

GALVESTON BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM (GBEP)

Galveston Bay Council (GBC) Meeting Minutes – January 18, 2023

Attendees:

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

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

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

Due to issues with COVID-19, the January 18, 2023, quarterly GBC meeting was held in a hybrid format with an in-person meeting at the Harris-Galveston Subsidence District and virtually on Microsoft Teams from 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Members Present: Glenn Clingenpeel (In-person), Scott Alford, Andrea Catanzaro, Winfred Colbert, Vance Darr, Lori Hamilton, Jonathan Holley, Doug Jacobson, Brian Koch, Kristin Lambrecht, Michael T. Lee, Julie Masters, Garry McMahan, Helen Paige, Pamela Plotkin, Dianna Ramirez, Hanadi Rifai, Todd Running, Lindsey Savage, Caimee Schoenbaechler, Ronnie Schultz, Rusty Senac, Linda Shead, Charrish Stevens, Bob Stokes, Sue Theiss, Matthew Tilimon, Maria Valdez, Kirk Wiles, Tracy Woody

Members Not Present/Delegates: Jeff DallaRosa, Elizabeth Fazio Hale, Albert Gonzales, Audrey Kuklenz, Ana Partin, Taylor Rieck, Shane Simpson, Sharron Stewart, Scott Williams

(*=Member designated a proxy)

Proxies Present (GBC member absent/designated proxy): None

Current Vacancies: League of Women Voters; Underrepresented Communities

Other Attendees: Amy Stelter, George Guillen, Tony Pathyil, Leia Wilson, Trae Campbell, Lori Traweek, David Villareal, Grace Martinez

Additional GBEP Staff Present: Matthew Abernathy, Lindsey Lippert, Christian Rines, Ellen Creecy

Call to Order: Introduction of Members and Delegates

Glenn Clingenpeel brought the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Mr. Clingenpeel reminded all attendees that beginning with the January 18, 2023, meeting, only in-person attendees will be counted towards quorum and thus will be allowed to vote. Online attendees are encouraged to interact and participate in discussions but will not be eligible to vote due to the complexities of the Open Meetings Act.

Mr. Clingenpeel announced that a quorum was present and in the interest of time, there would be an opportunity for introductions and announcements at the end of the meeting.

Action Item: Approval of October 19, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Clingenpeel called for the approval of the meeting minutes from the October 19, 2022, meeting. There were no comments or corrections noted and Brian Koch motioned to approve the minutes and Bob Stokes seconded the motion.

Report of the Program

Ms. Marshall began the program report by informing the GBC that GBEP anticipates being fully staffed by early February. Ms. Marshall then read the biography of GBEP's new Technical and Quality Program Coordinator, Ellen Creecy, to the GBC.

Secondly, Ms. Marshall noted that one half of the GBC membership is on the Commissioner's Agenda for membership approval on February 22, 2023.

Report of the Chair

Mr. Clingenpeel began the report of the chair by notifying the GBC that two members were stepping down from their positions. Nancy Parra stepped down from her position representing the League of Women Voters and it was announced that Grace Martinez would fill her vacancy. Ms. Martinez then introduced herself to the GBC. Cruz Hinojosa has also stepped down from his position representing underrepresented communities. This vacancy will be approved by the GBC at the April meeting. Juan Flores is interested in serving on the GBC, but as this position is not appointed, if there are any other nominations from GBC members, they should be provided to the chair for discussion and a vote at the April 2023 GBC meeting.

Mr. Clingenpeel then introduced Lindsey Savage, the new GBC representative from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and read her biography to the GBC attendees.

Next, Mr. Clingenpeel addressed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding selection process. The Budget and Priorities subcommittee will meet on February 15, 2023, to establish the process for future project selection cycles for BIL funding. The Budget and Priorities subcommittee will then make their recommendation to the GBC for their approval.

Mr. Clingenpeel then introduced the first presenter, Leia Wilson from Port Houston.

Presentation: *Houston Ship Channel New Work Dredging* - Leia Wilson, Houston Ship Channel Operations Manager, Port Houston

Ms. Wilson discussed the 11th project on the Houston Ship Channel, which is the widening of the ship channel and is being funded both by Port Houston and the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Ms. Wilson provided an overview of the work, both planned and active, for each segment of the ship channel along with timelines for each segment of the project.

Mr. Stokes asked if there was more information available on the dredge placement and mitigation sites. Ms. Wilson said she would provide Mr. Stokes with her contact information and provide him with more information. Mr. Stokes also inquired about an upcoming community meeting directed to boaters on February 2 and Ms. Wilson said she would be present and provide the attendees with more information on the reef and placement sites.

Ms. Wilson's presentation and contact information is available on the [GBEP website](#)¹ and a recording of her presentation is available upon request.

Presentation: *Port Houston Sustainability and 2050* - Trae Campbell, Environmental Affairs Director, Port Houston

Trae Campbell provided an update on the Port Houston sustainability plan. This included an overview of previous sustainability efforts as well as plans moving forward. He stated that in early 2021, the port created a sustainability report and began reaching out to the public regarding what more the port can do related to sustainability. This led to the development of their Sustainability Action Plan in 2021. Mr. Campbell then provided insight to Port Houston's plan for sustainability through 2050 and their goal to be carbon neutral by 2050.

Mr. Campbell's presentation is available on the [GBEP website](#)² and a recording of his presentation is available upon request.

Presentation: *Texas Legislative Overview* - Amy Stelter, Governmental Relations Manager, Trinity River Authority.

Ms. Stelter's presentation provided an overview of the Texas Legislature and key projects and bills that relate to the GBC. The details included the key players in the Texas Legislature, the Legislative process, key dates in the process, projects, and bills to watch, and information on advocacy.

Mr. Stokes commented on the lack of state funding available for land conservation in the state of Texas and that the proposed Texas Land and Water Conservation Fund would create a \$100 million fund for land conservation in Texas from existing oil and gas royalties.

Ms. Stelter's presentation is available on the [GBEP website](#)³ and a recording of the presentation is available upon request.

Presentation: *Building Healthy Soils through Planning* - Brian Koch, Regional Watershed Coordinator, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

Mr. Koch provided insight into the importance of healthy soils and the benefits they provide. Mr. Koch began his presentation introducing the GBC to the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and the role that it plays in Texas. He then provided information on how to improve soil health and the correlation between healthy soils and water quality. Lastly, he provided information on Water Quality Management Plans (WQMP) and financial assistance for landowners.

Mr. Clingenpeel asked if there is a place for municipal biosolids in soil augmentation. Mr. Koch responded that because WQMPs are voluntary and that the placement of biosolids requires a permit, they cannot be required but that there are some WQMPs that have associated permits noted in the plans.

¹ <https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Port-Houston-SC-expansion-PPT-230118-Galveston-Bay-Council-Meeting.pdf>

² <https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Port-Houston-GBC-Sustainability-2050-Path.pdf>

³ https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Tx-Leg-Overview_TRA-GBC-1-18-23.pdf

Vance Darr asked about regulation that was missing from these programs and Mr. Koch responded there have been more positive results in soil plans to have them as voluntary plans as the applicants tend to feel less attacked.

Ms. Parra commented on a process of using human urine as fertilizer and asked if that is a benefit to the soil. Mr. Koch responded that if it is applied appropriate rates that he did not think it would be a negative impact. He also noted that the material should be composted prior to use.

Garry McMahon asked if there is financial assistance for fencing if rotational grazing is included in the WQMPs. Mr. Koch replied that there are several options for financial assistance and that the plan and cost share agreement are usually done at the same time.

Mr. Koch's presentation is available on the [GBEP website](#)⁴ and a recording of his presentation is available upon request.

GBC Members Roundtable: News and Announcements

Julie Masters (Small Local Governments): Dickinson's Keep Texas Beautiful affiliate currently has nine adopt-a-street partners and two adopt-a-bayou partners. The annual litter survey has revealed a noticeable reduction in litter between Hurricane Harvey and 2022 and there has been less litter collected during the annual Trash Bash[®] event.

Dianna Ramirez (TXGLO): The Coastal Management Program (CMP) and Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Act (CEPRA) will have upcoming workshops with dates to be announced. Both programs have applications opening later this year. There are also Natural Resource Specialist position openings that may be extended depending on the number of applicants. The Coastal Texas Program was authorized by Congress in December 2022 but is yet to be funded.

Todd Running (H-GAC): The H-GAC Clean Rivers steering committee meeting will be on January 19, 2023.

The Cotton Bayou TMDL stakeholder meeting will be on January 26, 2023.

The Natural Resource Advisory Council meeting is on February 2, 2023.

The East Fork San Jacinto Watershed Protection Plan stakeholder meeting is on February 15, 2023.

The 29th annual Trash Bash[®] event will be held on March 25, 2023. All meeting and event details are available on the [H-GAC website](#)⁵.

Glenn Clingenpeel (TRA): Regional Flood Plans have all be submitted to the state for review.

The Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) is having a conference in Austin later in January.

Lisa Marshall (GBEP): Ms. Marshall introduced Ellen Creecy, who was able to join online and noted that Ms. Creecy will be working on our five-year Program Evaluation for the United States EPA as one of her first projects for GBEP.

⁴ <https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Planning-for-Healthier-Soils-.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.h-gac.com/Home>

Ms. Marshall thanked Ms. Parra for her service to the GBC and provided her with a token of appreciation from GBEP and the GBC.

Bob Stokes (GBF): GBF has a Volunteer Coordinator and a Communications and Marketing Manager position open, and more information is available on their website.

Lindsey Savage (TPWD): TPWD Coastal Fisheries has several positions open throughout the state. The Restoration and Artificial Reef Team is a combination of the oyster, marsh, living shoreline, restoration, and artificial reef programs into a single program and team. There are two artificial reef coordinator positions open and two restoration coordinator positions will open soon.

Lori Hamilton (TCEQ): TCEQ has an interim Executive Director, Erin Chancellor, and Deputy Executive Director, Brent Wade. Kerry Niemann has left TCEQ and will be replaced by Nicole Hall as the new Planning and Implementation section manager, beginning February 1, 2023. TCEQ has multiple vacancies throughout the state.

Nancy Parra (League of Women Voters): Ms. Parra expressed her enjoyment serving on the GBC and that she will miss the GBC members.

Caimee Schoenbaechler (TWDB): TWDB has several vacancies available throughout the state.

Sue Theiss (TXDOT): TXDOT has several openings throughout the state.

Public Comment: None

Other Business: None

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 12:23 p.m.

Upcoming GBC Meeting Dates: April 19, 2023, July 19, 2023, and October 18, 2023. Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the quarter from 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. If there are known conflicts, GBC members are welcome to propose alternate dates to the GBC.