



# WATER AND SEDIMENT QUALITY SUBCOMMITTEE GALVESTON BAY COUNCIL



## Meeting Minutes Wednesday, December 13, 2023 1:30PM – 3:30PM

Subcommittee Chair: Brian Koch, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB)

Subcommittee Vice Chair: Ryan Bare, Houston Advanced Research Center (HARC)

GBEP Representative: Christian N. Rines

### Call to Order

Attendees: Brian Koch (TSSWCB), Christian Rines (GBEP), Grant Moss (BPA), Christie Taylor (TX A&M AgriLife), Celina Gauthier (TX A&M AgriLife), Michael LaMontagne (UHCL), Steven Johnston (H-GAC), Rachel Windham (H-GAC), Katie Wilson (GCHD), Huy Vu (EPA), Dini Adyasari (TAMUG), Natasha Zarnstorff (GBF), David Villareal (TDA), Zulimar Lucena (USGS), Lisa Marshall (GBEP), Kari Howard (GBEP), Stacey Carr (TCEQ), Elizabeth Kompanik (TCEQ), Jennifer Irving (HARC), Erin Kinney (HARC), Stephanie Glenn (HARC), Ryan Bare (HARC), Ellen Creecy (GBEP), Lindsey Lippert (GBEP), Matthew Abernathy (GBEP), and Kendall Guidroz (H-GAC).

***Approval of the September 13, 2023 minutes – Ms. Rines opened the meeting with approval of the minutes. Ms. Glenn motioned to approve the minutes and Mr. Koch seconded. The minutes were approved with no changes.***

### New Business

**Presentation:** CCMP Update and Discussion – Stephanie Glenn, Ph.D., Houston Advanced Research Center

**Member Spotlight:** TAMUG’s Coastal Hydrology Lab – Dr. Dini Adyasari, Assistant Professor, Texas A&M University at Galveston

*\*Presentation, notes, and Q&A available upon request.*

## **Subcommittee Business:**

**Subcommittee Project Recommendation Process:** Ms. Rines introduced a conversation around WSQ's project nomination process (i.e., a consensus-based versus ranking system). A comment was received following the September subcommittee meeting that members tend to want to fund all projects versus only those that best implement the Galveston Bay Plan, 2nd Edition (GBP). It was suggested that the process for nominating projects be revisited. Ms. Rines explained the project nomination process as it currently stands and also ran through other subcommittee project selection processes.

Points made during the discussion included:

- The subcommittee typically has no problem addressing the developed priorities; however, vetting is a concern with the current process. Technical questions could be asked of each proposal ahead of time, allowing a space for those that want to provide comments outside of the meeting. It was also asked if it would be easier to present the questions before the meeting versus having them answered during the meeting.
- It was suggested that questions could be provided to the presenter ahead of time, to be answered after the presentation. Presentations typically provide context that may not come across in the proposals.
- Having a few days to really think about the projects would be beneficial, possibly something similar to what M&R does with their ranking system. It was also recommended to steer away from ranking, as it can be extremely biased to what organizations are voting, and they typically vote for their own organization's projects, and not what is necessarily best for GBEP or the subcommittee.
- Questions or comments could be submitted beforehand and those not addressed during presentations could be read anonymously by the coordinator.
- Proposals could be scored across the same criteria to have a basis from which to start the discussion (e.g., good, great, etc.). What are the project strengths, weaknesses, and how does it align with GBEP's mission? This would be done before the meeting.
- With members already so busy, is there a way to anonymously grab feedback during the meeting?
- It was also added that there are ways to get around entities voting for their own projects (e.g., rank choice).
- A lot of this information is provided in the proposal forms themselves, so is there something that the subcommittee coordinator could do beforehand to essentially score proposals. It was added that this would be subjective, but so is the subcommittee consensus-based discussion.
- It was asked if presentations could be sent out beforehand. The response was that this is too much to ask of presenters.
- It was asked if the subcommittee is required to have the June/September meeting schedule. The response was that you could have priorities set in

the June meeting, but then you'd have to hold an additional meeting for presentations before the September meeting. Presentations could be done virtually at an additional meeting and then final decisions could be made at the September meeting. It was decided that this is a busy time of year, and an additional meeting would not be feasible.

- It was stated that the voting did go well this past year, and adding too many steps outside the meeting may encumber the process. Having questions before the meeting would definitely help steer the conversation and may help ask the hard questions that people may not want to say during the meeting.
- If enough questions aren't presented by members, the coordinator and chairs could sit down and come up with a set of questions that they themselves could ask of the presenters during the meeting. Some of these questions could be developed during the March meeting.
- Presenters could be required to add a slide that shows exactly how their project specifically addresses the subcommittee priorities and GBP.
- Expand upon the section of the proposal that requires applicant to identify how the project implements other subcommittee priorities. This information could also be required on the additional slide.
- Slide could be developed by the coordinator and distributed to applicants ahead of the meeting.

### **Project Updates from WSQ Project Managers**

- Baseline Assessment of Microplastics in Galveston Bay (USGS) - Project complete; Ms. Lucena announced that the lab has had staffing issues and is in the process of hiring additional staff. Improvements have been made to the particle separation methods. USGS will meet with the lab after the holidays to try and come up with a more condensed timeline for analysis completion.
- Targeted Bacteria Monitoring (BPA thru H-GAC) - Ms. Guidroz announced that the project is wrapping up. BPA completed all sampling and analysis in July. A few outreach events were held in August, September, and October. The team recently received a list of findings from City of Houston Public Works on some of the investigatory sampling they completed over the summer. Sanitary sewer overflows, blockages due to fats, oils, and grease, and issues with apartment complexes were all identified. The findings do reaffirm that these are some of the main issues identified. The team is now just working on putting together the draft targeted monitoring report and any remaining reports for the project.
- Supporting the Use of Green Infrastructure (GI) in the Lower Galveston Bay Watershed (H-GAC) - Mr. Johnston announced that the project is wrapping up, although slightly behind schedule. The team is currently completing analysis of the acquired data from the various LID projects here locally, as well as Texas and nationally. Next, they will be moving

into the reporting phase. The project committee, the group that was engaged at the start of the project, will soon be getting back together. This way the team can get any corrections or thoughts on the project that the committee may have before going forward. The project will also be hosting a GI workshop after the new year. An annual project meeting and QA audit will also be held with GBEP in the near future.

- Townwood Park Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) (HPARD) – The project is complete, and they are moving into the final reporting phase of the project.
- Houston Parks and Recreation Department Water Management Plan (HPARD) – A subcontractor to write the plan has been secured and they are working to supply the needed data for plan development.
- Clear Creek Watershed Protection Plan (H-GAC) – Ms. Windham announced that the WPP has been completed and the public comment period has also ended. All comments have been incorporated into the document and the WPP is with TCEQ for agency review. Hopefully the team will hear back soon, but now that they have completed the document, they can shift their focus to outreach and education. The plan is to get some outreach efforts going after the new year and to host a nonpoint source workshop in the watershed.
- West Lake Houston Basin/East Fork WPP/Cotton Bayou TMDL (H-GAC) – West Lake Houston Basin: Ms. Windham announced that they have completed data analysis. There were a few hangups with the data, but the data analysis team has gotten it all worked out. The report is written, so now there is new information to share with the stakeholders in the region. Starting in January, the team is going to get multiple meetings on the calendar, hopefully in each watershed, since it is such a large area covering Lake Creek, West Fork San Jacinto River, Spring Creek, and Cypress Creek. This way they can get the stakeholders familiar with the process again and talk about some of the implementation they'd like to do since this is such a highly developed area, especially as you get into the Spring and Cypress Creek watershed. A big focus of this project will be getting pet waste stations installed. East Fork WPP: The WPP has been written and the public comment period is open and will close next Friday December 22. If you'd like to review the plan, please visit the document at [eastforkpartnership.com](http://eastforkpartnership.com). You can also provide comments directly to Ms. Windham at [Rachel.Windham@h-gac.com](mailto:Rachel.Windham@h-gac.com). Cotton Bayou TMDL: A meeting was recently held in the watershed to allow public comment on the TMDL. H-GAC is working with the stakeholders to refine the I-Plan, but other than that the project is quiet for now.
- BIG I-Plan/Chocolate Bay (H-GAC) – BIG I-Plan: Mr. Johnston announced that the BIG just held their fall meeting. They discussed possibly holding a workshop related to pathogen and/or virus indicators. The I-Plan is still being updated and will be worked out by the spring. Chocolate Bay: Mr. Johnston announced that the TCEQ had the public meeting for the

Chocolate Bayou TMDL project in November. The Oyster Creek meeting will be held in February, and then they will be moving onto Mustang and Halls Bayou later. Additionally, they'll be talking about developing an I-Plan for that watershed in the spring and into the fall of 2024.

- Dickinson Bayou/Highland Bayou WPP (TCWP) – Ms. Lowry announced that the Galveston Bay Coalition of Watersheds will ramp up meetings in 2024 under a recently secured 319 grant and have been communicating with stakeholders through a couple of different AgriLife programs. There will also be a GI project kicking off in Highland Bayou that started with discussions had back in the Highland Bayou WPP planning process. Ms. Lowry also wanted to thank the group for participating in a survey sent out regarding the upcoming soil health project that will consist of a couple of workshops and a field day. Mr. Koch added that Highland Bayou diversion was also recently featured as a 319 success story for coming off of the 303d list for bacteria.

### **Roundtable/ Partner Announcements and Updates:**

Ms. Rines announced that GBEP is looking for a Monitoring and Research Coordinator. The opening will close next Friday, December 22.

Mr. Koch announced that TSSWCB is hiring several positions for their on the ground program through a big grant to implement climate smart agriculture practices, so they'll be hiring statewide.

### **Old Business**

#### **Upcoming GBEP meetings:**

B&P Meeting – Wednesday, January 10, 2023 (1:00pm-3:00pm)

GBC Meeting – Wednesday, January 17, 2023 (9:30am -12:30pm)

WSQ Subcommittee Meetings

- Wednesday, March 13, 2024 (1:30pm-3:30pm)
- Wednesday, June 12, 2024 (1:30pm-3:30pm)
- Wednesday, September 11, 2024 (1:30pm-3:30pm)
- Wednesday, December 11, 2024 (1:30pm-3:30pm)

### **Adjourn**