

NATURAL RESOURCE USES (NRU) SUBCOMMITTEE

GALVESTON BAY COUNCIL
SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

23 June 2020

SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR Cherie O'Brien, TPWD	SUBCOMMITTEE VICE CHAIR Philip Smith, GBF
NRU COORDINATOR Lindsey Lippert, GBEP	

Members/Participants Present

Cherie O'Brien (TPWD - Chair), Philip Smith (GBF - Vice-Chair), Scott Alford (NRCS), Anna Armitage (TAMUG), Alexis Baldera (Audubon Texas), Sarah Bernhardt (BPA), Stacey Carr (TCEQ), William Comeaux (Galveston County-Bolivar Peninsula), Richard Gibbons (Houston Audubon), Lisa Gonzalez (HARC), Amanda Hackney (Black Cat GIS), Laura Jurgens (TAMUG), Elizabeth Kompanik (TCEQ), Haille Leija (GBF), Marissa Llosa (Houston Parks Board), Christopher Marshall (TAMUG), Kelli Ondracek (HPARD), Dianna Ramirez (GLO), Lisa Rickards (EPA), Derek Sanford (ABNC), Linda Shead (Shead Conservation Solutions), Matt Singer (GBF), Chris Smith (ABNC), Charrish Stevens (NOAA-NMFS), Colleen Ulibarri (Texas AgriLife), Heather Young (RESTORE Council)
GBEP Staff Present: Lindsey Lippert (NRU Coordinator), Lisa Marshall (Program Manager), Christian Rines (WSQ Coordinator), Cynthia Clevenger (PPE Coordinator), Patricia Thompson (Technical Programs Coordinator), Mary Stiles (PPE Assistant)

Planning and Priorities for FY 2022 Funding

Four priorities were selected for the FY 2022 project selection cycle:

#	Priority	Explanation
1.	Habitat Acquisition	The subcommittee agreed that the continuation of land conservation efforts is a priority for implementation in FY 2022.
2.	Enhancement of Existing or Ongoing Restoration/Conservation Efforts	The subcommittee agreed that addressing the needs of completed or ongoing efforts that may need additional maintenance or support was a priority. This includes, <u>but is not limited to</u> , issues such as expansion of project footprints, post-construction erosion issues (such as a breach), additional capacity of nesting habitat, and intrusion of invasive species.
3.	Benefit to Native Fish and Wildlife	Update of a FY 2021 priority. Projects should benefit Federal and State Listed Species or Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) but can also benefit nongame fish and wildlife. Nongame fish and wildlife refers to all animals that have no legal hunting season; species that are not hunted like robins, lizards, armadillos, etc.
4.	Brings Funding or Work Leverage to the Subcommittee	Continuation of a FY 2021 priority. Efforts must be made to expand projects beyond the scope of GBEP dollars and promote collaboration and partnerships.

Other topics were discussed but not selected as priorities:

- Restoration of aquatic endangered and threatened species
 - The NRU subcommittees work of conservation, restoration, and enhancement has previously been focused on habitat that benefits large suites of wildlife, and not focused on individual species. While the vocal majority agreed the former approach is more appropriate for the NRU action plan outputs and limited funding available to the NRU, the need for research, monitoring, and adaptive management of target species and habitats was recognized as a concern and a gap in implementation between the NRU and M&R subcommittee, and the *Galveston Bay Plan, 2nd Edition* in general. Species-targeted monitoring and research is not a specific action for M&R, and much of their recent work and representation is focused on chemical stressors and micro/macro plastics.
 - Resolution: The NRU Coordinator, Chairs, and select partners will work to address and incorporate these needs into the M&R subcommittee purview.
- Habitat Conservation Blueprint
 - The Habitat Conservation Blueprint is a named performance measure in the *Galveston Bay Plan, 2nd Edition*, but the contents and intended purpose of said Blueprint were strongly debated. While the original idea was to develop a restoration plan/inventory for future restoration in the watershed, adaptive management, coastal resiliency, and targeted monitoring were all suggested as potential expansions of the document.
 - Resolution: The subcommittee determined the Blueprint/inventory of conservation should be developed via a meeting with stakeholders to better incorporate conservation needs, efforts, successes, and failures and lessons learned. Lindsey will compile and develop supporting documents including compiling “Lessons Learned” from all past NRU projects ahead of the meeting.
- Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) Development
 - The Invasive Species Work Group (ISWG) had begun investigating the development of a CISMA in the Galveston Bay Watershed but had concerns about the lack of a “champion” to focus and guide the initiative long-term. Since initial discussions, certain funding streams dedicated to these efforts are no longer available.
 - Resolution: The ISWG will convene a meeting to discuss the fate and best path forward for this initiative.
- Regional Maintenance and Management Program
 - In 2017, the GBEP worked with TPWD and GBF to address smaller maintenance and management projects for multiple partners in the region. While the effort was extremely successful and eliminated the issue of GBEP working directly with nonprofit partners, the workload burden for the grantees was very heavy and created capacity issues.
 - Resolution: None; the want to continue these types of projects exists, but capacity is an issue.
- Monetary or Timeline Urgency

- Certain projects may be more urgent than others. A project may need funding match from the subcommittee, and the project will not happen at all if not secured. Or a habitat may be at imminent risk of loss or development within the funding cycle and will not exist if a commitment is not secured.
 - Resolution: All projects that receive NRU funding should have to address the urgency of completion. An additional field will be added to the NRU proposal form to address this topic.

Two projects were presented for informational purposes.

1. Jones Bay Oystercatcher Restoration Project - Haille Leija (GBF)
 - This project was previously presented in FY 2021 and was approved by the NRU subcommittee. It ultimately was not funded by GBEP due to budget constraints but received other funding to move to construction. GBF would like to expand the footprint of the project.
2. Armand/Horsepen Bayou Elephant Ear Control - Derek Sanford (ABNC)
 - ABNC is seeing encroachment of elephant ear into habitat previously restored by GBEP, TPWD, and other partners and would like to move forward efforts to manage those existing and new areas of infestation.

Project Proposal Timelines for FY 2022

The schedule for FY2022 project selection and development is as follows:

29 June 2020: Proposal form will be sent to stakeholders

24 July 2020: Proposal Deadline

10 August 2020: Proposals will be sent to Subcommittee for review

Projects selected will begin the contract initiation process in December 2020. FY 2022 funding will be available September 1, 2021, and able to be expended thru May 31, 2024.

As a reminder, GBEP is limited to partnering directly with state agencies and academia, local government, councils of government, and independent school districts. Nonprofit organizations **must secure** a pass-through with an organization mentioned above for projects. If you have any questions on this topic or need to determine your eligibility, please contact [Lindsey Lippert](#).

Other

NRU Project Updates

*Spreadsheet available on request.

Tracking Implementation of the Galveston Bay Plan

Lindsey gave a brief synopsis of an initiative to better track partner work in the region. This topic will be deferred to a future meeting due to time constraints, and possibly combined with the future habitat conservation blueprint meeting.

Selection of A Presenter for Next Meeting - Deferred

Roundtable - None

Announcements - None