

## **GALVESTON BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM (GBEP)**

### **DRAFT - Galveston Bay Council (GBC) Meeting Minutes – July 15, 2020**

#### **Attendees:**

**Galveston Bay Council Chair:** Glenn Clingenpeel (Trinity River Authority)

**Galveston Bay Council Vice-Chair:** Albert Gonzales (Low Income Communities)

**Estuary Program Staff Lead:** Lisa Marshall (Galveston Bay Estuary Program)

*Due to issues with COVID-19, the January 21, 2020 quarterly GBC meeting was held through the WebEx conferencing service.*

**Members Present:** Scott Alford, Caryn Brooks, Glenn Clingenpeel, Winfred Colbert, Bryan Eastham, Albert Gonzales, Lori Hamilton, Cruz Hinojosa, Jace Houston, John Huffman, Doug Jacobson, Brian Koch, Audrey Kuklenz, Kristen Lambrecht, Mike Lee, Garry McMahan, Helen Paige, Nancy Parra, Ana Partin, Pamela Plotkin, Russ Poppe, Melissa Porter, Lisa Rickards, Hanadi Rifai, Caimee Schoenbaechler, Ronnie Schultz, Rusty Senac, Linda Shead, Bob Stokes, Jeff Taebel, Sue Theiss, Matthew Tilimon, and Lori Traweek

**Members Not Present/Delegates:** Andrea Catanzaro\*, Jeff DallaRosa, Will Nipper\*, Taylor Rieck\*, Mary Beth Stengler, Charrish Stevens, Kirk Wiles, Tracy Woody  
(\*=Member designated a proxy)

**Proxies Present (GBC member absent/designated proxy):** Andrea Catanzaro/Harmon Brown, Will Nipper/Maria Valdez

**Current Vacancies:** None

**Other Attendees:** Kerry Niemann, Tyler Payne, Dianna Ramirez, Elizabeth Fazio-Hale, Stephanie DeVilleneuve, Terry Gentry, Carion Taylor, Theresa Morris

**Additional GBEP Staff Present:** Cynthia Clevenger, Lindsey Lippert, Kristen McGovern, Christian Rines, Mary Stiles, Patricia Thompson, Vanessa Zemke

#### **Call to Order: Introduction of Members and Delegates**

Glenn Clingenpeel brought the meeting to order and asked council members to please mute their mics.

#### **Action Item: Approval of January 21, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Clingenpeel opened the meeting with approval of the minutes. A motion was requested for approval. Brian Koch moved to approve the minutes, and Linda Shead seconded the motion.

#### **Report of the Chair**

Mr. Clingenpeel hoped council members are doing well and regrets the council could not meet in person. He appreciated members flexibility and adaptability and hopes these virtual meetings will be a temporary. Mr. Clingenpeel thanked GBEP staff for

their continued efforts to communicate throughout the pandemic. Mr. Clingenpeel also expressed that he and Ms. Marshall have consistently conversed during this time as well and wanted to assure continuity of operations.

Mr. Clingenpeel reported that the council has three newly appointed members— Lisa Rickards, Charrish Stevens and Sue Theiss. Each new member will be introduced.

### **Lisa Rickards**

Mr. Jacobson updated the council on his current projects. He has been working on the EPA's Deep Waters Horizon (DWH) response. Mr. Jacobson has been the Texas EPA representative for DWH responses since 2016 and has worked to implement and identify projects on the Texas coast to restore ecosystem services damage that occurred from the spill.

Mr. Jacobson also represents Texas on the Trustee Implementation Group (TIG), that created a plan and implemented 15 projects. EPA will start in 2020 or early 2021 on the restoration plan.

Mr. Jacobson has been with EPA for 25 years, and even though his role has changed at the EPA, and he will no longer serve on the council, he assured members that he will still be involved with GBEP. He will also keep up to date with the council and its continued work. Mr. Jacobson thanked the GBEP staff and council for their achievements over the past 25 years and wished continued success in future endeavors.

Doug Jacobson introduced his replacement, Ms. Rickards with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

### **Charrish Stevens**

Mr. Clingenpeel read Ms. Stevens's bio and introduced her to the council.

### **Sue Theiss**

Albert Gonzales read Ms. Theiss's bio and introduced her to the council.

Ms. Theiss said that she has a background in environmental and law and is back in Houston district, excited to get involved, and is honored to be nominated to the council.

Mr. Clingenpeel thanked Mr. Jacobson's contribution to the council,

Ms. Marshall thanked Mr. Jacobson for his service and his support to GBEP.

Mr. Gonzales also thanked Mr. Jacobson and said he has had the pleasure of being on the council with Mr. Jacobson since 1999, and Mr. Jacobson was very humble and helpful in responses and knowledgeable about EPA. Mr. Gonzales mentioned Mr. Jacobson is a great asset to EPA.

### **Report of the Program (Lisa Marshall)**

Ms. Marshall reported that every two years, half of the Council members' terms expire in November. After this Council meeting, Ms. Marshall will send an email with a form

to members whose terms are expiring to confirm they will continue to represent their organization on the Council. The aim is to approve those members at the TCEQ Commissioners Agenda in February or March, 2021.

In June, the subcommittees selected their priorities for the fiscal year 22 project development process. Currently the request for proposals has gone out to the subcommittees and they are due back to GBEP on June 24, 2020. The proposals will be presented, and projects selected during the September 2020 subcommittee meetings. The subcommittee coordinators will be announcing the priorities from their subcommittees later in the meeting.

Ms. Marshall announced the program has a Mickey Leland intern working at GBEP for the summer. Unfortunately, like everyone else, she is having to telework. Her name is Vanessa Zemke, and she is in the Master of Public Service and Administration Program at Texas A&M's Bush School of Government and Public Service and she is studying Public Management, with a concentration in Marine and Environmental Policy. Ms. Zemke is helping GBEP with implementation tracking for the Galveston Bay Plan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition as well as a project for the Partners in Litter Prevention. GBEP is happy to have her for the summer.

**Presentation: *Texas General Land Office's Regional Flood Studies* - Tyler Payne, Texas General Land Office (GLO)**

Tyler Payne provided an overview on the Community Development and Revitalization Program. Mr. Payne reported that GLO is responsible for veteran's affairs, land leases, oil spills, the permanent school fund, and coastal resources for Texas. Governor Perry designated GLO with responsibility for long-term disaster recovery and mitigation for the state in 2011. Governor Abbott extended that designation in 2016 through 2020. GLO also administers the Federal Emergency Management Agency short-term housing missions.

Mr. Payne provided an overview of the grants that are open and are currently administered or have been previously administered by GLO. The \$3 billion Hurricane Ike allocation, followed by \$5.6 million for Hurricane Harvey, and the mitigation for Harvey is \$4.3 billion in funding. Total funding is \$14.3 billion that will be administered. Texas Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) has requirements, and one of the biggest requirements is location; they are only allowed to work in counties associated with disasters.

Mr. Payne reported GLO is working with federal, state regional, local and academic partners to create the Texas Disaster Information System (TDIS). TDIS seeks to gather reliable and accurate information through data sharing agreements. TDIS will not act as a data clearinghouse. The two primary goals:

- Provide reliable and accurate data to decision makers before, during and after disasters.
- Help local communities build more competence by providing the tools and training to effectively conduct comprehensive community planning.

GLO has two TDIS contracts: TDIS Design (University of Texas – Center for Space Research) and TDIS Creation (Texas A&M University, Contracting Pending). TDIS datasets will be identified and prioritized. Web Portal capabilities will have the ability to query and export all data in accordance with security protocols and laws, validate users/roles and display data appropriately, and develop a comprehensive community planning platform.

GLO's target audience is primary stakeholders and organizations that share data, e.g., Federal and State agencies, regional planning and oversight organizations, local governments and insurance organizations. The web portal will mostly target decision-makers such as elected officials, disaster response personnel, recovery and mitigation planners, and local government planners, but will also be available to the general population. GLO reached out to federal and state entities to request high quality data.

Mr. Payne reported on the regional flood studies:

- Four-year contract
- Budget: \$25M/region (\$75M total)
- Four-phase study
  - 1) Data Collection and Outreach
  - 2) Flood Model Development
  - 3) Alternatives Analysis and Cost-Benefit Analysis
  - 4) Recommendations and Pursuit of Additional Mitigations Funds
- GLO-CDR will be contracting with USACE to serve as technical assistance
- Mitigation Funds:
  - 1) Texas allocated \$4.29 billion for mitigation
  - 2) State will run planning has a projected budget of \$214 million
  - 3) Planning survey will close June 30, 2020

**Presentation: *Water and Sediment Quality (WSQ) Focus and Priorities* – Christian Rines, GBEP WSQ Coordinator**

Christian Rines provided a brief overview of the WSQ subcommittee by going over some of the subcommittee's past and most recent accomplishments, needs/gaps and goals of the group, and identified priorities. Ms. Rines reported that the last WSQ subcommittee meeting was held June 10, 2020. Ms. Rines presented the priorities selected by the WSQ subcommittee for fiscal 2022 funding:

- Green infrastructure and soil health projects/monitoring to improve water quality;
- Supporting management measures and watershed-based plans;
- Waterway trash, marine debris, and/or macroplastics and microplastics.

**Presentation: *Bacterial Source Tracking (BST) on Tributaries of Trinity and Galveston Bays* - Terry Gentry, Ph.D, Texas A&M University**

Terry Gentry reported on Bacterial Source Tracking (BST), which is used to determine sources of fecal contamination. The method is based on uniqueness of bacteria from

individual sources. A variety of different methods are used, but it often works best as part of a toolbox type approach. Mr. Gentry reported that there are two library-dependent BST methods that use DNA fingerprinting, both with advantages/disadvantages. He also discussed the development of Texas *E. coli* BST Library.

The Texas *E. coli* BST Library (Volumes 1-20) contains 1,886 *E. coli* isolates from 1,645 different human and animal samples. It was developed by collecting over 4,000 domestic sewage, wildlife, livestock and pet fecal samples and screening over 7,000 isolates for clones and host specificity. Additional isolates are being added from ongoing and future BST projects in other areas of Texas.

The Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI) team conducted monthly water sampling for one year at locations on Buffalo, Double, Cedar and Dickinson bayous and Clear Creek. By working with local experts, the team was able to identify significant contributors of bacteria in each watershed, for which fecal samples were obtained. The isolates of these fecal samples were then used to supplement the Texas *E. coli* BST Library. These isolates, in addition to those already contained within the library, were then matched up to the isolates obtained from the water samples. The BST analysis performed by TWRI provided a unique profile that identified and quantified the different contributors of *E. coli* for each watershed. Results from this study indicate that wildlife (non-avian and avian) were the leading contributors of bacteria (56%). Contributors of this category include wildlife such as feral hogs, raccoons, opossums, rodents, and other small mammals, as well as various avian sources. Cattle and other livestock, as well as domestic pets, make up an additional 15% of the identified isolates. Human sources accounted for 8% of the total classifications. Surprisingly, 20% of the sources were unidentifiable, which is rare given other studies across the state. It is also worth noting that TWRI was unable to distinguish between isolates of different non-avian species, such as deer and feral hogs. Feral hogs are a known contributor of bacteria in our waterways and should therefore be differentiated from other wildlife given current population numbers and their reproductive capacity. Recent studies indicate a higher potential for bacteria generated by feral hog to infect humans. TWRI is aware of the need to differentiate feral hogs from other sources and will do so, should funding be secured. Additional information on this project may be found by accessing the final report on the GBEP website.

## **Subcommittee Updates**

### ***Monitoring and Research (M&R)***

Kristen McGovern reported that the M&R subcommittee meeting was held March 4, 2020. Ms. McGovern presented the priorities selected by the subcommittee for fiscal 2022 funding:

- Contaminant fate and transport and/or effects of contaminants (especially from chemical and oil spills) on species populations;
- Estimation of spatial/temporal trends in point source and/or nonpoint source loading and compliance with effluent standards; and

- Effects of increased frequency of flood tides and erosion on species populations.

### ***Natural Resource Uses (NRU)***

Lindsey Lippert reported the NRU subcommittee meeting was held on June 23, 2020. Ms. Lippert presented the priorities selected by the NRU Subcommittee for fiscal 2022 funding:

- Habitat Acquisition - the subcommittee agreed that the continuation of land conservation efforts is a priority for implementation in fiscal 2022.
- Enhancement of Existing or Ongoing Restoration/Conservation Efforts was agreed by the subcommittee that addressing the needs of completed or ongoing efforts that may need additional maintenance or support was priority. This includes, but is not limited to, 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.
- Benefit to Native Fish and Wildlife - update of a fiscal 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.
- Funding or Work Leverage - continuation of a fiscal 2021 priority. Efforts must be made to expand projects beyond the scope of GBEP dollars and promote collaboration and partnerships.

### ***Public Participation and Education (PPE)***

Cynthia Clevenger reported the PPE subcommittee meeting was held on June 18, 2020. Ms. Clevenger reported the priorities selected by PPE subcommittee:

- Mapping/database identifying underrepresented communities and a needs assessment for volunteer and stewardship programs and opportunities for those underrepresented communities.
- Programs building capacity to target and partner with underrepresented communities that encourage diversity, equity, and addresses language barriers.
- Create and facilitate a workshop that convenes thought leaders, stakeholders, and partners to address how to partner with underrepresented communities to deliver environmental education and outreach efforts. As an outcome of the workshop, develop a plan of action on how to deliver programs in the Galveston Bay watershed for underserved communities.
- Programs that address careers in the environmental field targeting high school-aged youth, young adults in college, and young professionals. Programs may encourage careers in, but not limited to, natural resource management, formal and informal education and outreach, and environmental communication.

### **Council Members Roundtable: News and Announcements**

**Glenn Clingenpeel (TRA)** - TRA is moving along with the flood planning process. Hydrology and hydraulic modeling work will inform behavior of the Trinity and San Jacinto Rivers. Management receives regular updates from Human Resources on COVID-19 and they are operating at 50% capacity.

**Bryan Eastham (TPWD)** - Commercial Oyster Mariculture rules have been approved, and TPWD will begin accepting applications for permits on September 1. TPWD is operating at 20% capacity and staff are back on the boats.

**Lori Hamilton (TCEQ)** - There have been several staffing changes at TCEQ. L'Oreal Stepney and Ramiro Garcia have been named Co-Deputy Executive Directors for the TCEQ, and Earl Lott has been named Deputy Director of the Office of Water. Amy Settemeyer has been named Assistant Division Director of the Water Quality Planning Division. Due to COVID-19, most of the agency is teleworking, with only essential personnel in office. All Commission Agendas and hearings are being held virtually.

**Cruz Hinojosa (Underrepresented Communities)** - Mr. Hinojosa thanked everyone who voted in this unprecedented situation with the pandemic. The Environmental Community Advocates of Galena Park and the League of United Latin America Citizens (LULAC) partnered to prepare 300 meals and provided them for free to Galena Park residents to alleviate some of the food strain caused by COVID-19.

**Brian Koch (TSSWCB)** - The TSSWCB 319 Request for Proposal will be released in August. Currently TSSWCB offices are rotating staff or working from home. Staff are not traveling and are preparing for pending budget cuts.

**Kristin Lambrecht (TDA)** - TDA is operating at 25% capacity. The State Office of Rural Health is working to distribute personal protective equipment to rural hospitals, working on getting rural products direct to the public, and providing safety training to farmers for selling products to the market.

**Mike Lee (USGS)** - The USGS is operating with full field staff and 50% office staff.

**Helen Paige (Marinas)** - Marinas are doing very well. People are using more boats, and boat sales have increased to the highest rate in 10 years.

**Nancy Parra (League of Women Voters)** - Activities have been affected by COVID-19. The organization cannot register people to vote in person, so the LOWV is figuring out how to reach people to register to vote. It has been problematic getting poll workers; most volunteers are retired and are in high-risk categories. LOWV is working to recruit younger workers. The "vote by mail" measure was overturned by a higher court, and the Supreme Court has issued a stay.

**Ana Partin (INEOS/EHCMA)** - INEOS has continued production with non-essential personnel teleworking.

**Russ Poppe (HCFCD)** – HCFCD currently had over \$400 million in construction, with \$30 million in contracts approved on July 14, 2020. HCFCD was deemed essential but are operating at 10% in the office and no more than two people per vehicle in the field.

**Hanadi Rifai (UH)** – During COVID-19, all academics were moved online, and all research was canceled. UH is now at 25% occupancy and will have three different ways to open in the fall.

**Caimee Schoenbachler (TWDB)** – TWDB is teleworking, cancelling all events. Now they have voluntary reentry at 10% capacity in offices. TWDB has developed COVID-19 field procedures and are moving forward with flood planning. Hiring flood positions, including Coastal Flood Modeler.

**Jeff Taebel (H-GAC)** – H-GAC is working with Houston Wilderness to continue supporting conservation efforts in the watershed, including holding listening sessions with local elected officials. Future meetings with regional resource managers are planned to convey results of the listening sessions. Due to COVID-19, H-GAC has a voluntary limited return of 10%, but due to local infection numbers rising there is a temporary hold on staff returning and everything is virtual. H-GAC is looking at updating field procedures.

**Sue Theiss (TXDOT)** – Ms. Theiss is looking forward to working with the GBC. TXDOT is currently teleworking with a voluntary 10% staff return. All meetings and hearings are virtual. TXDOT updates include the Gulf Freeway PEL is upcoming; August 11<sup>th</sup> Galveston Causeway to 61<sup>st</sup> Street presentation; Pelican Island Bridge Replacement; I-45 North Houston EIS will be ready by the end of summer.

**Lori Traweek (GCA)** – GCA has a robust COVID-19 strategy and staff are following those practices. Ms. Traweek will be retiring November 16<sup>th</sup>; Ms. Elizabeth (Liz) Fazio-Hale will be nominated as the new representative on the GBC. Trash Bash 2020 was canceled but 4,300 shirts were printed. Those shirts were donated to the Shriners Hospital and local homeless ministries.

**Matthew Tilimon (USCG)** – There is new leadership in Galveston; Captains Smith and Donahue.

**Kerry Niemann Regarding the (TCEQ) TMDL Program:**

- Two TMDLs for indicator bacteria in the Corpus Christi Bay Beaches, Cole Park, and Ropes Park are scheduled to go to Agenda to release for public comment on August 12<sup>th</sup>.
- One TMDL and one Implementation Plan for indicator bacteria in Carancahua Bay are scheduled to go to Agenda for adoption and approval respectively on August 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Twenty-three TMDLs for indicator bacteria, DO, and pH in Adams Bayou, Cow Bayou, and associated tributaries are scheduled to go to Agenda for adoption on August 26<sup>th</sup>.

Regarding the NPS Program: The Request for Grant Applications solicitation closes on Friday, July 31<sup>st</sup>.



Regarding the 2020 Integrated Report: EPA approved the report on May 12, 2020.

Regarding Water Quality Standards: The Surface Water Quality Standards Advisory Work Group held two half-day meetings on June 29 and June 30, 2020. The agenda and handouts are available on the TCEQ website.

Regarding the Clean Rivers Program: The calendar of Steering Committee Meeting dates may be accessed from the statewide Coordinated Monitoring Schedule. Meetings occur throughout the year and help to establish monitoring priorities.

Dianna Ramirez (GLO) - GLO is teleworking; locally the oil spill program is teleworking but still conducting patrols. All meetings including the Technical Advisory Committee for the Texas Coastal Resiliency Master Plan are virtual. As the nonfederal sponsor for the Texas Coastal Study, the GLO is reaching out to potential partners on the ecosystem restoration components.

**Public Comment:** None

**Adjourn:** Meeting was adjourned at 11:47 a.m.

**Upcoming Galveston Bay Council Meeting Dates:** October 21, 2020, January 20, 2021, April 21, 2021, July 21, 2021. Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the quarter from 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.