

# EQUITY STRATEGY

## THE GALVESTON BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM



A PROGRAM OF TCEQ

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# List of Abbreviations

Bayou Preservation Association	BPA
Bipartisan Infrastructure Law	BIL
Black, Indigenous, and People of Color	BIPOC
Budget and Priorities	B&P
City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department	HPARD
Climate and Environmental Justice Screening Tool	CEJST
Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan	CCMP
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	DEI
Galveston Bay Council	GBC
Galveston Bay Estuary Program	GBEP
Galveston Bay Foundation	GBF
Galveston Bay Plan, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition	GBP, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition
Houston Advanced Research Center	HARC
Houston-Galveston Area Council	H-GAC
Monitoring and Research	M&R
National Estuary Program	NEP
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	NOAA
Natural Resource Uses	NRU
Public Participation and Education	PPE
Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound	SMART
Supplemental Demographic Index	SDI
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension	AgriLife
Texas A&M University at Galveston	TAMUG
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality	TCEQ
Texas Department of State Health Services	DSHS
Texas General Land Office	GLO
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	TPWD
Texas Water Resources Institute	TWRI
Turtle Island Restoration Network	TIRN
United States Environmental Protection Agency	EPA
Under-resourced Communities	URCs
United States Fish and Wildlife Service	USFWS
United States Geological Survey	USGS
University of Houston	UH
University of Houston Clear Lake	UHCL
Water and Sediment Quality	WSQ

# Introduction

The objective of the Galveston Bay Estuary Program (GBEP) Equity Strategy is to expand partnership with, and the equitable distribution of, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funds to disadvantaged communities, in this project, called under-resourced communities, (URCs). As a part of this strategy, GBEP will establish practices for tracking the distribution of funds as well as monitoring and measuring the impacts and benefits to URCs as defined by this project. This strategy will fulfill the goals of Executive Orders 14008 (Justice40) and 13985 (United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Equity Action Plan).

## Governance Overview

### GBEP

GBEP, a stakeholder-based program, provides comprehensive ecosystem management to ensure the preservation of Galveston Bay's multiple resources. GBEP was included in 1989 as part of the National Estuary Program (NEP) of the EPA created to protect and restore estuaries of national significance through Section 320 of the Clean Water Act in 1987. The Galveston Bay watershed extends as far north as the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex beginning with the Trinity River and flows over 20,000 square miles meeting the San Jacinto River into Galveston Bay. While the upper watershed of Galveston Bay is comprised of mostly rural communities, the lower watershed contains one of the most culturally diverse cities in the United States. Based on the 2020 census data, 64% of Houston and the surrounding cities' population is made up of non-white, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). The term BIPOC is used as a term of solidarity, often highlighting the unique experiences of BIPOC, particularly their individual and joint struggles for equality and justice. Given the diversity of Galveston Bay, there is great potential through this equity strategy to engage with communities and individuals that have been largely underserved.

### GBEP's Mission and Goals

The mission of GBEP is to preserve Galveston Bay for generations to come. This vision is fulfilled by providing comprehensive ecosystem management through collaborative partnerships and ensuring preservation of Galveston Bay's multiple uses. The goals of GBEP are to judiciously acquire, manage, and disburse funds to implement specific actions in the Galveston Bay Plan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (GBP, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition); provide coordination and communication between state and federal resource agencies for cross jurisdictional issues; coordinate, monitor, and track implementation activities of the GBP, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition partners; identify and communicate Galveston Bay improvements to agencies, stakeholders, and the public; conduct public outreach and education to increase awareness of Galveston Bay; and maintain stakeholder involvement in the decision-making process through the GBC. GBEP's mission and goals align with the goals of Justice40 and therefore this strategy highlights the natural integration of the two towards greater investment in URCs.

### GBEP Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan

The GBP 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, GBEP's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), is a guiding document for the restoration and preservation of the bay by identifying goals and objectives paired with actions necessary to implement the desired outcomes. GBEP works cooperatively with local governments, businesses, ports, commercial fisheries, recreational anglers, environmental and other nonprofit organizations, and state and federal natural resource agencies. The contributions of these partners shape the success of CCMP initiatives and a sustainable future for Galveston Bay.



The GBP, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition provides detailed information on how to identify issues and take actions to protect and restore the estuary. There are four categories of focus for the GBP, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition that are closely linked with actionable steps to address and achieve success in meeting the priority goals detailed in the GBP, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. The four categories of focus or Plan Priorities were developed in part by stakeholders identifying the most pressing issues facing Galveston Bay. The structure of the Plan Priorities is to draw focus to action-oriented outcomes that, when achieved, will help preserve Galveston Bay's natural resources. Each of the Plan Priorities impact the community as a whole, but the Equity Strategy will allow the under-resourced and underserved communities an opportunity to participate in the collaborative projects to improve Galveston Bay as well as benefit from a healthier estuary. The four Plan Priorities are listed below:

1. **Ensure Safe Human and Aquatic Life Use** involves actions to improve water quality through nonpoint source and point source pollution abatement and promotes public health and awareness.
2. **Protect and Sustain Living Resources** includes actions to support habitat conservation, species conservation, and to sustain freshwater inflows.
3. **Engage Communities** seeks to preserve Galveston Bay through stakeholder and partner outreach and support public education and awareness.
4. **Inform Science-based Decision Making** involves collaborating with research institutions to support applied research and monitoring and to increase access to Galveston Bay ecosystem information.

## Environmental Justice and Equity Work for Fiscal 2024

The GBEP subcommittees (NRU, WSQ, PPE, M&R, and B&P) met to discuss priority areas for fiscal year 2024 project selection. With the goal of expanding investment in URCs, GBEP partnered with a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) consultant who provided guidance and insight about developing priority areas using an equity lens. The integration of a subject matter expert provided guidance and built a strategy that is meaningful and fully integrated into GBEP's operations. Beyond working with a DEI consultant, GBEP has already demonstrated a clear investment in the diverse communities represented in Galveston Bay through their stakeholder engagement and funding of projects in these communities (more details on this work are in the Baseline calculations section of this document).

### *Under-Resourced Communities*

With the goal of expanding to new and strengthening current partnerships with diverse communities, GBEP chose to engage their stakeholders and explore alternative terminology to disadvantaged communities. While the goal of this equity strategy is to increase investment in specific communities, including diverse, low-income, and under-invested communities, the best investment does not just come through funding, but through meaningful partnerships. To this end, GBEP along with a DEI consultant, met with selected stakeholders to receive feedback on benefits they experienced from GBEP funds, how they define their service area and the communities they work in or create impacts, and what effective engagement and communication looks like to them. From these discussions, GBEP garnered feedback around inclusive and community-defined alternatives to disadvantaged communities. For the purpose of this equity strategy, the following term is being used and defined as:

**TERM:** Under-resourced communities (URCs)

**DEFINITION:** URCs are those that have been historically or presently excluded from resources. This includes communities with a high level of culturally underrepresented populations; this also includes linguistically isolated populations and low-income households. It is important to note that this definition acknowledges the structural inequality that has resulted in unequal distribution of resources to these communities.

As the definition identifies, URCs include census tracts with low-resourced schools, low-income households, high pollution burden, and low-water quality. This is in line with the EJScreen Tool's Supplemental Demographic Index (SDI) indicators. The EPA EJScreen Tool's SDI will be used to identify URCs in GBEP's focus area. The SDI incorporates five indicators as averages of the following indexes.

**EJScreen Tool's SDI Indicators:**

- % Low Income
- % Unemployed
- % Limited English Speaking
- % Less than High School Education
- Low Life Expectancy

However, when tested, this tool excluded certain URCs inappropriately as it averages the indicators, rather than taking them individually. For example, San Leon is an area where limited English is spoken and there is a low graduation rate, but the employment rate is high and therefore, it is excluded from the areas identified as under-resourced. To compensate for these exclusions, the Climate and Environmental Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), a tool used to carry out the Justice40 initiative, will also be also used. The CEJST categorizes census tracts as disadvantaged if they meet the threshold for at least one of the categories of burdens or if they are on land with Federally Recognized Tribes. The CEJST classification of disadvantaged communities is as follows.

**CEJST Methodology:**

A community is identified as disadvantaged if it is in a census tract that is (1) at or above the threshold (90<sup>th</sup> percentile) for one or more environmental, climate, or the other categories of burden (Housing, Health, Transportation, and Workforce development) and (2) at or above the threshold (65<sup>th</sup> percentile) for an associated socioeconomic burden (low income or high school education).

Categories of Burden	Communities are <u>identified as disadvantaged</u> if they are in census tracts that:
Climate change	ARE at or above the 90th percentile for expected agriculture loss rate OR expected building loss rate OR expected population loss rate OR projected flood risk OR projected wildfire risk  AND are at or above the <u>65th percentile</u> for low income

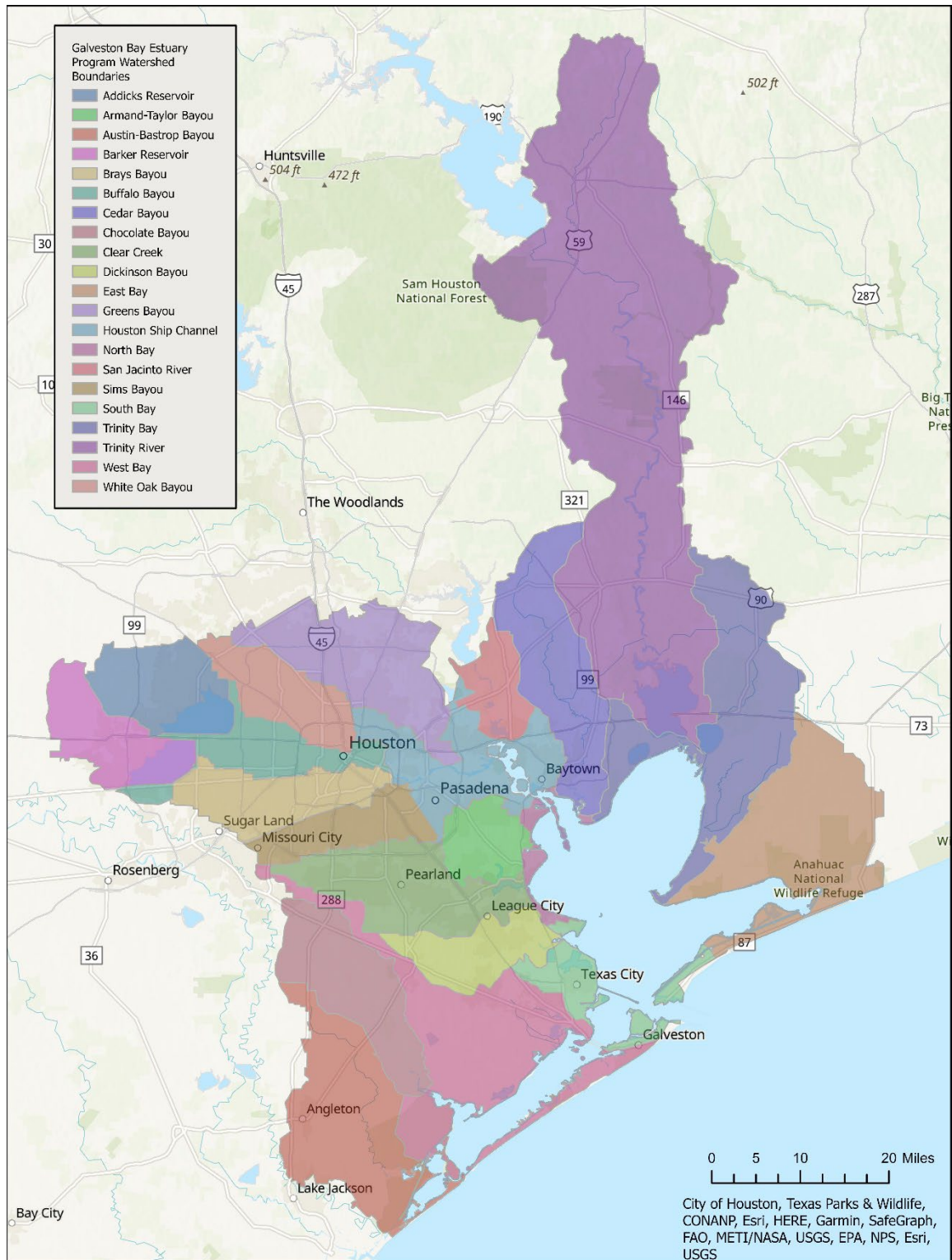
<b>Energy</b>	<p><b>ARE</b> at or above the 90th percentile for energy cost OR PM2.5 in the air</p> <p><b>AND</b> are at or above the <u>65th percentile</u> for low income</p>
<b>Health</b>	<p><b>ARE</b> at or above the 90th percentile for asthma OR diabetes OR heart disease OR low life expectancy</p> <p><b>AND</b> are at or above the <u>65th percentile</u> for low income</p>
<b>Housing</b>	<p>Experienced historic underinvestment OR are at or above the 90th percentile for housing cost OR lack of green space OR lack of indoor plumbing OR lead paint</p> <p><b>AND</b> are at or above the <u>65th percentile</u> for low income</p>
<b>Legacy Pollution</b>	<p>Have at least one abandoned mine land OR Formerly Used Defense Sites OR are at or above the 90th percentile for proximity to hazardous waste facilities OR proximity to Superfund sites (National Priorities List) OR proximity to Risk Management Plan facilities</p> <p><b>AND</b> are at or above the <u>65th percentile</u> for low income</p>
<b>Transportation</b>	<p><b>ARE</b> at or above the 90th percentile for diesel particulate matter exposure OR transportation barriers OR traffic proximity and volume</p> <p><b>AND</b> are at or above the <u>65th percentile</u> for low income</p>
<b>Water and wastewater</b>	<p><b>ARE</b> at or above the 90th percentile for underground storage tanks and releases OR wastewater discharge</p> <p><b>AND</b> are at or above the <u>65th percentile</u> for low income</p>
<b>Workforce Development</b>	<p><b>ARE</b> at or above the 90th percentile for linguistic isolation OR low median income OR poverty OR unemployment</p> <p><b>AND</b> more than <u>10% of people ages 25 or older have a high school education</u> (i.e., graduated with a high school diploma)</p>

In combination, the two tools appropriately capture the URCs in the Galveston Bay watershed and provide a clear visual for opportunities where GBEP can expand investment in these communities. Specifically, these tools will be used for two purposes:

1. To identify under-resourced communities (URCs) in the Galveston Bay service area using a combination of the two tool's indicators.
2. To provide a visual means of tracking expansion of GBEP's partnerships with URCs and track that communities experiencing the highest burdens (based on higher percentages of factors included in EJScreen tool or multiple categories of burden defined by the CEJST) are being prioritized.

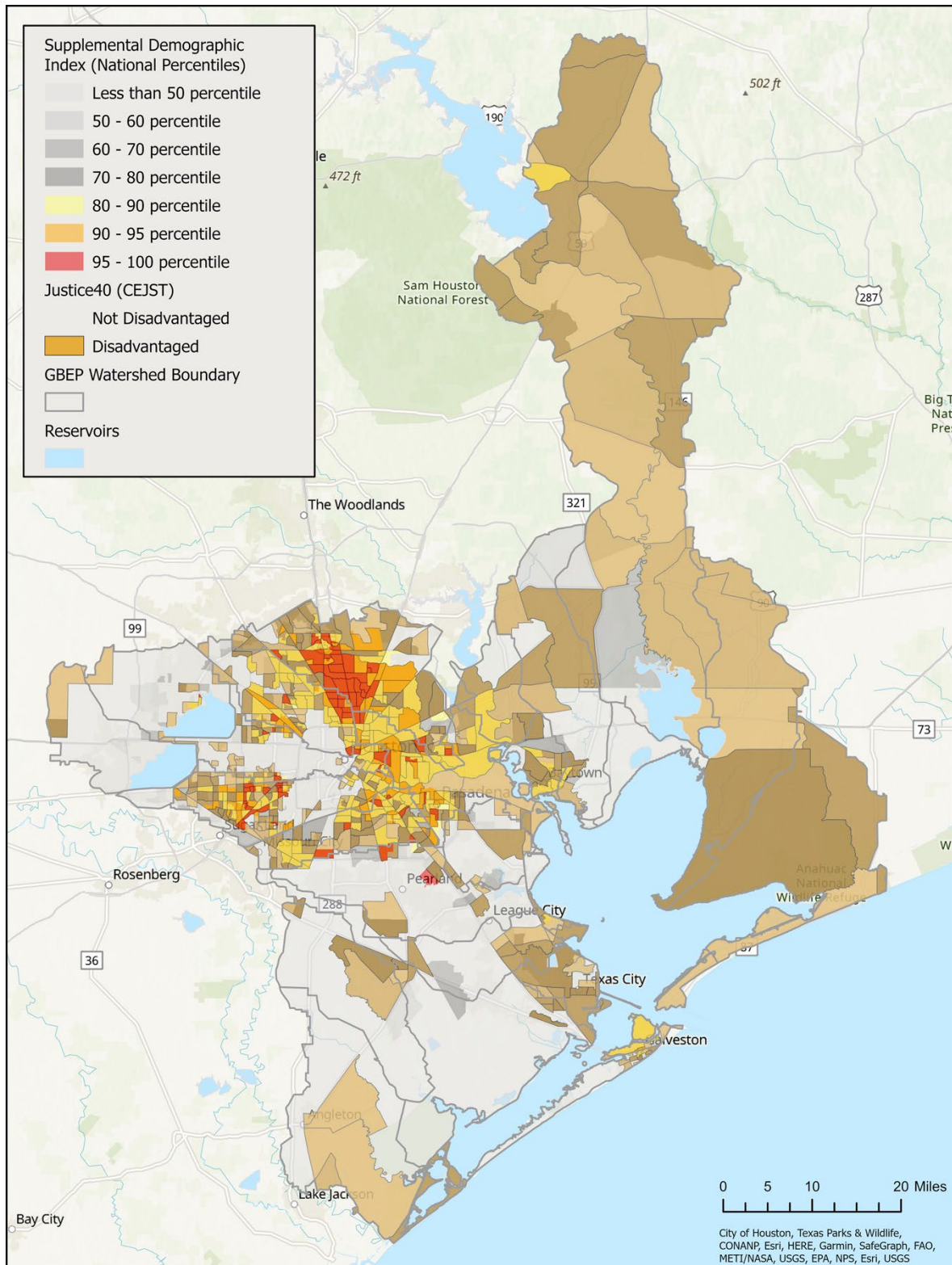
While the EJScreen and CEJST tools are being leveraged for the above purposes, they may not always appropriately capture every community burdened by environmental injustices. These tools cannot replace the role and value of meaningful community engagement and partnership to learn from the lived and learned experience of people living in this region. The stakeholder engagement plan in this strategy will also be crucial in identifying URCs, tracking benefits, and determining priorities.

**Figure 1. Map of Lower Galveston Bay Watershed**





**Figure 2. Map of Disadvantaged Communities in Galveston Bay**



# Baseline Analysis

## Investment in Diverse Communities in GBEP Service Area

The EPA Headquarters has calculated baselines for all NEPs for the sake of consistency and establishing a universal baseline for investment in disadvantaged communities prior to receipt of BIL funds. See Tables 1 and 2 below for these baseline values for GBEP.

**Table 1. Habitat Projects in disadvantaged communities between 2017 and 2021**

Year	# of Habitat Projects in disadvantaged communities	Total Habitat Projects	% of Habitat Projects in disadvantaged communities
2017	0	4	0.00%
2018	0	3	0.00%
2019	1	3	33.33%
2020	0	8	0.00%
2021	1	9	11.11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>7.41%</b>

**Table 2. Total Funds Invested in disadvantaged communities between 2017 and 2021.**

Year	Section 320 Funds Invested in disadvantaged communities (\$)	Total Section 320 Funds (\$)	% of Section 320 Funds Invested in disadvantaged communities through Habitat Projects	Habitat Project Costs Invested in disadvantaged communities (\$)	Total Habitat Project Costs (\$)	% of Habitat Project Costs Invested in disadvantage communities
2017	0	25,000	0.00%	0	9,151,000	0.00%
2018	0	22,925	0.00%	0	2,927,000	0.00%
2019	0	0	-	1,880,000	2,075,471	90.58%
2020	0	6,600	0.00%	0	3,395,403	0.00%
2021	8,475	38,059	22.27%	460,000	5,950,833	7.73%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,475</b>	<b>92,584</b>	<b>9.15%</b>	<b>2,340,000</b>	<b>23,499,707</b>	<b>9.96%</b>

Beyond the calculations conducted by EPA headquarters, Tables 1 and 2, there is additional information that may provide a more robust image of GBEP's baseline investments in URCs. Between the years 2020 and 2023, GBEP funded six projects (24% of total projects) with geographic areas or service parameters that included URCs. There are an additional three projects that will begin in fiscal 2024 that include URCs. That is a total of \$438,012 invested in URCs by GBEP since 2020 (see Table 3). Additionally, half of the projects funded in 2022 benefitted URCs. As Table 3 highlights, there has been a significant increase in the number of projects that focus on URCs and the number of funds allocated to them. It is also worth noting that these projects are multi-year projects, all are at least three years, and several are four years. Even with this progress, the equity strategy intends to increase investments in URCs.

**Table 3. Total Projects and Funds Invested in URCs between 2020 and 2022.**

Year (Project Start Year)	# Projects funded that include URCs	% of total projects funded (per project start year)	Funds dedicated to URCs (\$)	% of total funds distributed
2020	1	14.8%	\$89,323	10%
2021	2	25%	\$185,549	28%
2022	3	50%	\$163,140	47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>\$438,012</b>	<b>16%</b>

## Numeric Targets for GBEP Service Area

Per the guidance from Justice40, and the national target of 40% of funds directly impacting URCs, GBEP is also setting a numeric target of investing at least 40% of EPA BIL funds to projects that directly and indirectly benefit URCs. Given the recent increase in projects that include URCs and the percentage of funds distributed to these communities (Table 3), it is ambitious, but also realistic, for GBEP to set a numeric target in line with the national target of at least 40%. Previously, GBEP has experienced challenges in expanding investment in these communities. These barriers have included:

- **Distrust:** One potential challenge that was named by a partner during our interviews is building trust and battling distrust that may exist between some URCs and organizations. Several organizations, in their endeavor to address the needs of the under-resourced communities, have prioritized objectives without sufficiently incorporating the perspectives and input of those very communities into the decision-making process. GBEP's goal is to engage, connect and partner with communities with their priorities and goals in mind. This speaks to the need for a strategy to consider trust and relationship building. This also speaks to the importance of leveraging current partnerships to establish new community connections.
- **Capacity:** Although the equity strategy intends to be integrated into the operations of GBEP, it will require additional time and resources. For example, during the partner interviews, several partners spoke of the need for more in-person events and meetings. In-person events require additional time commitments given travel, physical space to be made available and other resources. Although prior to COVID, this was standard, virtual meetings and events have become the new standard. A hybrid approach has been the most accessible option to engage current and new partners across the region, however more efforts are being made to collaborate with partners outside of regular subcommittee meetings. This can include using spaces provided by partner organizations for other meetings and engagement opportunities.

The key activities incorporated in this strategy are intended to address these challenges and provide a foundation for the continued investment of funds in URCs. The Galveston Bay watershed is a diverse watershed and GBEP will seek to increase investments in URCs to the greatest extent possible throughout and beyond receipt of BIL funds. The approach taken in this equity strategy will also track the non-monetary benefits, as defined by the community, to provide a more robust estimation of overall investment in URCs.

## ***Key Activities***

The GBP, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition identifies four priority areas of focus with specified action plans to make watershed improvements concentrating on water quality, habitat and wildlife, research monitoring, and public awareness. While the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of GBEP's CCMP, revised in 2018, addresses environmental concerns for millions of people who live, work, and play in the Galveston Bay watershed, it does not acknowledge environmental justice as an overarching need for all priorities within the plan. The following actions identified have equity and environmental justice considerations based on needs, impacts, and available resources within those communities that stand to benefit from a healthy watershed. Some of the actions within the GBP, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition have been left intentionally flexible to account for changes in technological resources, weather patterns and natural disasters such as hurricanes and winter storms, population growth in the Houston and coastal areas, and other unexpected opportunities and challenges. These actions include:

### **Plan Priority 1: Ensuring Safe Human and Aquatic Life Use**

#### **Action Plan 1: Improve water quality through nonpoint source pollution abatement**

NPS-1: Support watershed-based plan development and implementation

NPS-2: Support nonpoint source education and outreach campaigns

NPS-3: Implement NPS best management practices

NPS-4: Host nonpoint source workshops

#### **Action Plan 2: Improve water quality through point source pollution abatement**

PS-1: Support stormwater education programs

PS-2: Achieve sanitary sewer system capacity and ensure integrity

PS-3: Increase wastewater treatment facility compliance

#### **Action Plan 3: Promote public health and awareness**

PHA-1: Improve Seafood Advisory Awareness

PHA-2: Improve regional contact recreation risk awareness

PHA-3: Improve contact recreation safety through watershed-based plans

PHA-4: Improve shellfish consumption safety through watershed-based plans

### **Plan Priority 2: Protect and Sustain Living Resources**

#### **Action Plan 1: Support habitat conservation**

HC-1: Land acquisition

HC-2: Habitat restoration

HC-3: Habitat enhancement

#### **Action Plan 2: Support species conservation**

SC-1: Native species management

SC-2: Invasive species control

#### **Action Plan 3: Sustain freshwater inflows**

FWI-1: Regional planning for freshwater inflows

FWI-2: Freshwater inflows research and management

FWI-3: Water conservation and education



## Plan Priority 3: Engaging Communities

Action Plan 1: Preserve Galveston Bay through stakeholder and partner outreach

SPO-1: Stewardship programs and volunteer opportunities

SPO-2: Workshops and events

SPO-3: Support regional initiatives

SPO-4: Local government outreach

Action Plan 2: Support public education and awareness initiatives

PEA-1: Key issue engagement

PEA-2: Adult education

PEA-3: K-12 education efforts

## Plan Priority 4: Informing Science-Based Decision Making

Action Plan 1: Collaborate with research institutions to support focus area applied research and monitoring

RES-1: Conduct biological stressor monitoring and research

RES-2: Conduct geochemical stressor monitoring and research

RES-3: Conduct physical stressor monitoring and research

RES-4: Conduct monitoring and research to address limits to contact recreation

RES-5: Conduct monitoring and research to address limits to seafood consumption

RES-6: Evaluate Best Management Practices project

RES-7: Conduct research on ecosystem services and economic valuation of bay resources

RES-8: Complete coastal resiliency and acclimation studies

Action Plan 2: Increase access to Galveston Bay ecosystem information

ACS-1: Tracking ecosystem health indicators

ACS-2: Access to monitoring and research data

ACS-3: Track GBP implementation

Based on the guidance provided from the EPA's Justice40 Initiative and the CEJEST tools, the implementation of the GBP, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition priority and action plans will address resilience, pollution, health, and water quality concerns. Actions related to nonpoint source pollution, freshwater inflows, and wastewater can contribute to improvements of the watershed overall while efforts aimed at habitat conservation, increasing green infrastructure, and enhanced access to nature can support communities facing economic burdens. Additionally, research, monitoring, and increased environmental education will inform stakeholders and decision makers about current environmental conditions as well as address the lack of environmental literacy through specific actions.

To implement the equity strategy, GBEP will issue its annual calls for proposals to seek out CCMP projects within the GBEP area. In the upcoming years, as BIL funding is available, GBEP will specifically reach out to URCs, through partnerships and broad calls for projects. GBEP will track the selection of projects within URCs. Keeping the numeric target of 40% in mind, recruitment and selection of projects will be done with consideration of direct benefits to URCs. Below is an outline of examples for key activities necessary to reach the target of 40%.

### 1. Expanding Expert Partnerships

Developing new partnerships and leveraging existing ones with experts in equity issues and experts in the issues facing communities in the Galveston Bay area is one way to assist in reaching the target of investing 40% of BIL funds in diverse communities.

- The GBC and subcommittee members, as well as GBEP staff, will continue to build their capacity to operate using an equitable approach.
- Working with current project partners to explore new potential community partners and learn more about existing work that aligns with GBEP's priority areas.
- Identifying community and environmental organizations with a focus on BIPOC led communities and organizations that serve URCs.

## **2. Engaging Equitable Selection Practices**

Developing a selection process that is equitable and standardized will help to increase project selection that aligns with GBEP's priority areas. This process should also consider barriers facing potential partners/organizations who may want to receive funding but are smaller organizations or are otherwise excluded from funding sources due to structural inequalities. This may require auditing the selection process to determine what projects are being rejected versus approved with an equity lens. One change that GBEP has already applied is allowing nonprofit organizations to receive direct funding. This will increase the potential for diverse partners investment in URCs. Ensuring alignment with CCMP priority areas is one key criterion in addition to the specific priorities established by the GBEP subcommittees.

Along with the priority areas that are in line with GBEP's CCMP goals, the B&P subcommittee also discussed considerations for selecting projects that prioritize EPA's areas of interest: reduction in nutrient pollution, water reuse and conservation, marine litter reduction, and green infrastructure and resiliency. In addition, consideration will be given to projects that align with and further Justice40 goals and incorporate equity and EJ.

## **3. Establishing Ongoing Stakeholder Engagement**

During previous engagement with project partners, partners mentioned that one of the greatest non-monetary benefits of receiving funding from GBEP was the expansion of their organizational networks. These networks have led to increased information sharing and access to opportunities. It will be important for GBEP to establish a method for ongoing communication, information sharing, and engagement with project leaders based on the feedback from partners. This will help with addressing issues that arise in real-time and with the retention of partners. This approach will facilitate engagement between project leaders across organizations, which can create a supportive network. Beyond communication, GBEP will continue to leverage and improve upon the Back the Bay website to continue information sharing and engagement with communities in, around, and beyond the Galveston Bay.

## **4. Evaluating the Approach**

Evaluation is critical not only to measuring success, but also to course correct as needed and expose equity issues early on. There will be two forms of evaluations throughout the BIL funding period:

- Along with regular communication with stakeholders, there will be annual engagements in the form of semi-structured interviews or focus groups with project leaders to assess benefits received and impacts due to BIL funding. These sessions will be an open space for project leaders to share any barriers they have faced or any relevant information to improve their partnership with GBEP.

Additionally, there will be an annual review of the priority areas in collaboration with the GBEP subcommittees to ensure alignment and progression toward BIL targets.

## Tracking Benefits

GBEP will adhere to the national guidance for tracking benefits to URCs identified in this project. In addition, GBEP will work collaboratively with communities to establish community-defined benefits from receiving BIL funding. These community-defined benefits will be project-specific and defined by the project leadership and participants. Each selected project will be given a timeframe to identify and disclose their goals. Once identified, these benefits will be tracked. The EPA benefits methodology and community-defined SMART<sup>1</sup> goals and benefits will be tracked using the below table.

**Table 4. Table for Tracking Benefits of each Project including Community-defined Benefits.**

<b>Project Name</b>	
<b>Primary Project Benefit (Select One)</b>	
<b>Resilience:</b> Expanded the adaptive capacity of communities to be resilient to climate change	
<b>Environment:</b> Improved habitat, addressed water quality challenges or prevents or reduces non-point source pollution	
<b>Accessibility:</b> Facilitates public access to the benefits of the estuary, including all types of recreation	
<b>Education and Engagement:</b> Expands education and/or deepens community engagement	
<b>CCMP Actions Implemented (# and Type)</b>	
<b>Distribution of NEP BIL Project Funds</b>	
URC (# and %)	
Tribes (# and %)	
<b>Non-Monetary Benefits</b>	
# of Actions taken by project to prevent, reduce, or promote resilience to flooding	
# of green stormwater infrastructure measures implemented by this project	
# of recreational opportunities created, expanded, or improved by this project	
# of new partnerships established	

<sup>1</sup> SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound. To learn more visit [SMART Goals](#)

Community-Defined SMART Goals (for use of BIL Funds)	
Community-Defined Benefits (Monetary and Non-Monetary)	

## Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Stakeholder engagement is a central aspect of this equity strategy, as seeking the input of current GBEP partners informed the approach detailed in this strategy. An equitable approach to stakeholder engagement means diversifying approaches to communicating and engaging with partners to consider the needs, capacity, and availability of all partners. This equity strategy thinks of engagement as diverse, ongoing, intentional, and informed by the input of the specific partners with which GBEP engages. This is especially crucial when thinking about EJ principles, as the most impacted communities are often the least meaningfully engaged in decision-making. Leveraging current partnerships will continue to inform the expansion of meaningful working relationships with URCs and ultimately, expanding investment in these communities. Goals around stakeholder engagement include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Leverage diverse means of communication and engagement, while remaining responsive to the preferred approaches communicated by partners.
2. Engage with community and stakeholders throughout all key project activities including project plan development, implementation, and evaluation.
3. Conduct interviews and focus groups to create intentional spaces for evaluating the equity strategy approach.
4. Create an environment where all partners feel valued and are able to provide open feedback to GBEP.

Through the GBC, GBEP practices continuous engagement with diverse partners and communities as detailed in the Appendix. Beyond the subcommittees, GBEP also engages a broader group of stakeholders through their newsletter and participation in other organizations. Currently, there are GBEP staff members that participate in the subcommittees of several other organizations including attending their quarterly meetings.

## Conclusion

The strength of this equity strategy is that it engages diverse communities throughout the entirety of this process. In developing this equity strategy, the DEI consultant engaged in subcommittee



meetings as well as smaller group discussions with partners. This level of engagement will continue throughout strategy implementation to ensure that the priorities of communities throughout the Galveston Bay area are considered and thoughtfully incorporated. Additionally, the strategy is strong because it incorporates GBEP's priority areas into the key activities of the plan, which means they will become institutionalized in GBEP's normal operations. GBEP is committed to maintaining a clear strategy that increases and sustains the investment in URCs.

# Appendix

## Breakdown of Stakeholder Engagement via GBEP subcommittees

Stakeholder	Category	Engagement Type	Frequency of Engagement
<p><b>The Galveston Bay Council (GBC)</b> is a coordinating body, appointed by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to implement the GBP, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. The GBC provides an ongoing forum for technical and stakeholder involvement in the implementation of the GBEP, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition along with other actions. The GBC is also committed to integrating equity into all of its work, as reflected in the DEI Statement, "the long-term preservation of the Galveston Bay Estuary depends on the equitable, just and inclusive engagement of all communities throughout the watershed." For the full statement visit <a href="#">the GBEP webpage</a><sup>2</sup>.</p> <p>The Following are members of the GBC:</p>			
Air Alliance Houston	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Audubon Texas	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Chambers County	Regional/local government	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Citizens at Large	Community organization	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
City of Houston	Regional/local government	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Coastal Conservation Association Texas	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
EPA	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
East Harris County Manufacturers' Association	County government	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF)	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Gulf Coast Authority	Regional/local government	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)	Regional/local government	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year

<sup>2</sup> <https://gbep.texas.gov/the-galveston-bay-council/>

Individual Citizen representing Low Income Communities	Community organization	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Keep Dickinson Beautiful	Regional/local government	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Kuraray	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
League of Women Voters	Community organization	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Marina Bay Harbor	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
NRG Energy, Inc.	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
NOAA	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Oysterman/Jeri's Seafood: Commercial Fishermen	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Port Houston	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
San Jacinto River Authority	Regional/local government	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Shead Conservation Solutions	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
TCEQ	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Department of Agriculture	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Department of Transportation	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year

Texas General Land Office (GLO)	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Railroad Commission	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Sea Grant	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Water Development Board	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Trinity River Authority	Regional/local government	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
United States Army Corps of Engineers	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
United States Coast Guard	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Science	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
United States Geological Survey (USGS)	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
University of Houston (UH)	University	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
<b>PPE Subcommittee:</b> The PPE subcommittee advises the GBC and GBEP staff regarding education and outreach efforts. The following are the PPE members:			
American Bird Conservancy	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Artist Boat	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year



Audubon Texas	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Bayou Land Conservancy	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Bayou Preservation Association (BPA)	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Birding for Fun	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Black Cat GIS and Biological Services	Business	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
City of Baytown	Regional/local government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD)	Regional/local government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
City of Houston Public Works Department	Regional/local government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
Coastal Prairie Conservancy	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
College of the Mainland	Community college	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
EPA	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
GBF	Environmental non-profit	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Galveston Island Nature Tourism	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Galveston Island Park Board of Trustees	Regional/local government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
Harris County Soil and Water Conservation District	Regional/local government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
Houston Advanced Research Center (HARC)	Environmental non-profit	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year

Houston Arboretum	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Houston Botanic Garden	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Houston Zoo	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
H-GAC	Regional/local government	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
KPRC	Business	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
League of Women Voters	Community organization	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
National Marine Sanctuaries	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
North American Association for Environmental Education	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Promoters of Education, Awareness, and Community Engagement	Community non-profit	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Student Conservation Association	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Texas Children in Nature Network	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
TCEQ	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
TPWD	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Sea Grant	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension (Agrilife)	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
The Nature Conservancy	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Texas Master Naturalist-Galveston Bay Area	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year

Chapter			
Turtle Island Restoration Network (TIRN)	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
University of Houston Clear Lake (UHCL)	Local university	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Vision Galveston	Community organization	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
<b>NRU Subcommittee:</b> The NRU subcommittee advises the GBC and GBEP staff on matters pertaining to habitat/living resource conservation and balanced human uses. The following are the NRU members:			
Artist Boat	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
BPA	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Citizens at Large	Community organization	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
HPARD	Regional/local government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
City of La Marque	Regional/local government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
EPA	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
GBF	Environmental non-profit	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Gulf Coast Waste Disposal Authority	Regional/local government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
HARC	Environmental non-profit	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Houston Parks Board	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Houston Wilderness	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
H-GAC	Regional/local government	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
League of Women	Community organization	Info distribution,	Quarterly per

Voters		consultation	year
Marina Bay Harbor	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
National Marine Sanctuaries	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
National Wildlife Federation	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Prairie View A&M University	State university	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
San Jacinto River Authority	Regional/local government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
Shead Conservation Solutions	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas A&M University at Galveston (TAMUG)	State university	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
AgriLife	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
TCEQ	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Department of Agriculture	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
DSHS	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Forest Service	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
GLO	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Master Naturalist	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
TPWD	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI)	State university	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year



TIRN	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
USGS	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
UHCL	Local university	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
<b>WSQ Subcommittee:</b> The WSQ subcommittee advises the GBC and GBEP staff on matters pertaining to water and sediment quality. The following are the WSQ members:			
BPA	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Citizens at Large	Community organization	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
HPARD	Regional/local government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
EPA	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
GBF	Environmental non-profit	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Gulf Coast Waste Disposal Authority	Regional/local government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
HARC	Environmental non-profit	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Houston Parks Board	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Houston Wilderness	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
H-GAC	Regional/local government	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
League of Women Voters	Community organization	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Marina Bay Harbor	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
National Marine Sanctuaries	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
National Wildlife Federation	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year

Prairie View A&M University	State university	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
San Jacinto River Authority	Regional/local government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
Shead Conservation Solutions	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
TAMUG	State university	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
TCEQ	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Department of Agriculture	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
DSHS	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Forest Service	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
GLO	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Master Naturalist	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
TWRI	State university	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
AgriLife	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
TIRN	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
USGS	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
UHCL	Local university	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
<b>M&amp;R Subcommittee:</b> The M&R subcommittee is to advise the GBC and GBEP staff on matters pertaining to monitoring and research. The following are the M&R members:			
Audubon Texas	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year

BPA	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Black Cat GIS and Biological Services	Business	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Citizens at Large	Community organization	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
EPA	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
GBF	Environmental non-profit	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
HARC	Environmental non-profit	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
HPARD	Regional/local government	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
H-GAC	Regional/local government	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
League of Women Voters	Community organization	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Lee College	Local university	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Marina Bay Harbor	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Mission-Aransas National Reserve	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
National Wildlife Federation	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
San Jacinto River Authority	City government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
Sierra Club	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas A&M University	State university	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
AgriLife	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
TCEQ	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
DSHS	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year

Texas Water Development Board	Regional/local government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
Trinity River Authority	Regional/local government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
TIRN	Environmental non-profit	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
United States Coast Guard	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
USFWS	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
USGS	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
UH	Local university	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
UHCL	Local university	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
<b>B&amp;P Subcommittee:</b> The B&P makes final decisions around priority areas that other subcommittees recommend. Membership is composed of the Chairs of the five standing GBC subcommittees, the former GBC Chairs, the present GBC Chair and Vice Chair, the EPA and TCEQ representatives on the GBC. The B&P subcommittee meets quarterly and on an as needed basis.			
Citizens at Large	Community organization	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
City of Houston	Regional/local government	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
EPA	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Exxon Mobile Biomedical Sciences, Inc.	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
GBF	Environmental non-profit	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Greater Houston Partnership	Regional/local government	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Gulf Coast Authority	Regional/local government	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
HARC	Environmental non-profit	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year

H-GAC	Regional/local government	Consultation, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year
Individual Citizen- Lori Traweek	Community organization	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
League of Women Voters	Community organization	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Lyondell Basell	Business	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
TCEQ	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
GLO	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board	State agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
Texas Water Development Board	Regional/local government	Public meetings, consultation, project design	Quarterly per year
Trinity River Water Authority	Regional/local government	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Science	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
USGS	Federal agency	Info distribution, consultation	Quarterly per year
UHCL	Local university	Info distribution, project design/implementation	Quarterly per year