



# 12<sup>th</sup> State of the Bay Symposium January 31, 2024 and February 1, 2024

## Call for Presentations, Sessions, and Posters

### ABOUT THE ESTUARY PROGRAM

The Galveston Bay Estuary Program (GBEP) is a non-regulatory program of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). The Estuary Program is a member of the National Estuary Program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. GBEP is charged with implementing *The Galveston Bay Plan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition: The Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for the Galveston Bay Ecosystem* (GBP, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition). The Galveston Bay Plan was recently revised and approved by the Galveston Bay Council and TCEQ. GBEP, Galveston Bay Council, and its partners work together to implement the GBP 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

### ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM

The symposium provides an opportunity for stakeholders to interact and share success stories associated with the Galveston Bay Plan, report the latest monitoring and research findings, plan for future activities, share new ideas and lessons learned, and illuminate the challenges facing Galveston Bay. The symposium will be held on January 31, 2024 and February 1, 2024. The location of the State of the Bay Symposium will be announced in Summer 2023 at a venue in South Houston or Galveston, Texas.

The symposium focus areas correlate with the four plan priorities of the GBP, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. The GBP, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition is a roadmap for the future and it builds upon the work and input of many stakeholders, factual and scientific information, and two decades of conservation work. More details about the plan priorities can be found in the [full document](#).

This symposium will continue to highlight the accomplishments of GBEP, regional stakeholders, and other local and national entities, and address the value of learning from challenges and opportunities. The symposium will also provide information on new and innovative approaches for research, natural resource management, and education and outreach. The goal of the symposium is to use the information disseminated to help inform future planning and implementation.

The symposium audience is comprised of representatives from citizen and environmental groups; business and industry; commercial and recreational fishing; ecotourism and recreation; K-12 education and academia; and local, state, federal and regional government. GBEP will present related aspects of a topic or focus area (e.g. research/technical aspects, implementation activities and results, impediments to implementation) within single sessions. Therefore, presentations should be associated with a focus area and be developed with a diverse audience in mind.

GBEP welcomes abstracts for oral and poster presentations and panel sessions that highlight success stories or address coastal and estuarine restoration and management, in all habitats, at all scales in all regions of Galveston Bay. See instructions for submitting abstracts below.

NOTE: The content of the presentations need not be limited to Galveston Bay, but applicable to estuarine systems.

## PRESENTATIONS, POSTERS, AND SESSIONS

**Single Presentation** – Please propose one 15-minute presentation within one of the symposia focus areas listed on the following page. The selected presentations will be organized into cohesive 90-minute concurrent sessions and assigned session moderators. If you would like to propose more than one presentation, you must submit each proposal separately.

**Poster** – Posters will be displayed at the symposium, and a dedicated time will allow poster presenters to directly interact with symposium participants. If you would like to submit more than one poster, you must submit each proposal separately.

**Dedicated Session** – You are invited to propose a session that is directly related to one of the symposia focus areas. A session moderator may propose a session for three, 20-minute presenters in a 90-minute session. Dedicated sessions must include multiple viewpoints and organizational representation, and proposals that address various aspects of the chosen topic are encouraged. Submissions must be made by the proposed session moderator and must identify all proposed presenters. Panels, roundtable discussions, and single presentations are welcome. The session moderator may propose themselves as one of the presenters in the session as long as the session has no more than four presenters.

## FOCUS AREAS

### Ensure Safe Human and Aquatic Life Use

The bay is an economic driver for the Houston-Galveston region with frequent and varied use by residents, tourists, and commercial and trade interests. Good water quality is one key to a healthy bay and is often used to gauge the health of Galveston Bay. Maintaining and improving Galveston Bay's water quality is crucial for the bay's living resources. There are many ways to improve water and sediment quality in bays and bayous. The symposium aims to identify steps to be taken to ensure Galveston Bay is kept safe for human and aquatic life use. Along with successes, understanding the challenges provides valuable information. Lessons learned presentations are invited. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Incorporating low impact development (LID) strategies into restoration and management;
- Achieving large-scale watershed water quality goals through expanded coordination of watershed-based plans: approaches, challenges, and implementation;
- Implementing Best Management Practices (BMP) for nonpoint source and point source pollution with sustained stakeholder participation and involvement;
- Employing upstream measures that lead to downstream improvements;
- Making the most of lessons learned with multi-jurisdictional efforts;
- Identifying the relationship between water quality and water quantity;
- Understanding and reducing waterway trash, marine debris and plastics; and
- Promoting public health awareness for bay users.

### Protect and Sustain Living Resources

The ability of the bay to support its abundant bird life, native plant communities, and other living systems depends on high-functioning habitats. Habitats within the Galveston Bay watershed such as coastal prairie and freshwater and estuarine marsh have been impacted over the past decades. A goal of the symposium for the Protect and Sustain Living Resources focus area is to present a variety of restoration and conservation techniques that collectively emphasize an ecosystem approach. This approach ensures the continued existence and distribution of coastal habitats that protect the living resources of the Galveston Bay system. Along with successes, understanding the challenges provides valuable information. Lessons learned presentations are encouraged. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Challenges and opportunities for conservation and restoration activities on public and private lands;

- Research and management techniques addressing:
  - Marshes and tidally influenced wetlands,
  - Shellfish,
  - Submerged aquatic vegetation,
  - Mangroves,
  - Beaches and shorelines, and
  - Fisheries management;
- Lessons learned with multi-jurisdictional efforts;
- Promoting water quality improvements through best management practices for soil health;
- Innovative strategies that enhance existing habitats to increase overall function and productivity;
- Balancing multiple pressures on built and natural resources;
- Restoring habitat function that has been lost or degraded;
- Managing native and invasive species;
- Increasing natural systems' ability to recover from disturbances and tolerate or adapt to change;
- Creating and sustaining conservation partnerships;
- Promoting beneficial use of dredged material;
- Facilitating deployment of green/nature-based infrastructure; and
- Ensuring adequate levels of freshwater inflow.

## **Engage Communities**

The Galveston Bay watershed is home to a diverse and increasing population of people, with economically important activities and an evolving set of stressors. Interactions between human and natural systems makes protecting and promoting the health of Galveston Bay more important than ever. Communicating this importance to residents and visitors is a challenge. Long-term success in environmental awareness and stewardship takes time and is not simple. It is the result of repeated interactions with the public and engagement on a topic. The symposium aims to identify strategies for outreach and education that engage on the community level and lead to long-term, sustainable behavior change and awareness. Along with successes, understanding challenges and gaps provides valuable information. Lessons learned presentations are invited. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Creating outreach and public awareness projects and campaigns using the community-centered approach;
- Collaborating with under-represented and diverse communities;
- Building capacity in the long-term for outreach and education and adapting to change;
- Incorporating social sciences into planning and decision-making;
- Employing best practices and lessons learned in education for all ages;
- Developing and implementing new approaches for tourism and recreation;
- Assessing and improving public awareness of restoration and coastal management;
- Using art in outreach and education initiatives;
- Working with non-traditional partners;
- Defining K-12 Environmental Education;
- Promoting STEM environmental education and college/career readiness; and
- Training educators on the value and resilience of nature.

## **Inform Science-Based Decision Making**

The symposium aims to identify topics that support monitoring and research efforts that inform science-based decision making. Lessons learned presentations are invited. Coordinated, quality-assured monitoring, and accessible research data support informed decisions to preserve Galveston Bay. Along with successes, understanding the challenges provides valuable information. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Emerging technologies available to support implementation and monitoring;
- Biological, physical, and geochemical stressor monitoring and research on aquatic, semi-aquatic, and terrestrial populations;
- Evaluating the effectiveness of BMPs to address nonpoint source and point source pollutants and improve water quality;
- Contact recreation monitoring and research;
- Seafood consumption monitoring and research;
- Characterizing risks to coastal habitats and food webs;
- Coordinated monitoring in the wake of disasters;
- Determining the economic valuation of bay resources;
- Understanding freshwater, estuarine and marine ecosystem biodiversity: species distributions and habitat changes;
- Using science and technology in long-term planning and adaptive management.

## **Finance and Funding**

Federal, state, and partner contributions are critical to the success of preserving Galveston Bay. Funding projects and resources to protect the estuary requires a coordinated approach, which involves forging new partnerships with public and private entities. The symposium aims to identify how projects and programs are financed and for attendees to learn new perspectives and approaches to leverage funding. Along with successes, understanding the challenges provides valuable information. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Implementing innovative strategies to develop non-traditional public-private partnerships;
- Leveraging funding;
- Demonstrating measurable success to funders and partners;
- Engaging new funders in the preservation of Galveston Bay;
- Determining performance measurement(s), values and metrics appropriate for decision-making; and
- Identifying and engaging funding partners for conservation funding;

## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMISSION**

Those wishing to present an oral or poster presentation or organize a dedicated session must submit a proposal and the additional information noted below in electronic format. Proposal abstracts will be provided as part of the symposium agenda. To be accepted for consideration, proposals must conform to the following guidelines:

1. Prepare using Microsoft Word.
2. Maximum length of presentation/session proposal is one page.
3. Use 1-inch margins on top, bottom, and sides; single-spaced; Arial, 11-point font.
4. Center title at top of page and type in bold, all capital letters.
5. Skip one line between title and author(s).

6. Center author(s) name(s) and provide only author name, division/section/etc., organization/firm/university/etc., city, state. If multiple authors, insert one author per line and skip one line between authors.
7. Skip one line between the author(s) and body of proposal.
8. Use full justification for body of proposal.
9. Leave a line between paragraphs but do not indent.
10. Do not include figures, tables, citations or graphs.

In addition, you must include the following information with your proposal for it to be accepted for consideration (this can be placed on a second page of the proposal file, a separate file or in the body of an e-mail):

1. Name, title, division/section/etc., organization/firm/university/etc., mailing address, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address of presenter(s)/panelists. If multiple presenters are listed, indicate the primary presenter that will serve as the point of contact for subsequent communications. Dedicated Sessions must also include a primary contact/moderator.
2. Indicate if an oral or poster presentation or dedicated session is desired and indicate if you would accept a poster presentation should your oral presentation submittal not be selected.
3. Optional: Suggest the topical area(s) under which the presentation might best fit in the symposium; choose from the list of topics noted above.

**All proposals must be received in electronic format at the GBEP office no later than close of business on September 1, 2023 via e-mail.** The proposals will be reviewed by a symposium committee, which will try to accommodate the authors' desire for an oral or poster presentation, or dedicated session. You will be notified if your presentation or session has been accepted for inclusion in the symposium by the October 1, 2023. At that time, further information will be provided about event registration and submittal of biographical information and presentation slides.

Please send proposals to:

Galveston Bay Estuary Program

E-mail: [gbep@tceq.texas.gov](mailto:gbep@tceq.texas.gov)

Please include "Symposium Proposal" in the subject line.

**Important note for presenters/panelists: All attendees and presenters must register and pay the registration fee to participate in the symposium. If you will attend only to give your presentation, you will not be required to pay the registration fee, but you will not be able to attend the rest of the symposium.**

If you have questions, please contact Kari Howard at (281) 486-1245 or [kari.howard@tceq.texas.gov](mailto:kari.howard@tceq.texas.gov) or Lisa Marshall at (281) 486-1244 or [lisa.marshall@tceq.texas.gov](mailto:lisa.marshall@tceq.texas.gov).

Further information about the symposium will be placed on the [GBEP](#) and [TCEQ](#) websites as it becomes available.