

# MONITORING AND RESEARCH SUBCOMMITTEE GALVESTON BAY COUNCIL

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**Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, June 19, 2019**  
**9:30AM -11:30AM**

Subcommittee Chair: George Guillen, Environmental Institute of Houston-University of Houston Clear Lake (EIH-UHCL)

Subcommittee Vice Chair: Mike Lee, United States Geological Society (USGS)

GBEP Representative: Kristen McGovern

## **Call to Order, Introductions**

Attendees: George Guillen (EIH-UHCL), Sarah Gossett (GBF), Chris Marshall (TAMUG), Jan Culbertson (TPWD), Lythia Metzmeier (TCEQ), Laura Jurgens (TAMUG), Lisa Gonzalez (HARC), Stephanie Glenn (HARC), Mandy Mulcan Lopez (UH), Anna Armitage (TAMUG), Rebekah Davis (TPWD), Colleen Roco (TPWD), Hui Liu (TAMUG), Web Mangham (TRA), Jean Wright (H-GAC by phone), Antonietta Quigg (TAMUG by phone), Kerry Niemann (TCEQ by phone), Kristen McGovern (GBEP), Lisa Marshall (GBEP), Lindsey Lippert (GBEP), Cynthia Clevenger (GBEP), Patricia Thompson (GBEP), Jessica Alanis (GBEP), and Christian Rines (GBEP).

**Approval of March 6, 2019 meeting minutes - approved.**

## **New Business**

**Presentation:** The Impacts of Assimilative Capacity of Reservoirs on Coastal Inflows - Stephanie Glenn, Hydrology and Watersheds Program Director, Houston Advanced Research Center (HARC)

## **Member Spotlight Short Presentations:**

**Jan Culbertson**, Coastal Ecologist, Dickinson Marine Laboratory, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)

## **Project Updates:**

Freshwater Inflows in Galveston Bay: Relationship to HABs - TAMUG: The project is completed and the final report has been turned in. They have

solidified their engagement with the Texas HABS Group, which Alex Nunes is overseeing. They have been sharing data with him and with Kirk Wiles (DSHS). All of the rain we have been getting have made conditions unfavorable for HABS, which is a good thing. Once we get back to drier conditions, we may see more HABS appearing in Galveston Bay – this is basically the findings of the report in a nutshell.

Nutrient and Sediment Monitoring of the San Jacinto River – USGS: USGS has collected more samples – were out for big release that occurred last week. The field audit is scheduled for next week. USGS might be able to leverage three different cooperators to get the gage installed ahead of time, which would move the project timeline ahead by 2-3 years. This will give velocity and discharge data below Lake Houston. This will be the first time that freshwater inflow data will be available from the San Jacinto River into Galveston Bay.

Seafood Evaluation in a Portion of Galveston Bay – DSHS: DSHS has received all their data from GERG and are completing data entry and QA.

Characterization of the Influence Freshwater Inflow on Trinity River Delta Indicators – EIH: EIH has been out to sample five times (last sampling event was April 2019). They have not found any *Vallisneria* (indicator of freshwater) during any of the surveys, but turbid water conditions have been an issue (not issue in previous studies). They have detected some large seagrass beds consisting mainly of *Ruppia maritima*. There is a lot of grazing pressure caused by nutria. They have a Fulbright scholar at EIH looking at age and growth of *Rangia* by taking cross-sections of the shells – can look at age and how fast growth is occurring by looking at distances between annuli. He should have results in the fall.

Intertidal Oyster Reef Mapping and Analysis – UH: Both QAPPs have been approved; they are currently working on the GIS analysis to identify potential oyster reef habitat, after which they will begin ground-truthing.

**Peer review of final reports:** Kristen asked the subcommittee what they thought about having one member of the subcommittee review each of the final reports submitted for GBEP M&R projects to make the reports more robust and of more use to the scientific community and make sure GBEP is putting out quality reports. The reviewer would ideally be the person with the most knowledge of the project. Subcommittee members indicated that it would add strength to the body of work being produced, but indicated that they were concerned about time constraints – would this occur within the 60-day time period – subcommittee members indicated that the reviewer should have a due date. Subcommittee members indicated that they agreed it was a good idea and there were no objections. Going outside of M&R for reviewers was briefly discussed, but the subcommittee agreed that reviewers should be selected from

within the subcommittee if possible, and if there was no one with the expertise available, then we could reach out to experts outside of the subcommittee.

### **Procedures and timeline for FY 21 project development:**

Submission opens 6/25 and closes 7/22. A copy of the proposal form was given to everyone at the meeting and Kristen indicated that she would email the proposal to everyone early next week. Kristen indicated that everyone would need to indicate how their project implements one or more actions from the M&R section of the Galveston Bay Plan (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) and how their project falls under one of the subcommittee-selected priorities - which we will be trying to reduce to three. Kristen asked that proposals be limited to <1000 words. Kristen stated that each person that submits a proposal would have three slides at the September meeting to present their proposal and the subcommittee agreed that the meeting time period would be extended from 9:00am - 12:00pm. In the past two years, the M&R subcommittee was allocated \$115-140K per year to fund 2-3 projects. Match is not required but leveraging is always recommended when possible.

Chris suggested that the members work together to develop a larger collaborative project centered on microplastics. George stated that it was a good idea and Mike said that there was nothing prohibiting it. Lindsey stated that WSO and PPE were also interested in microplastics and that it might be a good idea to have a joint meeting to obtain a more holistic approach. Cynthia stated that PPE was really interested in the citizen science approach and that it would be good to see that element in the plan. George stated that it would be a great idea to have a microplastics-themed session at the State of the Bay Symposium. There was some discussion regarding establishing standard methodologies for sampling and analyzing microplastics. Cynthia indicated that a plastic symposium was being organized for October 29<sup>th</sup> at Moody Gardens; this could be an opportunity to listen and present.

### **Information gaps and needs for the region:**

Information gaps and needs for the region that were previously identified by the M&R subcommittee were revisited and discussed in preparation for the upcoming project planning meeting in June. For each information need, current GBEP projects falling under that topic as well as actions from the Galveston Bay Plan, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition that corresponded to that topic were identified. This will better aid the subcommittee in ensuring that the actions identified in the Galveston Bay Plan, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition are being implemented. The goal was to narrow down the previously identified priorities to three for fiscal year 2021. The topics that were discussed were:

1. Contaminants in Aquatic Organisms: The NOAA Mussel Watch results are still not out. George stated that the National Coastal Condition Assessment would be conducted next year, they sample sediment and some tissue, but not sure if oysters are sampled. Sarah inquired as to whether there is baseline data we are waiting to get on contaminants and stated that background information on PFAS would have been useful in the wake of the ITC incident. The subcommittee agreed to modify the topic to baseline data (chemical, biological, and physical) on emerging contaminants.
2. Waterway trash and marine debris: The subcommittee agreed to expand the topic to include microplastics.
3. Larval transport: Kristen indicated that she was not at GBEP during the original discussions for this priority and asked if the subcommittee still thought that this was a valuable topic to consider as a priority. The subcommittee agreed that they wanted to keep the priority in anticipation of the closure of Rollover Pass and the Coastal Spine plans.
4. LID/infrastructure performance data: The subcommittee asked if this topic was better suited to the WSQ subcommittee. The subcommittee did not think that the topic was as high of a priority as the other priorities identified.
5. Spatial and temporal trends in Point Source Loading: George indicated that this has not been looked at bay-wide in over 20 years. Lythia asked whether this is beyond the scope of the M&R subcommittee.

The three priorities agreed upon for the FY 21 funding cycle were: emerging contaminants in water, sediment, and organisms; larval transport in the estuary, and macro- and microplastics (in water, sediments, or organisms) research.

Members can submit proposals for 1, 2, or even 3 years (but the third year has to be short). Mike said that going back to what Chris was saying, the subcommittee may have a bunch of proposals on microplastics, and that he wondered if the subcommittee might be better served to make it a more holistic, collaborative study. It was agreed that a meeting between interested parties from all subcommittees would be convened in July to discuss the possibility of submitting a collaborative microplastics proposal. Kristen will send out a Doodle poll to decide on a date.

### **GBEP, Council, and subcommittee updates:**

- WSQ subcommittee meeting: June 20, 2019 1:30PM - 3:30PM
- GBC meeting: July 17, 2019 9:30AM - 12:30PM
- Regional Monitoring Database (Status and Trends) workgroup in July/August (Doodle poll will be sent out next week to determine date) facilitated by HARC to get input on what stakeholders would like

### **Old Business**

#### **Announcements/Path Forward Items**

- Wednesday, September 11, 2019 9:00AM - 12:00AM
- Wednesday, December 11, 2019, 9:30AM - 11:30AM
- Lisa M. introduced Jessica Alanis, the GBEP summer intern, and told the members to please let her know of any opportunities to participate in fieldwork.
- Chris announced that TAMUG established the Gulf Center for Sea Turtle Research and there is a license plate available for purchase to support the center.
- Jean stated that the 2019 Basin highlights Report is published and can be found on the HGAC website under Environment, Water, Clean Rivers reports.
- Lisa G. announced that on August 28<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am, GBF and HARC will be hosting an event to release the latest version of the Galveston Bay Report Card at the Sea Star Base in Galveston.
- Web stated that the TRA is moving toward working more in the bay, and that they have staff time for three people for this year to collect data. Subcommittee members can email him any ideas that they have. Past work includes sediment sampling, water quality sampling, and bathymetric surveys. Web indicated that they have sampled for heavy metals in the past.
- Cynthia stated that the State of the Bay Symposium is still waiting on a venue space and that the call for abstracts would be going out shortly. She stated that the three priorities for the PPE subcommittee are projects that support underserved/ underrepresented communities, projects with an emphasis on K-12 education efforts,

and projects driven by user need and/or relevant data (microplastics would fall into that). The dates are Jan 22-23, 2020 for the symposium.

**Adjourn**