

WATER AND SEDIMENT QUALITY SUBCOMMITTEE GALVESTON BAY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 7, 2018
1:30PM – 3:30PM

Subcommittee Chair: Brian Koch, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB)

Subcommittee Vice Chair: Justin Bower, Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)

GBEP Representative: Christian N. Rines

Call to Order, Introductions

Attendees: Brian Koch (TSSWCB), Justin Bower (H-GAC), Stephanie Glenn (HARC), Charriss York (TCWP), Christie Taylor (TCWP), Brianna Morales (GCA), Celina Gauthier Lowry (TCWP), Kristen McGovern (GBEP), Christian Rines (GBEP), Linda Shead (Texas Coastal Partners/Bayou Preservation Association), Sarah Gossett (GBF), Lindsey Lippert (GBEP), Lisa M. Marshall (GBEP), Joey Kaspar (H-GAC), Cynthia Clevenger (GBEP), Elizabeth Kompanik (TCEQ-SWQM), Sarah Bernhardt (Bayou Preservation Association by phone), Stephanie DeVilleneuve (TWRI by phone), Jessica Uramkin (TCEQ by phone).

Approval of December 6, 2018 minutes - approved with no changes.

New Business

Presentation: *Designing for Impact: Implementing and Incentivizing Low Impact Development*, Joey Kaspar, Senior Planner for the Houston-Galveston Area Council

**Presentation, notes, and Q&A available upon request.*

State of the Bay, 4th Edition update - Houston Advanced Research Center

- Stephanie Glenn with HARC provided an update. The State of the Bay had a successful QAPP audit on January 28, 2019. Three chapters have been

submitted to TCEQ and are under review (The Bay and Public Health, Water and Sediment Quality, and Freshwater Inflows). A graph from 1970 - 2016 shows for the first time an emerging trend of increasing water temperatures recorded for the Galveston Bay Report Card.

Needs/Gaps/Priorities that should be considered by the WSQ Subcommittee

- Ms. Rines passed out a spreadsheet of WSQ projects funded since 2012. She emailed the spreadsheet prior to the meeting asking the subcommittee to consider needs and gaps as we prioritize projects this September.

Discussion: An introductory conversation was had regarding priorities/need & gaps and what types of projects the subcommittee wants to fund in the upcoming fiscal year.

Soil Health - Mr. Koch questioned how we incorporate soil health/green infrastructure into urban landscapes. A 1% increase in organic matter over an acre equals 25,000 gallons of water infiltrated instead of running off. Benefits to improving soil health can already be seen on farms, ranches, and even in his own yard. Ms. Shead commented that flood control groups believe restored prairies are no better than parking lots. We need evidence to support these practices and disseminate that information to the public. TSSWCB is also interested in bringing a soil health conference to our area. Mr. Koch responded to GBF's question asking if this is something that could be applied to an urban backyard setting by saying yes and added the importance of eliminating synthetic fertilizers and reducing soil disturbances. Zone 3 of NRCS has a soil health trailer and rainfall simulator that could possibly be utilized for outreach. Ms. Gossett mentioned Texas Living Waters as a possible partnership. They are in the middle of completing their 3-year strategic plan and are looking to incorporate more native plants in their water conservation message. GBP is also trying to incorporate this into their outreach. Lindsey recommended using the Back the Bay campaign to drive this native plant message. Linda went on to say that native plants won't fix anything if the soil health isn't addressed. Brian added that keeping the ground covered is key regardless of what species is on it. Once the soil recovers, the native plants will come back since the seed source is there. A guidance document to hand out to homeowners would be needed. Fort Bend currently has incentives for homeowners and developers covering bare ground and goes even further as to asking what is being planted. Ms. York mentioned "Skip" Richter, AgriLife Horticulture agent for Harris County as a possible partner. Mr. Koch and other members agreed to possibly starting a soil health workgroup.

****Decision was made to add soil health as a priority of the subcommittee.***

Quantifications of Wildlife Contribution - Currently supported through BST project. Do we keep this? Justin Bower supported keeping this as a priority as additional data would make bacteria loading data more defensible. The current BST project looks at all possible sources contributing to the Bay (human, wildlife, livestock, pets, and other) and determining which source is the biggest contributor. Ms. Gossett commented on studies that show wildlife fecal bacteria as being less pathogenic to humans than human fecal bacteria. Mr. Koch stated we need to focus on things we know we can address. We know we can fix OSSFs and WWTFs and make cattle graze differently, but we cannot control the wildlife.

Subcommittee agreed monitoring gauges are still a necessity since a lot of these waters are tidally influenced and it's hard to obtain information. USGS has shown interest in being involved. Lindsey Lippert also reminded everyone that the Bay is going to be experiencing a lot of change with the imminent closing of Rollover Pass and water quality is not currently being looked at by anyone. Current monitoring sites and data collected in the bay were discussed amongst the group. The decision was made to keep this as a concern but not a priority of the subcommittee.

Soil Health & Green Infrastructure (workshops, tool kits, and incentives) and gauges were added as priorities and supporting management measures and WPPs was kept. Topics could be further reduced to headings for more flexibility. Will discuss in further detail at next Subcommittee meeting in June. The subcommittee will keep water quality in the Bay on their radar, due to the closing of Rollover Pass.

Old Business

Galveston Bay Estuary Program, council, and subcommittee updates:

- Ms. Lippert announced that GBEP is currently working on a few major reports - CCMP, State of the Bay, Estuary Resilience Assessment. Some of these are currently under review. GBEP is getting ready to submit their 5-year Program Evaluation to the EPA and will have a site visit with them sometime in June. In addition, they will be going to Commissioner's Agenda for Council nominations and the CCMP review. *Ms. Shead encouraged members to come and show stakeholder support of the Galveston Bay Plan, 2nd Edition.
- Ms. Lippert announced that Ms. Clevenger plans on getting a call for abstracts out sometime in May or June. A few preliminary planning meetings have been held on possible themes, locations, etc. Bids on locations will be obtained within the next few weeks. Participant comments and recommendations for the previous symposium have been acknowledged and will be addressed for the 2020 symposium.

Upcoming GBEP meetings:

- Monitoring and Research Subcommittee Meeting - TBD
- Public Participation and Education Subcommittee Meeting - April 4, 2019
- Natural Resources Subcommittee Meeting - TBD
- Budget and Priorities Subcommittee Meeting - March 29, 2019
- Galveston Bay Council Meeting - April 17, 2019 at 9:30am

Watershed Partnership Updates/Roundtable:

Dickinson Bayou/ Highland Bayou WPP (TX AgriLife)

- Dickinson - No Update
- Highland - They are currently working on revising the WPP and have started with stakeholder meetings this week. Stakeholders want to expand the scope of the project to include not only Highland and Marchand Bayous but also the Highland Bayou diversionary canal watershed, Moses Lake, two tributaries that feed into Moses Lake, Moses Bayou, and one unnamed Bayou (locally referred to as Bayou Pierre). A conversation was had with stakeholders about adding to the initial characterization phase. There were several smaller watersheds/bayous that were mapped out but based on a call with TCEQ this will most likely not happen. There really isn't additional funding right now to tackle these smaller waterways, so for now the project will focus on the other mentioned waterways with impairments. Stakeholder meetings will continue for the next few months with the next meeting occurring sometime in the first two weeks of April.

GIFT (TX AgriLife)

- Approval of the Sheldon Lake QAPP Revision is still ongoing. The next quarter of vegetation monitoring for the Sheldon Lake freshwater wetland project is also set to occur this month.
- Phase II of the Exploration Green stormwater wetland is still scheduled to be planted in the fall.

West Fork San Jacinto/Cedar Bayou Watershed Protection Plan (H-GAC)

- West Fork - The WPP was successfully accepted by the EPA with no comments. Copies of the approved WPP were provided during the meeting. Efficiency with funds allows the project to continue through the end of May 2019 in working on some early implementation efforts.
- Cedar Bayou - Working with local decision makers on a combined approach that addresses flood mitigation, water quality, and some transportation issues. There was a lot of concern that there was a lot going on with no unified representation, so H-GAC has taken the lead on facilitating that process.

- Cypress Creek - Efforts for a new WPP for Cypress Creek have started. H-GAC is currently looking for stakeholders and is establishing communication lines for this project. Mr. Bower added that H-GAC has been working on an urban forestry project that is tangentially related to this project for the last couple of years. He is now working on a potential new grant and is open to ideas or projects that deal with urban forestry, especially if they have some sort of water quality relationship to the region.
- Mr. Bower added that H-GAC has a supplemental project through the TCEQ and Harris County that fixes OSSF in priority watersheds. It is exclusively for low income households. H-GAC has someone who is now dedicated to this project and funding has been secured. There is a backlog with vendor issues, but H-GAC is willing to help if there is a need in a community.

Low Impact Development (LID) Implementation (H-GAC) - Update provided during project presentation by H-GAC.

BIG I-Plan/Basins 11 and 13

- The Annual Report for The BIG Proper is in progress. This is an update year for the I-Plan, so they are working through that process. There is an array of other TMDL projects that branch out from this one in Basin 11 and are working on an I-Plan for Chocolate Bayou. They are also currently going through the characterization process for the lower aspects of Oyster Creek and looking at a WPP vs. TMDL with stakeholders. Similar characterization efforts are ongoing for Halls and Mustang Bayous in deciding on an I-Plan or WPP. In Basin 13, the characterization phase is underway for Caney Creek and Big Creek. H-GAC is continuing to facilitate the Upper Oyster Creek, which is in its 5th year and is in the process of being updated. Ms. Rines mentioned that she has been in communication with a TCEQ employee who is currently mapping out all aggregate mining operations along the West Fork of the San Jacinto and she will relay updates to the team as received.

Oyster Waters I-Plan/FOG (GBF)

- GBF has no major updates. They are currently looking at lessons learned and are working to address public comments and identify those areas where the community wants more information to help GBF better engage with the community.

Double Bayou Watershed Protection Plan (GTRI)

- A successful stakeholder meeting was held a few weeks ago where GBF presented on GBAN. There are residents within the watersheds

that are currently getting assistance in both the replacement and maintenance of their septic systems. The new WWTF manager for the City of Anahuac also presented at the meeting. A tour of the facility will be hosted for all stakeholders in May, anyone is welcome to attend. Ms. Glenn was also notified that the water quality management plan is also going on in the watershed. The project's QAPP has been submitted for review.

Bacteria Source Tracking (TWRI)

- 50 of the 75 samples needed in the watershed have been collected, of which 40 were viable. Most of collected samples have been for livestock, so this month the team will focus on getting more wildlife and possible wild hog samples. Both the water and fecal sample collection should be completed by the end of April. The data will then be sent to a lab in El Paso where they will start matching up the isolates obtained from BST to the library. TWRI is at the tail end of the monitoring phase.

Announcements

Next Meeting: June 7, 2019 1:30pm to 3:30pm **Subject to change pending EPA program evaluation dates. Doodle poll will be sent out should date change.*

Ms. Rines announced a funding opportunity with the EPA's National Estuary Program (state match provided) for projects that relate to resiliency or nutrient reduction (green infrastructure, stormwater reduction, septic system upgrades, habitat restoration, hypoxia, nutrient related research, coastal acidification, and community engagement). Project ideas must be submitted no later than March 18th. **GBEP would apply as an NEP.*

Ms. York announced that TCWP is working with the Smart Cities Council, who are leading a post Harvey effort to help communities implement smart technologies to become more resilient in a cost effective and beneficial way. This will serve as a follow-up to a series of workshops that were held to identify community priorities. A two-day event will be held that will bring the community together and provide a "Resiliency Roadmap".

Ms. Uramkin announced that the TCEQ Nonpoint Source Program annually issues a Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) for projects that support water quality throughout the state. The RFGA will open in June.

Ms. Shead announced the following environmental events in the area:

- Trash Bash: March 30th
- Bayou Greenway Day: April 6th
- Art Car Parade Weekend: April 11th - 14th
- Earth Day at Discovery Green: April 6th

Mr. Koch handed out fliers for the upcoming Texas Soil Health Conference, April 23rd - 24th in Victoria. The agenda and registration form will be emailed out for distribution.

Adjourn