



WATER AND SEDIMENT QUALITY SUBCOMMITTEE GALVESTON BAY COUNCIL



Meeting Minutes Wednesday, March 13, 2024 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), Cassidy Kempf (HPARD), Celina Gauthier Lowry (TX A&M AgriLife), Fouad H. Jaber (TX A&M AgriLife), Michael LaMontagne (UHCL), Steven Johnston (H-GAC), Naima Khan (TAMUC), Rachel Windham (H-GAC), Cornell Evans (H-GAC), Maggie Sager (TIRN), Jack Newton (SJRA), Natasha Zarnstorff (GBF), David Villareal (TDA), Zulimar Lucena (USGS), Luke Travis (USGS), Michael Roberts (The Coastal Trust), Linda Shead (Texas Coastal Partners), Lisa Marshall (GBEP), Ellen Creecy (GBEP), Jenelle Estrada (GBEP), Lindsey Lippert (GBEP), Matthew Abernathy (GBEP), Kari Howard (GBEP), and Kendall Guidroz (H-GAC).

Approval of the December 13, 2023 minutes – Ms. Rines opened the meeting with approval of the minutes. Ms. Howard noted a misspelled name, and the correction was made. Mr. Koch motioned to approve the minutes and Ms. Lucena seconded. The minutes were approved with the single change.

New Business

Presentation: Supporting the Use of Green Infrastructure (GI) in the Lower Galveston Bay Watershed – Steven Johnston, Senior Planner, Houston-Galveston Area Council

Presentation: HPARD Current Projects – Cassidy Kempf, Park Naturalist, City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department

**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. 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, which was done in December 2023. The subcommittee now needs to take the suggestions gathered from the December meeting and set a plan moving forward for the project nomination process. Ms. Rines started by explaining the project nomination process as it currently stands, for those new members in the room. The entire process from subcommittee priority development in June to the approval of projects by the Council in October was discussed.

Ms. Khan asked if selected projects would just focus on the Galveston area or could projects say in Dallas be selected. Ms. Rines responded that only projects in the lower Galveston Bay watershed could be selected with the funding that GEBP receives.

Ms. Rines shared the comments that were made during the December meeting with hopes of highlighting a few to use going forward. She mentioned that 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. These questions could be developed by the subcommittee coordinator and chairs or the subcommittee members themselves and submitted anonymously, or it could be a combination of both.

Ms. Lowry said that it seemed like questions would be asked from both a set developed by the coordinator and chairs and also from the subcommittee members. She was curious as to if some of these things were already being asked in the proposal form itself. Ms. Rines responded that maybe this information could be pulled from the proposals and put into a required slide that showcases pertinent information.

Ms. Lucena shared that the subcommittee typically has a hard time choosing which projects to nominate as there are a lot of good projects, it just comes down to choosing which ones better implement the subcommittee priorities, and maybe this is something that could be highlighted better during the presentation. Instead of just leaving the discussion at, "this is a good project", we really get into how each project actually implements that year's priorities

and the GBP.

Mr. Koch mentioned that it seems the subcommittee has had very similar priorities for the past few years. Would it make sense to maybe rank them? Ms. Lucena added that the priorities have been very broad, and it may be helpful to narrow down to more specific priorities. Ms. Marshall and Mr. Koch agreed.

Mr. Roberts asked if bacteria was the water quality focus of this area, and Mr. Koch responded with yes, that is the directive from the state, as they feel if bacteria is addressed so, too are the other impairments. It continues to be the number one impairment in the state.

Ms. Marshall added that we should also remember that the Estuary Resiliency Plan should also be considered when developing priorities in June.

Ms. Shead thinks it is a great idea to narrow down priorities but it's also important to realize that this committee and program can't control everything that's going on outside of the program, in that there may be external circumstances that play into what sorts of projects are being focused on for the time being (e.g., other funding sources, or a certain public awareness of an issue, etc.) Just knowing that you may not get exactly the types of projects you want, but being open to the outside influences that may push projects in a certain direction is important.

Mr. Koch asked if it'd be worth including a priority that specifies involvement with other subcommittees. Ms. Rines suggested maybe adding that to the presentation template.

Ms. Rines asked if everyone was okay with the subcommittee coordinator chairs developing a template for the presenters in addition to having subcommittee member submit questions anonymously prior to the meeting to be asked of presenters during the meeting. The chairs and coordinator can also review the proposals and present findings in some sort of table during the meeting to also help steer the conversation. The subcommittee agreed. It was also asked if priorities should be ranked, and it was decided that the decision could be made at the June meeting.

Project Updates from WSQ Project Mangers

- Baseline Assessment of Microplastics in Galveston Bay (USGS) – Ms. Lucena announced that she had reached out to the lab recently to obtain an update. She added for those that do not know, the lab has had an incredibly difficult time separating samples due to their nature. They have finally developed a method using two oxidation steps and two density separating steps along with other solvents. There are still some

issues being worked out, but once they're confident it'll work, they'll start analyzing the smaller particles. They are also still trying to hire someone full time to help with separation of the samples.

- Targeted Bacteria Monitoring (BPA thru H-GAC) – Ms. Rines announced that they have submitted an updated Targeted Monitoring Report that identified problems spots and repairs made to address the issues. This project is wrapping up and will be complete in August. It has been a hugely successful project, so look forward to the final report and everything that comes from it.
- Supporting the Use of Green Infrastructure (GI) in the Lower Galveston Bay Watershed (H-GAC) – Mr. Johnston provided an update during the project presentation earlier in the meeting. The project has been completed and the final report will be added to the GBEP website once approved by TCEQ.
- Townwood Park Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) (HPARD) – Ms. Kempf provided an update during the HPARD presentation earlier in the meeting. The project has been completed and the final report will be added to the GBEP website once approved by TCEQ.
- Houston Parks and Recreation Department Water Management Plan (HPARD) – Ms. Kempf provided an update during the HPARD presentation earlier in the meeting.
- Clear Creek Watershed Protection Plan (H-GAC) – Ms. Windham announced that the WPP has completed agency review and will soon be submitted to the EPA. The project hosted a TST and volunteer monitoring workshop in December at the Challenger 7 Park in the watershed.
- West Lake Houston Basin/East Fork WPP/Greens Bayou WPP/Cotton Bayou TMDL (H-GAC) – West Lake Houston Basin: Ms. Windham announced that they are looking to have three different public meetings in the three different locations in April and are still looking for places to have the meetings. They are hoping to share some of their recent data collection and resources for implementation. East Fork WPP: The WPP has been written and reviewed by stakeholders and will now be going for agency review. Greens Bayou WPP: The team is in the beginning phases of this project and is just starting to develop the WPP. Ms. Windham introduced Mr. Evans who will be an integral part of this project.
- BIG I-Plan/Chocolate Bay (H-GAC) – The spring BIG spring meeting will be announced soon, and a stakeholder meeting was held last week in Chocolate Bay.
- Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) Demonstration Site Development for Greenspace Education in the Galveston Bay Watershed (TX A&M AgriLife) – Dr. Jaber announced that they have been working with the HCC Katy campus to locate a site for the demo installation. He also announced that Stephanie DeVilleneuve is no longer with TWRI and will no longer be a part of the project. They plan to build the site this summer and hold a workshop in the fall.

- Strategic Implementation of Green Infrastructure Best Management Practices in the Double Bayou Watershed (HARC) – Ms. Rines announced that the contract just got executed and they are currently working to develop a project QAPP.
- Dickinson Bayou/Highland Bayou WPP (TCWP) – Ms. Lowry announced that the Galveston Bay Coalition of Watersheds was able to reconvene this month with 319 funding from the TCEQ. They will be working to redevelop their Outreach Strategic Action Plan to make sure they are aligning with current watershed priorities, but in the meantime can run with the current plan. She will update everyone with upcoming meeting dates as they come.

Roundtable/ Partner Announcements and Updates:

Ms. Windham announced that the annual Trash Bash event is coming up on March 23rd. There is still time register online at trashbash.org. The WISE awards, which were developed by H-GAC's natural resources advisory committee is looking for nomination. If you'd like to recognize someone in the water industry, you have until March 29 to apply.

Mr. Koch announced that there will be a Lone Star Healthy Streams workshop in Angleton on May 16. More information will be sent in a follow-up email.

Old Business

Upcoming GBEP meetings:

NRU Meeting – Wednesday, March 20, 2024 (10:00am -12:00pm)

GBC Meeting – Wednesday, April 17, 2024 (9:30am -12:30pm)

WSQ Subcommittee Meetings

- 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