

## **Budget and Priorities (B&P) Subcommittee of the Galveston Bay Council (GBC)**

**Date:** Wednesday, July 17, 2024, 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

**Location:** Galveston Bay Estuary Program (GBEP), Office, Conference Room

### ***Minutes***

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#### **Attendees**

**Members attended:** Kendall Guidroz, Brian Koch, Mike Lee, Linda Shead, Philip Smith, Huy Vu

**GBEP Staff attended:** Matthew Abernathy, Jenelle Estrada, Zoe Gapayao, Meagan Hayes Lindsey Lippert, Lisa Marshall, Christian Rines

#### **Welcome**

Lisa Marshall welcomed the members and guests to the meeting.

**Action:** Brian Koch motioned to approve the meeting minutes from January 10, 2024. And a second was made by Philip Smith.

#### ***Presentation of Subcommittee Priorities for Fiscal Year 2026 Section 320 and State Funding***

Mrs. Marshall asked each subcommittee coordinator to present the priorities for each subcommittee developed for the fiscal 2026 Section 320 and state funding.

Christian Rines presented the Water and Sediment Quality (WSQ) subcommittee priorities:

- Supporting management measures and watershed-based plans
- Monitoring and Research that evaluates green infrastructure effectiveness
- Evaluation and development of indicators and metrics of water (surface and ground) and sediment quality

Lindsey Lippert presented the Natural Resource Uses (NRU) subcommittee priorities:

- Habitat acquisition.
- Enhancement of existing or ongoing restoration/conservation efforts.
  - special emphasis on adaptive management for previously completed projects.
- Benefit to native fish and wildlife, including federal and state listed species, Species of Greatest Conservation Need, or nongame wildlife.
  - special emphasis on projects addressing seagrasses, intertidal reef/shell hash, and benthic mapping.

- any species monitoring projects should be a collaboration/partnership between subcommittees.
- Brings funding, work leverage, or multiple goal benefits to the subcommittee.
- Takes into consideration the results of the [Estuary Resilience Action Plan](#).
- Project urgency: Project must be completed in next 24 months or opportunity is lost.

Matthew Abernathy presented the Public Participation and Education (PPE) subcommittee priorities:

- Continuation or expansion of established education, outreach, or engagement programs.
- Partnering with new local entities or smaller non-governmental organizations to reach new communities.
- Connecting new audiences to existing/completed projects or the natural habitat
- Opportunities for GBEP and partners to host workshops/networking opportunities for stakeholders on key topics

Jenelle Estrada presented the Monitoring and Research Subcommittee (M&R) priorities:

- Meaningful and effective monitoring of existing, past, and new projects (NRU: especially species of concern, WSQ, PPE).
- Baseline assessments for large-scale, man-made changes to Galveston Bay.
- Assessment, Exposure, and Response to stressors, including but not limited to:
  - Species of greatest conservation need;
  - Contact recreation standards;
  - Environmental parameters;
  - Emerging contaminants; and
  - Legacy contaminants.

***Presentation of Subcommittee Suggested Priorities for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)***

Mrs. Marshall stated that each subcommittee met to discuss suggestions for the BIL priority list. Each subcommittee coordinator presented their suggestions for BIL funding.

M&R subcommittee:

- Monitoring and research that produces data applicable and transferable to multiple programs.

- Projects that produce meaningful data that can be used for future implementation and management decisions.
- Long-term monitoring of basic environmental parameters made available to public.
- Projects should address the Estuary Resilience Action Plan (ERAP)/Equity Strategy.

NRU subcommittee:

- Habitat Protection and Enhancement
- Support for existing projects, such as: habitat mapping gaps and pre and/or post construction monitoring (including data acquisition after construction/preservation for the purpose of adaptive management over time)
- Must include Estuary Resilience Action Plan /Equity Strategy in proposal

PPE subcommittee:

- Collaborating with underrepresented and/or under-resourced communities via having physical presence or connection to the targeted communities.
- Engaging K-12 students and/or adults in hands-on, place-based environmental education.
- Diversifying strategic partners with environmental and non-environmental community organizations working within targeted communities.
- Incorporating the implementation of the Estuary Resilience Action Plan and/or Equity Strategy.

WSQ subcommittee:

- Projects in support of management measures (e.g., green infrastructure, watershed health, water reuse and conservation) and watershed-based plans.
- Projects that assess indicators and evaluate efficacy of Galveston Bay Plan implementation efforts (past, present, and future).
- Projects that incorporate the implementation of the Estuary Resilience Action Plan and/or Equity Strategy.

Subcommittee members had a few follow-up questions concerning the implementation of the Equity Strategy plan into suggested BIL priorities. Huy Vu suggested that although the national target is set that 40% of total funding will directly benefit projects for underserved communities, state agencies do not have to meet the 40% mark. Mrs. Marshall stated that proposals that implement the Equity Strategy plan are highly encouraged due to GBEP's diverse watershed.

B&P Subcommittee members then made suggestions to the BIL recommendations to add into the fiscal year 2025 BIL priorities, either as an action priority or a supporting priority.

### ***Final Priorities for Fiscal Year 2025 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law***

Action Priorities – Must address at least one

- 1.) Habitat protection & enhancement, including adaptive management
- 2.) Projects in support of management measures (e.g., green infrastructure, watershed and human health, water reuse and conservation)
- 3.) Projects that support research and monitoring related to the plan priorities of *Ensure Safe Human & Aquatic Life Use and Protect and Sustain Living Resources*

Support Priorities – must address number 1 and at least one other

1. Projects that incorporate the implementation of the Estuary Resilience Action Plan and/or Equity Strategy (including having physical presence or connection to the targeted communities)
2. Engaging K - 12 students and/or adults in hands on, place based environmental education.
3. Diversifying strategic partners with environmental and non - environmental community organizations working within targeted communities.
4. Monitoring and research that produces environmental data applicable to future implementation and management decisions and made available to the public.

### ***Review of Requirements of BIL Funds***

In addition to the established requirements for receiving BIL funding, Mrs. Marshall asked if the subcommittee members wanted to keep the B&P subcommittee request of funding up to three-year projects, encouraging collaboration among projects and subcommittees, and a minimum of \$150,000 worth of funding. B&P subcommittee members agreed to the previous requirements.

### ***Common Issues***

Mrs. Marshall asked the subcommittee members about their thoughts on having both project presenters and subcommittee members in the same room as project proposals are being discussed, as well as the concerns about project presenters spending too much time pitching their project rather than directly addressing the specific questions posed. Subcommittee members agreed that the project presenters should be in the same room as the proposals are being discussed. Ms. Marshall recommended making a

friendly reminder once the presentations are over to only answer the question and that the proposers should not advocate for their project at that time.

**BIL Time Frame:**

- July 22<sup>nd</sup> - Release of Requests for Proposals
- August 26<sup>th</sup> - Proposals are Due
- September 9<sup>th</sup> - Proposals are sent to B&P subcommittee for review
- October 2<sup>nd</sup> - Proposals are presented to the B&P subcommittee for final recommendation.

**Announcements and Program Updates**

No announcements were made.

**Upcoming B&P Subcommittee Meetings:**

October 2, 2024

Meeting Adjourned