MONITORING AND RESEARCH SUBCOMMITTEE

GALVESTON BAY COUNCIL

# Meeting Minutes

# Wednesday, June 8, 2022

# 9:30AM – 11:30AM

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

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

GBEP Representative: Lisa Marshall

## Call to Order, Introductions (Via Microsoft Teams)

Attendees: Amanda Hackney (Black Cat GIS), Ryan Bare (HARC), David Wells (TAMUG), Kirsten Vernin (HARC), Steven Johnston (H-GAC), Kristy Smith (Lee College), Jessica Casillas (H-GAC), Brittani Flowers (BPA), Ryan Seymour (TCEQ), Michael Shields (TAMU), Hui Liu (TAMUG), Rayna Nolen (TAMUG), Anna Armitage (TAMUG), Jean Wright (H-GAC), Jim Dobberstine (Lee College), Haille Leija (GBF),George Guillen (EIH-UHCL), Erin Kinney (HARC), Michael Lee (USGS), Yina Liu (TAMU), Webster Mangham (TRA), Christopher Marshall (TAMUG), Morgan Huette (TIRN), Lisa Marshall (GBEP), Lindsey Lippert (GBEP), Christian Rines (GBEP), Alejandra Trevino (GBEP), Matthew Abernathy (GBEP), and Vanessa Zemke (GBEP).

## Approval of March 30, 2022 meeting minutes – approved

**Project Updates:**

* Characterizing PCBs and Dioxins in the Houston Ship Channel and Galveston Bay Post Hurricane Harvey – UH: Project complete. Review of the final report is underway.
* Effect of Microplastics on the Base of Marine Food Webs – TAMUG: The contract was recently amended to extend the contract end date and make changes to the Scope of Work, primarily removing fish sampling and replacing with expanded analyses of microplastic abundance in filter-feeding fishes due difficulties catching fish of the correct size for the swim trials. The QAPP is also currently being amended to reflect these changes.
* Regional Monitoring Database – HARC: HARC has completed the first phase of the project, which involved developing the portal which will serve as the interface for all of the aggregated datasets that will be available for download. HARC is working to address TCEQ comments for the first phase and is now working on the second phase of the project.
* The Distribution, Fate, and Transport of Emerging Contaminants in Galveston Bay – TAMU: TAMU completed the March cruise and were able to sample both water and sediment. They are now processing the samples for PFAS and will freeze the PPCPs for later analysis.
* The Fate of Emerging Per- and Polyfluoroalkylated Substances (PFAS) in Shellfish and Fish of Galveston Bay – TAMUG: The QAPP was amended to reflect modification to detection limits for all PFAS parameters. TAMUG is performing tissue extractions from biota for the analysis of PFAS.
* Galveston Bay Oyster Microplastics: Baselines and Impacts – TAMUG: TAMUG has completed processing oyster and water microplastic loads for all samples and has started material analysis.
* Effects of Erosion Control Structures on Shoreline Marsh Species Populations – TAMUG: The QAPP is approved and as of May 26, the first sampling season is complete. Sample processing is now in progress.

**Presentation:** *Evidence for Small-scale Living Shoreline Viability in Galveston Bay, Texas – Jim Dobberstine (Lee College), Haille Leija (Galveston Bay Foundation), Cindy Howard (University of Houston Clear Lake):* Shoreline habitat restoration is being used to combat coastal subsidence and erosion in Galveston Bay. This study is seeking to quantify the benefits of small-scale living shoreline projects by using natural reference sites and armored sites near each project site to compare stability and function. Data from this project can be used by those that are considering different restoration management techniques.

**Priorities for FY 24 project development (results of poll)**

Suggested priorities were submitted by M&R subcommittee members via email and the resulting list was ranked in order from most important to least important in an online poll. The top four priorities selected for FY 24 project planning were as follows:

1. Contaminants in Aquatic Organisms, Sediments, and Water (RES-2, RES-5)
2. Effects of Increased Frequency of Flood Tides and Erosion on Species Populations (RES-3)
3. Effects of Tropicalization and Episodic Weather Events on Organisms and Ecosystems in Galveston Bay and the Gulf of Mexico (RES-1, RES-3, RES-8)
4. Impacts of Coastal Spine Structures on Species Movements (RES-3)

**Procedures and timeline for FY 24 project development**

The application will be similar to previous years. Tentative dates for the FY 24 project development process are:

* June 24 – GBEP will send out solicitation for FY 24 project proposals
* July 22 – FY 24 project proposals due
* August 8 – GBEP will distribute all proposals to subcommittee members to review before September meetings
* September 14 – M&R meeting, proposal presentations
* September 20 – proposal rankings due
  + Honor system – vote in best interests of subcommittee
  + Each entity/lab submits one ranking
  + Rankings should only be submitted by entities/labs that have been actively participating in recent meetings of the subcommittee

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

* WSQ subcommittee meeting: June 8, 2022 1:30PM – 3:30PM
* PPE subcommittee meeting: June 15, 2022 10:00AM – 12:00PM
* NRU subcommittee meeting: June 22, 2022 9:30AM – 11:30AM
* B&P subcommittee meeting: July 12, 2022 9:00AM – 11:00AM
* GBC meeting: July 20, 2022 9:30AM – 12:30PM

**Announcements/Path Forward Items*:***

* Ms. Hackney recently attended a meeting in Lafayette, LA with USFWS, USGS, and Clemson University to discuss the creation of a Gulf bird atlas that is an outshoot of a colonial waterbird project. The atlas will cover Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and part of Florida. It will be a site-based atlas that is not expected to be updated or have any regular data submittals. Trends, locations, and habitats of species in this region will be addressed.
* Mr. Johnston announced that H-GAC will be working with GBEP on the *Supporting the Use of Green Infrastructure (GI) in the Lower Galveston Bay Watershed* project. In this project, H-GAC will be investigating GI practices, particularly GI performance of those with existing datasets. H-GAC will not be collecting data but will using existing practices that already have data to create a regional list of recommended best management practices for local decision makers.
* Ms Wright announced that H-GAC’s 2022 Basin Highlights Report has been published and is available on H-GAC’s website as both an interactive StorymMap and a traditional PDF.
* Next M&R meeting:Wednesday, September 14, 2022, 9:00AM – 12:00PM

**Adjourn**