

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

### **DRAFT - Galveston Bay Council (GBC) Meeting Minutes – January 17, 2024**

#### **Attendees:**

**Galveston Bay Council Chair:** Bob Stokes (Galveston Bay Foundation)

**Galveston Bay Council Vice-Chair:** Vance Darr (Industry – Kuraray America, Inc.)

**Estuary Program Staff Staff Lead:** Lisa Marshall (GBEP)

*Due to inclement weather, the January 17, 2024, quarterly GBC meeting was held in a virtual format on Microsoft Teams from 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. There was no in-person option available.*

**Members Present:** Scott Alford, Shane Bonnot, Glenn Clingenpeel, Winfred Colbert, Jeff Dallarosa, Vance Darr, Elizabeth Fazio Hale, Albert Gonzales, Jonathan Holley, Brian Koch, Audrey Kuklenz, Kristin Lambrecht, Michael Lee, Grace Martinez, Garry McMahan, Kelly Mills, Ana Partin, Dianna Ramirez, Hanadi Rifai, Todd Running, Lindsey Savage, Caimee Schoenbaechler, Rusty Senac, Linda Shead, Shane Simpson, Charrish Stevens, Bob Stokes, Sue Theiss, Matt Tilimon, Maria Valdez, Huy Vu, Kirk Wiles, Scott Williams, Katie Wilson

**Members Not Present/Delegates:** Andrea Catanzaro, Juan Flores, Julie Masters, Helen Paige, Sharron Stewart, Tracy Woody

(\*=Member designated a proxy)

**Proxies Present (GBC member absent/designated proxy):** N/A

**Current Vacancies:** Texas A&M Sea Grant – Research/Academia

**Other Attendees:** Stephanie Glenn, Nicole Hall, Jen Irving, Erin Kinney, Ashley Morgan-Olvera, Gene Muller, Jack Newton, Lori Traweek, David Villarreal

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

#### **Call to Order and Confirm Quorum**

Bob Stokes brought the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

A quorum was not met for this meeting because it was held virtually. Action items were put on hold for approval until the April 17, 2024 meeting.

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

Lisa Marshall reported that GBEP is in the process of hiring a new Monitoring and Research Subcommittee Coordinator and the selected candidate will hopefully start by the end of February.

Ms. Marshall also brought up the idea of having a GBC field trip for the April meeting. Sites are still to be determined. Liz Fazio Hale has offered to help pay for the bus rental and more details will be sent out as soon as they are available.

#### **Report of the Chair**

There were no additional comments for the Report of the Chair.

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

Erin Kinney began the presentation with an overview of the update to the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). This included clarifying the difference between an update and revision of the CCMP, providing the requirements for the update, and showing examples of updates from other National Estuary Programs.

Dr. Kinney provided additional background information on the Estuary Resilience Action Plan (ERAP) and the Equity Strategy. Both documents were completed in 2023 and are required to be included in the CCMP update. Dr. Kinney also provided a summary of the input that was received from the subcommittees during the December 2023 subcommittee meetings.

Albert Gonzales reiterated the importance of integrating the various subcommittees and GBC by keeping all members updated on when subcommittee meetings are being held to allow for attendance and participation.

Dr. Kinney then provided a timeline for the project and requested additional input from GBC members to help provide a more comprehensive idea of how the CCMP is being used and to guide the best ways to implement this update.

Mr. Stokes thanked Dr. Kinney and Dr. Glenn for their work on this project and reiterated the importance of the CCMP, the update, and the input provided by GBC members.

A copy of the presentation is available on the [GBEP website](#)<sup>1</sup> and a recording of the presentation is available upon request.

**Presentation:** *Member Highlight* - Vance Darr, Kuraray America, Inc.

Vance Darr provided background information about Kuraray, along with his own professional and personal background. Mr. Darr will be the Vice Chair of the GBC for the next two years. Mr. Darr reiterated how excited he is to be the Vice Chair of the GBC.

Mr. Stokes asked about the shrimp boat photo and if Mr. Darr had any shrimpers in his family. Mr. Darr thought it was a nice shot, so he just took a photo, and while he loves spending time on the bay and fishing, he has no shrimpers in the family.

A copy of the presentation is available on the [GBEP website](#)<sup>2</sup> and a recording of the presentation is available upon request.

**Presentation:** *Texas Invasives: Research, Programs, & Outreach* - Ashley R. Morgan-Olvera, Texas Invasive Species Institute, Sam Houston State University

Ashley Morgan-Olvera is the Director of Research and Education for the Texas Invasive Species Institute (TISI) at Sam Houston State University. Ms. Morgan-Olvera provided the GBC with an introduction and background of the Texas Invasive Species Institute, which was initially a sister organization to TexasInvasives.org, but since 2020 TISI acquired [TexasInvasives.org](#)<sup>3</sup> and they are now part of the same organization.

Ms. Morgan-Olvera then provided the definition of invasive species which emphasizes that an invasive species is a non-native species that causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. She then followed this with examples

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<sup>1</sup> [https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/CCMPUpdate\\_Findings\\_GBC.pdf](https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/CCMPUpdate_Findings_GBC.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2024.01-GBC-Spotlight-VDarr.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://texasinvasives.org/>

of common invasive species, methods of transportation, and impacts caused by the species.

TISI also conducts research including surveys to focus on early identification and detection of invasive species in the region. Additionally, TISI is a Clean Rivers Program partner and conducts water quality testing in portions of the Galveston Bay watershed.

Lastly, Ms. Morgan-Olvera provided information on public education and outreach initiatives. This also includes how to report species, discourage the spread of invasives, and what to do if you find an invasive species.

Mr. Stokes thanked Ms. Morgan-Olvera for her presentation.

Mr. Gonzales thanked her for her presentation and stated that he did not see Chinese Tallow on the website. Ms. Morgan-Olvera replied that the Chinese Tallow tree is on the site with more information.

Brian Koch commented that many of the invasive issues are now being combated by using native plantings and improving soil health. More degraded systems seem to be preferable to invasive species, so by improving the habitats, it is helping to deter some invasive species.

Ms. Morgan-Olvera responded that this is something that is being looked at with new research. She stated that part of the issue is making sure that new, beneficial information is being shared so that it can be seen how these practices help with invasive species issues.

Lori Traweek asked if leaf cutter ants were native or non-native and Ms. Morgan-Olvera replied that they are native.

A copy of the presentation is available on the [GBEP website](#)<sup>4</sup> and a recording of the presentation is available upon request.

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

**Caimee Schoenbaechler (TWDB):** TWDB will be adding over 100 positions in response to current legislation. Ms. Schoenbaechler will have a data analyst position opening on the Coastal Science Team and asked to please send potential candidates her information.

**Todd Running (H-GAC):** The Natural Resource Advisory Committee meeting is on February 1, 2024, from 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.

There will be a Clean Water Initiative for Green Infrastructure meeting from 1:00 - 3:30 p.m. at H-GAC on February 23, 2024.

The Big Creek total maximum daily load (TMDL) meeting at 6:00 p.m. at the George Memorial Public Library is on February 26, 2024.

The Oyster Creek TMDL meeting at 6:00 p.m. at the Brazoria County Public Library is on February 27, 2024.

The 30<sup>th</sup> Trash Bash event is on March 23, 2024.

**Liz Fazio Hale (GCA):** Remember, the 30<sup>th</sup> Trash Bash event is on March 23.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/GalvBayCouncil\\_TXinvasives\\_17Jan24.pdf](https://gbep.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/GalvBayCouncil_TXinvasives_17Jan24.pdf)

**Grace Martinez (League of Women Voters):** Grace Martinez mentioned an area in Nassau Bay that was purchased by Federal Emergency Management Agency and the houses have been removed and there is community interest to turn it into a greenspace. It is still a preliminary discussion, but she will provide more information in the future.

**Kelly Mills (TCEQ):** The Cotton Bayou Tidal TMDL and the Chocolate Bayou TMDL will go to Commissioner's Agenda on May 22, 2024, for adoption. Each received one public comment, which have been addressed. Once adopted, they will be sent to the Environmental Protection Agency for approval.

TMDL fiscal year 2024 projects of interest include water quality monitoring on Tarkington Bayou and Luce Bayou by H-GAC and the Tres Palacios Recreational Beach TMDL methodology performed by the Texas Water Resources Institute.

Outside of the Galveston Bay watershed, there is a project looking at TMDL methodologies for recreational beaches performed in other states to find an efficient method for beach TMDLs in the future.

For the Nonpoint Source Program, fiscal year 2024 projects of interest include the Greens Bayou Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) that is to be developed by H-GAC, and the Highland Bayou WPP and Bastrop Bayou WPP implementation is being conducted through the Galveston Bay Coalition of Watersheds performed by Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service, which includes education and outreach and water quality analysis.

The 2024 Integrated Report documents are tentatively scheduled to be released for public comment on February 9, 2024.

TCEQ is working on meeting federal regulations for Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Implementation of these requirements will include ensuring that grant subrecipients comply with Title VI and document their compliance. This will begin with projects for fiscal 2026. If you have any questions, you can contact Nicole Hall with TCEQ.

**Linda Shead (Shead Conservation Solutions):** Linda Shead introduced Tom Douglas, who provided information on a film about soil health called *100,000 Beating Hearts*.

**Lindsey Savage (TPWD):** TPWD Coastal Fisheries Division Ecosystem Resources Program is hiring a team lead for the Upper Coast Ecosystem Resources Assessment Team. The position application period closes on January 25.

**Rusty Senac (Nature Tourism):** Rusty Senac heard recently that there may be a new proposed route for the connection between the Houston Ship Channel and Cedar Bayou. Mr. Senac also asked if anyone else had heard anything.

Mr. Stokes said they are following it but have not heard anything yet and that it is a long, slow process.

Dianna Ramirez stated that the GLO is on the interagency team for the project, and they will be following along on the project and providing input as well. She reiterated that it is a slow process, and she has not heard anything else.

**Sue Theiss (TxDOT):** Sue Theiss said the presentations were great. She also added that she has some job openings in environmental and transportation engineering.

**Public Comment: None**

**Other Business: N/A**

**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

**Upcoming Galveston Bay Council Meeting Dates:** April 17, 2024, July 17, 2024, October 16, 2024, and January 15, 2025. Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the quarter from 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. If there are known conflicts, Council members are welcome to propose alternate dates to the Council.