

## **GALVESTON BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM (GBEP)**

### **DRAFT - Galveston Bay Council (GBC) Meeting Minutes – April 19, 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)

*The April 19, 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, Shane Bonnot, Andrea Catanzaro (v), Winfred Colbert (v), Jeff DallaRosa (v), Vance Darr, Elizabeth Fazio-Hale, Nicole Hall, Juan Flores, Jonathan Holley, Kristin Lambrecht, Grace Martinez, Julie Masters, Garry McMahan (v), Helen Paige, Pamela Plotkin, Dianna Ramirez, Hanadi Rifai (v), Todd Running, Lindsey Savage, Caimee Schoenbaechler, Ronnie Schultz, Rusty Senac, Linda Shead, Shane Simpson, Charrish Stevens, Matthew Tilimon, Maria Valdez, Huy Vu (v)

**(v=Member present online; not counted in the quorum)**

**Members Not Present/Delegates:** Brian Koch, Audrey Kuklenz, Michael Lee\*, Ana Partin, Sharron Stewart, Bob Stokes\*, Sue Theiss, Kirk Wiles, Scott Williams, Tracy Woody

**(\*=Member designated a proxy)**

**Proxies Present (GBC member absent/designated proxy):** Michael Lee/Zulimar Lucena, Bob Stokes/Haille Leija

**Current Vacancies:** TCEQ Representative

**Other Attendees:** Tom Douglas, Bryan Eastham, Stephanie Glenn, George Guillen, Diane Guzman, Erin Kinney, David Miller, Mary Anne Piacentini, Lori Traweek, David Villarreal

**Additional GBEP Staff Present:** Matthew Abernathy, Ellen Creecy, Kari Howard, Lindsey Lippert, Christian Rines, Casey Taylor

#### **Call to Order: Introduction of Members and Delegates**

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

At the start of the meeting, a quorum had not been met. Mr. Clingenpeel reminded all present and online that only in-person participants were counted for a quorum. Due to the lack of a quorum at the start of the meeting, the action items were postponed until a quorum was met.

#### **Report of the Program**

Lisa Marshall began the program report by informing the GBC that GBEP is now fully staffed and introduced the new Public Participation and Education coordinator, Kari Howard, and the new Monitoring and Research coordinator, Casey Taylor. Both Ms. Howard and Ms. Taylor provided brief introductions of themselves to the GBC.

Ms. Marshall also announced that on March 31, 2023 she presented the GBC member new term resolution to the TCEQ Commissioners, and the resolution was approved.

### **Report of the Chair**

Mr. Clingenpeel began the Report of the Chair by providing an update on the selection of the priorities and establishment of the selection process for projects to be funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding. The Budget and Priorities subcommittee met and established priorities and guidance for parties interested in applying for funding through this source. (The informational presentation on the specific priorities and timelines is available upon request)

At approximately 9:40 a.m., Mr. Clingenpeel announced that a quorum was present and that the GBC would proceed to the review and approval of the action items.

### **Action Item: Approval of January 18, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Clingenpeel called for the approval of the meeting minutes from the January 18, 2023, meeting. There were no comments or corrections noted and Julie Masters motioned to approve the minutes and Rusty Senac seconded the motion.

### **Action Item: Approval of Juan Flores, Underrepresented Communities**

The second action item was the replacement of Cruz Hinojosa. Juan Flores was nominated by Lori Traweek, and there were no additional nominations. Mr. Senac motioned for the approval of Mr. Flores to the GBC and Linda Shead seconded the motion. There was one abstention from the vote, Zulimar Lucena, proxy for Mike Lee of the United States Geologic Survey (USGS).

Mr. Clingenpeel then introduced the first presenters, Stephanie Glenn and Erin Kinney of the Houston Advanced Research Center (HARC).

### **Presentation: *Galveston Bay Estuary Resilience Action Plan: Overview* - Stephanie Glenn, Ph.D. and Erin Kinney, Ph.D., HARC**

Ms. Glenn began the presentation with an introduction to the Galveston Bay Estuary Resilience Action Plan. This project began in February 2019, with HARC being tasked to assess a series of coastal resilience criteria against the priorities and goals of the Galveston Bay Plan, 2nd Edition (GBP, 2nd Edition). The goal was to evaluate potential coastal resilience impacts and how those impacts will influence the ability of GBEP and the GBC to meet the goals of the GBP, 2nd Edition.

Through stakeholder meetings, the workgroup identified 11 stressors that are currently or likely to impact the Galveston Bay region in the near future. From there, the stressors were related to the GBP, 2nd Edition to determine the potential impacts and influences on the goals and priorities of GBEP.

Ms. Glenn then introduced Ms. Kinney, who provided insight into how the vast amount of information was analyzed and translated into usable and understandable information for GBEP, the GBC, and their stakeholders.

Caimee Schoenbaechler commended HARC for their ability to distill the information into an understandable document. She also asked if there was a plan and timeline for adaptive management as it relates to the resilience plan. Ms. Glenn responded that this is intended to be a document that would be reevaluated and updated as needed to ensure

that the data remains relevant and then referred the question to Ms. Marshall, who reiterated that the resilience plan information would continue to be evaluated and incorporated into the plan moving forward.

Hanadi Rafai asked how some of the current activities of GBEP are incorporated into the resiliency planning. Ms. Glenn stated that the estuary resilience plan is going to be incorporated into the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) Update that HARC will be working with GBEP on in fiscal 2024. Ms. Kinney agreed that the information from the resiliency assessment is intended to be utilized in the review and update of the CCMP. Ms. Rafai then followed up with the suggestion that resiliency be defined regarding adaptation vs. mitigation because there is common misuse of these terms as it relates to resilience. Ms. Kinney responded that in the initial report, timeframes were included to show when the possible impacts will occur, and Ms. Rafai added that defining terms such as resilience and sustainability will help better understand how potential impacts were analyzed.

Ms. Marshall added that there will be follow-up correspondence from GBEP requesting more feedback on the Estuary Resilience Action Plan.

Ms. Glenn and Ms. Kinney's presentation and contact information are available on the [GBEP website](#)<sup>1</sup> along with a copy of the [Draft Resilience Action Plan](#)<sup>2</sup>. and a recording of the presentation is available upon request.

**Presentation:** *The Luce Bayou Interbasin Transfer Project* - David Miller, Coastal Water Authority (CWA)

David Miller's presentation provided a background on the Luce Bayou Interbasin Transfer project. Mr. Miller was the major project manager for this project, through 2022 before transitioning to the Operation's Manager position with the CWA. The Luce Bayou Interbasin Transfer Project was completed to move additional water from the Trinity River westward for 23 miles into Lake Houston in the San Jacinto Basin to provide additional water for the Houston area.

The CWA provides water to the Houston, Deer Park, Baytown, and nearby industrial areas. Mr. Miller provided a background on the CWA and what services and infrastructure it provides to the region. The City of Houston does not have sufficient surface water to meet the needs of the city, creating the need for this project to help with this situation.

Mr. Miller also provided a video that shows the implementation of the project through completion. Due to technical issues, the video was unable to be shared during the meeting but was shared with the GBC afterwards.

Mr. Senac commented that he had seen a newspaper article from the 1930s about the land acquisition for Lake Houston and that it had mention of the Luce Bayou Interbasin Transfer and the location of the Capers Ridge Pump Station was identified in this article as well. There was a plan in the 1970s to pump water over the ridge into Luce Bayou for transfer to Lake Houston, but it was shelved until the early 2000s, when there was a greater need of water. Due to the potential environmental impacts, it was then decided to purchase land for a canal to transfer water as opposed to using Luce Bayou itself.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/HARC\\_GBC\\_Presentation.pdf](https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/HARC_GBC_Presentation.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/GBEP-Report-Draft.041823.pdf>

Mr. Clingenpeel asked what the firm yield of Lake Houston is and whether the maximum annual input from Luce Bayou would exceed the maximum capacity of Lake Houston and where the water would go after reaching Lake Houston. Mr. Miller responded that the water they are providing is primarily for the northeast water purification plant expansion. Other extractions include the City of Houston east purification plant, which moves 70 million gallons per day (MGD) and the San Jacinto River Authority plant at 40-70 MGD. Mr. Clingenpeel also commented on the ancillary benefits of higher water quality. Because the water upstream of Lake Houston has gone through Lake Conroe, it helps to trap nutrients and the same for the water from the Trinity River as it is downstream of Lake Livingston. Mr. Miller also stated that water quality studies have been conducted to ensure that the water is treated properly for both drinking and industrial uses. Luce Bayou is currently running at 90 MGD and once the expansion finishes, it will reach 500 MGD. the project is anticipated to completed in 2025.

Mr. Senac asked how many people will come off well water with this transfer. Mr. Miller said that there is a significant change and a conversion schedule, which is driving the expansion of the northeast water purification plant and the Luce Bayou Interbasin Transfer. Mr. Senac also mentioned that he was surprised that Ft. Bend was involved, with their proximity to the Brazos River. Mr. Miller responded that the North Bend Authority have been a 15% -17% participant in the infrastructure build out. Mr. Senac mentioned the importance of water for industry and Mr. Miller said there has been significant interest for additional water access.

George Guillen asked if there was anything that addressed interbasin fouling organisms. Mr. Miller stated this was addressed and offered to share the environmental impact statement with the GBC. Additionally, part of the permitting includes a Zebra mussel response plan. Mr. Clingenpeel stated that Zebra mussels are in Lake Livingston, but their population appears to be declining. Linda Shead also commented that the transfer could additionally impact the biology and ecology of Galveston Bay as the water diverted to Lake Houston is being kept from flowing down the Trinity River into Trinity Bay.

Albert Gonzales commented on the need for water and how citizens can do more to help with water availability, especially through restaurants that provide water without customers asking. Mr. Clingenpeel responded that there was an issue in the Dallas area and that conservation needs to be in the forefront of the discussion of the availability of future water supplies.

Mr. Senac asked if this was the largest interbasin transfer in Texas and it was noted that it is definitely the largest in Texas. There is also concept discussion about moving water from the Sabine Basin to the Trinity River.

Mr. Senac also asked if water rights were still available in the state. Mr. Clingenpeel responded that almost all of the water in the state has been permitted, but there is some that is still available for contractual purposes.

Mr. Miller's presentation is available on the [GBEP website](https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/GCA-Galveston-Bay-Estuary-Presentation-compressed.pdf)<sup>3</sup> and a recording of the presentation is available upon request. The CWA Luce Bayou Interbasin Transfer completion [video](https://vimeo.com/651425633)<sup>4</sup> is available online as well.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/GCA-Galveston-Bay-Estuary-Presentation-compressed.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://vimeo.com/651425633>

**Presentation:** *Occurrence of Microplastics in Tributaries of Galveston Bay* - Zulimar Lucena, USGS

Ms. Lucena's presentation provided an overview of the first phase of a study by the USGS to evaluate the presence of microplastics in the waters of the tributaries that feed into Galveston Bay. She provided background information along with details on the sampling process and analysis of samples to the GBC. Additionally, she provided preliminary data on the types of microplastics found, where the highest concentrations were in the study, and the percentage of each type found at each site.

Ms. Masters asked why it is important to determine the different compositions of the microplastics. Ms. Lucena responded that it is important for determining the source of the materials, to reduce the influence of the source on the waterways.

Pamela Plotkin asked if the samples were only taken on the surface, and they were. She also asked if they plan to use the same sampling method for the open water of the bay, to which Ms. Lucena said they would.

Dr. Guillen asked whether the Raman Spectroscopy was able to identify the materials that composed the undetermined types of microplastics. Ms. Lucena said that it could not, and it did not match anything in the database. Dr. Guillen then asked if they had considered where they were located in the hydrograph when sampling during storm and base flows. Ms. Lucena acknowledged that there were variations in storm levels and sampling locations that can impact the presence collected.

Mr. Clingenpeel asked if any plastic sinks had been identified. For reference, he mentioned that plastics were seen travelling on the surface of the Trinity River out of Dallas, but they are not regularly seen in Lake Livingston. Ms. Lucena said that things like the breakdown of plastics, shoreline entrapment, and other possible scenarios can make it so we do not necessarily see all of the plastics present. Dr. Guillen noted that over 30 years ago he had seen what he thought were fish eggs at the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary that ended up being plastic materials all over the sea floor.

Ms. Lucena's presentation is available on the [GBEP website](#)<sup>5</sup> and a recording of his presentation is available upon request.

### **GBC Members Roundtable: News and Announcements**

**Todd Running (H-GAC):** Mr. Running announced the unexpected passing of Brian Sims from H-GAC.

5/31/23 is the Clean Rivers Program Steering committee meeting.

5/4/23 is the Natural Resource Advisory committee meeting.

5/23/23 is the Bacterial Implementation Group spring meeting.

2023 Trash Bash results from 3/25/23: 14 sites, 40.5 tons of trash, 219 tires, 760 pounds (lbs.) of recyclables collected by 2,456 volunteers including 960 youth and 290 scouts. 2,400 tons of trash, 12,000 tires, and thousands of stream miles cleaned in the 29-year life of the project.

**Julie Masters (Small Local Governments):** Keep Dickinson Beautiful had 102 volunteers that collected 20,000 lbs. of trash and 123 tires for Trash Bash. Dickinson Public Works

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<sup>5</sup> [https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/USGS-GalvBayTribes\\_Council.pdf](https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/USGS-GalvBayTribes_Council.pdf)

has also removed tires from an illegal dumpsite and noted that Dickinson has a place where tires can be recycled.

**Matt Tilimon (USCG):** The Central Texas Area committee is working to update their geographic response strategies for emergency response.

**Pam Plotkin (Texas Sea Grant):** Texas Sea Grant is currently hosting a research competition and have received 19 proposals requesting funding related to fisheries, mariculture, and coral health issues. They expect to award five grants totaling \$1,000,000.

**Shane Bonnot (CCA):** Mentioned SB 1032, which would allow TPWD to establish a restoration oyster lease program to provide opportunities for strategic and meaningful reef restoration.

**Dianna Ramirez (GLO):** The adopt a beach clean-up is happening on April 22, 2023.

Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Act (CEPRA) and Coastal Management Program (CMP) grant application periods are open.

The GLO will have an entry level biology position opening soon in the La Porte field office.

**Albert Gonzales (Low-income Communities):** Met with Dawn Buckingham (GLO Commissioner) and he mentioned to her that funds from Hurricane Harvey need to be better distributed to the Texas coast.

**Hailee Leija (GBF):** GBF has an opening for a Habitat Restoration Manager and on 4/22/23 is the Houston Oyster Seafest to support the oyster shell recycling program.

**Liz Fazio Hale (GCA):** Monitoring legislative issues including funding for the Gulf Coast Protection District and funding for infrastructure projects and upgrades (senate bill 28). Additionally interested in the house bill 4820 which involves direct funding to non-profits.

**Caimee Schoenbaechler (TWDB):** TWDB is wrapping up a 2020 study on quantifying the hydrologic conductivity in the Trinity River Delta. This will be shared with the GBC upon completion and has potential for a future GBC presentation.

**Zulimar Lucena (USGS):** The Trinity and San Jacinto River basins were selected for the Integrated Water Science Basin number five, resulting in funding for 10 years of monitoring for the basin.

**Charrish Stevens (NMFS):** Looking for interested parties for a seagrass loss workgroup, especially if you have access to a boat.

**Grace Martinez (League of Women Voters):** Expressed interest in working on single page fact sheets about subjects related to Galveston Bay. She was referred to Kari Howard.

**Vance Darr (Kuraray):** Just a reminder that Saturday, April 22, 2023, is Earth Day, find a way to get out and participate.

**Juan Flores (Underrepresented Communities):** Provided a brief background on himself and provided information on the Galena Park Earth Day event on April 22, 2023.

**Shane Simpson (SJRA):** Working on a watershed protection plan webpage and dashboard for the San Jacinto watershed area.

**Nicole Hall (TCEQ):** Introduced herself as the new Planning and Implementation Section Manager and provided updates on the following local watershed projects:

- The TMDL program approved the Cotton Bayou TMDL and is now in the TCEQ agenda process. TMDLs are in development for Winters and Jarbo Bayous.
- Water quality monitoring will begin soon on Tarkington Bayou and Luce Bayou.
- The Bacterial Implementation Group will do targeted monitoring and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System outreach in fiscal 2023 and fiscal 2024.
- Nonpoint Source Program will be working on a Greens Bayou watershed protection plan and an implementation program on the Highland and Bastrop bayous.

**Public Comment:**

**Diane Olmos Guzman, Promoters of Education, Awareness, and Community Engagement (PEACE):** Provided background on her program and the efforts they make in schools. She also invited council members to come present in the classrooms as well.

**Tom Douglass:** On Saturday, the Texas Association of Broadcasters announced their broadcast news awards and KUHF won best documentary for their work on Hurricane Harvey impacts to the region.

**Other Business:** N/A

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

**Upcoming GBC Meeting Dates:** 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.