GALVESTON BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM (GBEP)

**DRAFT - Galveston Bay Council (GBC) Meeting Minutes – November 3, 2021**

**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(GBEP)

*Due to issues with COVID-19, the November 3, 2021 quarterly GBC meeting was held in a hybrid format with in-person at the Harris-Galveston Subsidence District and virtually on Microsoft Teams.*

**Members Present:** Scott Alford, Glenn Clingenpeel (Chair, attending in person), Winfred Colbert, Jeffrey DallaRosa, Vance Darr, Bryan Eastham, Elizabeth Fazio Hale, Albert Gonzales, Lori Hamilton, Cruz Hinojosa, Brian Koch, Audrey Kuklenz, Michael Lee, Helen Paige, Nancy Parra, Ana Partin, Pamela Plotkin, Melissa Porter, Lisa Rickards, Hanadi Rifai, Caimee Schoenbaechler, Ronnie Schultz, Rusty Senac, Linda Shead, Shane Simpson, Matthew Tilimon, Sue Theiss, and Maria Valdez

**Members Not Present/Delegates:** Alan Black\*, Andrea Catanzaro, Jace Houston, Kristin Lambrecht, Garry McMahan\*, Tyler Rieck, Mary Beth Stengler, Charrish Stevens\*, Sharron Stewart, Bob Stokes, Jeff Taebel\* Kirk Wiles, Scott Williams, and Tracy Woody

**(\*=Member designated a proxy)**

**Proxies Present (GBC member absent/designated proxy):** Alan Black/Glenn Laird, Garry McMahan/Mollie Powell, Jeff Taebel/Todd Running, and Charrish Stevens/Rusty Swafford

**Current Vacancies: N/A**

**Other Attendees:** Mike Gerel, Kendall Guidroz, Amin Kiaghadi, Dylan Lorence, Earl Lott, Ronnie Lucas, Dianna Ramirez, and Lori Traweek

**Additional GBEP Staff Present:** Cynthia Clevenger, Lindsey Lippert, Kristen McGovern, Christian Rines, and Vanessa Zemke

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

Glenn Clingenpeel brought the meeting to order and asked GBC members to please mute their microphones.

**Action Item: Approval of July 21, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Clingenpeel opened the meeting with approval of the minutes. Rusty Senac made a motion to approve the minutes and Cruz Hinojosa seconded the motion.

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

**Announcement:** Introduction of Vanessa Zemke, Technical and Quality Program Coordinator

Vanessa received a B.S. in Marine Science from the University of Delaware and a Master of Public Service and Administration (MPSA) from Texas A&M University. She was an intern with GBEP during the summer of 2020 and is now working with GBEP full-time as the Technical and Quality Program Coordinator. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time outdoors and playing fetch with her dog.

Lisa Marshall announced that GBEP would like to take the GBC members on a field trip for their January meeting. Polls were taken to gauge interest.

Ms. Marshall reminded the GBC members that GBEP would need donations to lease a bus because GBEP’s state and federal funds could not be used.

**Report of the Chair** (Glenn Clingenpeel)

Mr. Clingenpeel reminded the GBC members of the Teams features and the requirements for participating in a hybrid meeting – GBC members must keep their cameras on while actions are being discussed, microphones should be muted except when speaking, and when voting on the work plan, conflict of interests should be announced via the chat feature.

**Action Item: Nominations for GBC Chair and Vice Chair**

Mr. Senac nominated Mr. Clingenpeel and Albert Gonzales for Chair and Vice Chair, respectively. Mr. Hinojosa seconded this motion.

**Presentation and Discussion:** *Fiscal Year 2023 GBEP Work Plan.* A series of short presentations by GBEP staff covering the projects and programmatic costs being proposed.

**Action Item:** Approval of each category in the proposed Fiscal Year 2023 GBEP Work Plan.

Ms. Marshall indicated that the GBC would be voting on and approving the budget by category. Approval of each program area, a motion and second for each, abstentions and Conflicts of Interest for each item were noted.

Projects were approved by program area:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Program Area** | **Motion** | **Second** | **Abstain** | **Conflict of Interest** |
| Programmatic | Elizabeth Fazio Hale | Rusty Senac | Mike Lee, Lori Hamilton |  |
| WSQ | Elizabeth Fazio Hale | Nancy Parra | Lori Hamilton, Brian Koch, Ana Partin, Mike Lee | Linda Shead, Brian Koch |
| NRU | Elizabeth Fazio Hale | Ronnie Schultz | Dianna Ramirez, Linda Shead, Lori Hamilton, Ana Partin, Mike Lee | Linda Shead, Dianna Ramirez |
| PPE | Vance Darr | Ronnie Schultz | Elizabeth Fazio-Hale, Lori Hamilton, Ana Partin, Mike Lee | Linda Shead, Elizabeth Fazio Hale |
| M&R | Elizabeth Fazio-Hale | Helen Paige | Lori Hamilton, Ana Partin, Mike Lee |  |
| Alternate Budget | Nancy Parra | Rusty Senac | Lori Hamilton, Ana Partin, Mike Lee, Lisa Rickards | Linda Shead, Elizabeth Fazio Hale |

Questions about the presentation:

Vance Darr asked if outreach had been done within the local community with regards to the Blackhawk Restoration Project. He also had questions regarding the potential increase in the mosquitoes if wetlands were restored.

Cynthia Clevenger and Lindsey Lippert answered that it was only invasives removal and revegetation. While historical imagery shows coastal prairie pothole wetlands, there is no excavation being done to restore these features. Ms. Shead followed up that Kelli Ondracek and HPARD have a lot of community involvement when developing and carrying out their projects.

Mike Lee asked what had happened to the proposal “Characterizing Spatial and Temporal Trends in Point Source Pollutant Loadings of the Lower Galveston Bay Watershed” He did not remember getting to rank this project.

Lori Hamilton responded that because the proposal deals with entities that the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality regulate, there could be a conflict of interest if the proposal was funded.

**Presentation:** *New Tools to Respond to Environmental Justice in the Narragansett Bay Region* – Mike Gerel, Executive Director, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program(NBEP)

Mr. Gerel shared the NBEP’s efforts for creating tools and resources to address environmental justice. This region has a very high-density population. The manufacturing economy shifted to health services, tourism, and education leaving a significant population of indigenous and people of color behind. Tools that NBEP developed include diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) /Environmental Justice (EJ) training for staff, organizational assessment, mapping, project scoring, and CCMP planning. Using the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) EJScreen, NBEP created a story map that overlayed NBEP projects with communities that have issues such as degraded land conditions, lack of green space, water quality issues, flooding, traffic proximity, pollution releases from nearby petrochemical facilities, and urban heat islands. NBEP incorporated this information into their project planning and added EJ to their project scoring. For CCMP planning, NBEP now requires EJ/DEI assessment for all actions. NBEP is set to release a report of their work and hold workshops with community members to learn what the barriers are for these communities and how to address those barriers. Through this process they will address current and future project implementation. Mr. Gerel finished the presentation by sharing some tips:

1. Be patient. Listen and learn first.
2. Know where the EJ communities are.
3. Don’t be “extractive” of information, assure mutually beneficial engagement.
4. Budget for this work. It is not cheap.
5. Use simple compelling visuals and tools to educate and inform early actions.
6. Look to build EJ/DEIJ into your institutional polices so addressing these issues is a must.

**Presentation:** *Target Bacteria Monitoring Project* – Todd Running and Kendall Guidroz, Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)

Mr. Running began the presentation by reminding the GBC that bacteria continues to be the most pervasive pollutant in the lower Galveston Bay watershed. A map was shared that showed bacteria levels in local assessment units (AUs) in relation to the current state standards. Most streams were shown as having bacteria levels well above the contact recreation standard. The Clean Rivers Program and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality continually track these levels, so data is available; however, the tracking of the bacteria sources has not been done. The Bacteria Implementation Group (BIG) is seeking to find and eliminate some of these sources through targeted monitoring. This project is helping locate sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs), illicit discharges, failing infrastructure, or bad connections, and report them to the appropriate jurisdictions so that they may work to fix the problem. Not only has this project been successful in fixing sources of bacteria but has also created an instruction manual on a cost-effective approach to tackling this issue across the watershed.

Ms. Guidroz provided an overview and in-depth update of the project. The project prioritized six of the 10 most polluted waterways in the BIGs Top 10 list. In coordination with Bayou Preservation Association and its Student Conservation Association interns, H-GAC has completed 4.5 of the 6 AUs. A total of 78 samples have been taken, 74% of which were above the state standard. Ms. Guidroz provided details on the sampling data, follow-up investigations, and outreach completed thus far. Supply issues and an unusually wet summer prevented interns from completing sampling of all six AUs. So far, unreported SSOs are suspected as being one of the most prevalent sources of bacteria. Phase III of the project hopes to complete monitoring of the remaining AUs, provide targeted outreach, and work with City of Houston to provide training on the new “Eyes on the Bayou” initiative.

**Council Members Roundtable: News and Announcements**

**Brian Koch (TSSWCB) –** Section 319 RFGA closed. They received 19 proposals that are under review.

**Caimee Schoenbachler (TWDB) –** The TWDB launched theEstuary Science Exchange to connect more with stakeholders. They are hiring for a Field Hydrologist.

**Dianna Ramirez (TGLO)** – Texas Coastal Study was signed September 16, 2021 and is waiting to get sent to Congress. Meetings of the GLO Technical Advisory Committee are being held November 5 and November 18 to inform the next iteration of the Texas Coastal Resiliency Master Plan.

**Linda Shead (BPA)**– The Bayou Preservation Association’s Bayou City Detective Agency event is coming up. Information is available on the [BPA Website](https://bayoupreservation.org/Home)

**Lori Hamilton (TCEQ WQPD)** –

Regarding the TMDL Program: Four TMDLs for indicator bacteria in tributaries of the Neches River below Lake Palestine are scheduled to go to Agenda for public comment on March 9, 2022.

Regarding the NPS Program: The NPS Management Program is scheduled to go to Agenda for adoption on December 15, 2021.

Regarding the Integrated Report of Surface Water Quality: EPA approved the 2020 Integrated Report on May 12, 2020. The 2022 Integrated Report is under development and the public comment period is anticipated in early 2022.

Regarding Water Quality Standards: The 2022 revision of the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards is currently in progress. The public comment period is tentatively anticipated to begin in late winter 2022. The planned dates for the proposal agenda, public comment period, hearing, and adoption will be [posted](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/waterquality/standards/WQ_standards_revisions.html) once they are determined.

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.

**Melissa Porter (TGLO)** – The second sediment workshop is on November 10, 2021.

**Pamela Plotkin (TX Sea Grant)** – Texas Sea Grant exhibit is at Bush Library for their 50th Anniversary, open through July 15, 2022.

**Lisa Rickards (EPA) –** The GBEP CCMP revision was approved September 1. All NEPORT (leveraging and acreage) documents were also approved.

**Todd Running (HGAC) –** TheClear Creek Watershed Protection Plan meeting will take place in November.

**Sue Theiss (TxDOT) -** TXDOT is hiring for 24 openings in entry to mid-level positions looking for Project Managers, NEPA experience, and public development.

**Bryan Eastham (TPWD) –** The last of the Hurricane Harvey money was spent to plant oyster reefs. Commercial oyster season started. Spring gillnet and trout numbers are average, so the freeze from winter storm Uri did not have big impacts. They are hiring for a National Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) specialist.

**Ronnie Schultz (GCHD) –** Hiring for clerical, investigators, and manager positions.

**Lisa Marshall (GBEP) –** Hiring for an Education and Outreach Coordinator.

**Public Comment:** None

**Adjourn:** Meeting was adjourned at 12:19 p.m.

**Upcoming Galveston Bay Council Meeting Dates:** January 19, 2022; April 20, 2022; July 20, 2022; and October 19, 2022. Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the quarter from 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.