

GALVESTON BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM (GBEP)

Galveston Bay Council (GBC) Meeting Minutes – October 16, 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 Lead: Lisa Marshall (GBEP)

The Oct. 16, 2024, 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: Scott Alford, Susan Bandy (v), Raven Blakeway, Glenn Clingenpeel, Winfred Colbert, Jeff DallaRosa (v), Elizabeth Fazio Hale, Albert Gonzales, Jonathan Holley, Brian Koch, Kristin Lambrecht, Mike Lange, Michael Lee, Kelly Mills, Helen Paige, Ana Partin, Dianna Ramirez, Hanadi Rafai (v), Todd Running, Lindsey Savage, Caimee Schoenbaechler, Susanna Scott, Rusty Senac, Linda Shead, Dean Southward, Charrish Stevens, Bob Stokes, Kari Sutton, Matthew Tilimon (v), Maria Valdez, Huy Vu (v), Katie Wilson, Tracy Woody

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

Members Not Present/Delegates: Shane Bonnot, Vance Darr, Julie Masters, Laura Picariello*, Shane Simpson, Kirk Wiles, Scott Williams

(*=Member designated a proxy)

Proxies Present (GBC member absent/designated proxy): Laura Picariello/Brandi Keller

Current Vacancies: None

Other Attendees: Moriah Brewer, Tom Douglas, Nicole Hall, Gene Muller, Doug Peterson, Sue Theiss, Lori Traweek, David Villarreal (v),

Additional GBEP Staff Present: Matthew Abernathy, Jenelle Estrada, Zoe Gapayao, Lindsey Lippert, Christian Rines, Alejandra Trevino (v), Morgen Zander

Call to Order and Confirm Quorum

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

Introductions

Mr. Stokes began by having the GBC members introduce themselves. Introductions began with in-person attendees, followed by members attending virtually.

Action Item: Approval of July 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes

A quorum was met for this meeting and Mr. Stokes began by calling for the approval of the July 17, 2024, minutes. Glenn Clingenpeel motioned for the approval and Rusty Senac seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved with no oppositions or abstentions.

Report of the Program

Lisa Marshall began the report by reminding the GBC members that if they had not yet, to please review and sign the by-laws acknowledgment form and return it to her. Members attending virtually were instructed to sign and email the document to Ms. Marshall.

On March 13, 2025, half of the GBC members will be presented to Commissioners' Agenda for approval. GBC members that are awaiting approval should have received information from Alejandra Trevino confirming their participation in the GBC and requesting a biography.

Ms. Marshall announced that the State of the Bay Symposium is tentatively scheduled for Feb. 24-25, 2026, at Moody Gardens in Galveston, TX.

Lastly, Ms. Marshall reminded the GBC that she will be sending out calendar notifications for the 2025 GBC meetings within the next month or so to ensure everyone has them on their calendars.

Report of the Chair

Mr. Stokes began the report of the chair by recognizing the passing of long-time GBC member and Galveston Bay Foundation board member, Sharron Stewart. This was followed by a moment of silence in her memory.

Next, Mr. Stokes recognized Albert Gonzales for his service to the GBC as the vice chair and presented him with a plaque from the GBC.

Mr. Stokes then provided an update on new members to the GBC. Four new members that represent organizations who appoint their representatives were asked to introduce themselves. Raven Blakeway, Ph.D. (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), Susanna Scott (Texas Department of Transportation), Dean Southward (Texas Railroad Commission), and Kari Sutton (Port Houston) all introduced themselves and provided brief biographies to the GBC and were all welcomed as members.

Action Item: Approval of Changing Linda Shead's Representation Category

A motion was requested to move Linda Shead's representation category from Environmental Organizations to Citizens-at-Large. Ms. Shead believes the Citizen-at-Large category better fits the organization she represents, Elizabeth Fazio Hale motioned for the change in category and Brian Koch seconded the motion. The motion passed with no oppositions or abstentions.

Action Item: Approval of new GBC Members

Mr. Stokes then announced that two new members have been recommended to the GBC. Mike Lange was nominated to represent Environmental Organizations and Katherine Wilson was nominated to represent Medium Local Governments. Mr. Lange was introduced by Scott Alford and Ms. Wilson was introduced by Mr. Koch, and each provided a biography of the nominated parties.

Winfred Colbert motioned for the approval of Mr. Lange to the GBC and Mr. Senac seconded the motion. Mr. Clingenpeel motioned for the approval of Ms. Wilson and Ms. Fazio Hale seconded the motion.

Both motions were approved with no oppositions or abstentions.

Presentation: *Big and Bold: Making of Texas' First State Flood Plan* – Reem J. Zoun, Assistant Deputy Executive Administrator, Texas Water Development Board

Reem Zoun began her presentation by introducing herself. She has been with the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) for five years and as the Assistant Deputy Executive Administrator her main role has been to develop the Flood Plan for the State of Texas. The flood plan was adopted on Aug. 15, 2024, and submitted to the Texas Legislature by the deadline of Sept. 1, 2024.

Ms. Zoun then provided an overview of the TWDB and the State of Texas Flood Plan. This included information on the process for identifying flood hazards, comparing existing and potential future flood hazards, and identifying existing floodplain management regulations. Additionally, a summary of regulatory and floodplain management recommendations by regional flood planning groups and the recommendations in the flood plan made by TWDB. Information on the State of Texas Flood Plan is available online through the [Interactive State Flood Plan Viewer](#)¹.

Mr. Stokes asked if there was any speculation as to what the Texas Legislature would do with this or how they would use the flood plan in the upcoming legislative session. Ms. Zoun responded that she had no speculations and that they did not have any specific funding requests, but that there are lots of discussions around water rights now as it is a very prominent topic.

Caimee Schoenbaechler recognized Ms. Zoun and her team on their hard work to get this project completed. She then asked about the project ranking that is in volume two of the State Flood Plan and how the ranking is done. Ms. Zoun replied that the areas are ranked based on their flood risk and the flood risk criteria are weighted and used to establish flood risk. The project ranking is established by how much flood risk reduction is achieved by the project.

Mr. Clingenpeel asked if there were any innovations that combined water availability with flood risk reduction. Ms. Zoun responded that there are 37 projects that have identified water supply as a benefit, but the benefits to water supply are not significant.

Ms. Zoun's presentation is available on the GBEP website.

Presentation: *Unmanned Aircraft Systems – Overview and Use* – Marc Mokrech, Ph.D., University of Houston Clear Lake

Marc Mokrech, Ph.D. provided a comprehensive overview of Unmanned Aircraft Systems, more commonly known as drones, to the GBC. His presentation covered common terms, types of drones, the parts of a drone, flying methods, payloads, and uses. The presentation also covered basic regulations for both commercial and recreational drone use. Videos were also shown to provide examples of drone use for natural resource management.

Mr. Clingenpeel asked if drones were still required to operate within line of sight of the operator. Dr. Mokrech replied that while this requirement is true in most cases, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) does identify specific reasons that would allow deviation from this operating method. Mr. Clingenpeel then asked if any changes to this were expected in the future. Dr. Mokrech responded that this could change if drones were able to be used for human transportation. There is the potential that “highways in

¹ texasstatefloodplan.org/

the sky” could be established for drones that transport passengers or cargo that would operate outside of line of sight.

Mr. Stokes addressed the importance of following the rules and ensuring that the proper training was done to be licensed to operate drones commercially. Dr. Mokrech added that it is intensive and that 10 days to two weeks is recommended to dedicate to preparation for the drone pilot exam. The FAA wants to ensure that drone pilots are educated in the rules of operation.

Ms. Shead asked if recreational operators are required to have a license. While they do not have to have a license, there is a series of requirements and suggested training for recreational pilots.

Additional discussion by Tom Douglas, Dr. Mokrech, and Mr. Stokes highlighted the importance of following the rules, knowing about restricted airspace, and how important it is to investigate the rules prior to flying a drone as it can impact planning and operational capacity. Dr. Mokrech also noted that there are apps available that show restricted airspace and the radii of no-fly zones.

A copy of Dr. Mokrech’s presentation is available on the GBEP website.

Break

Presentations & Discussion of Fiscal 2026 GBEP Work Plan: A series of short presentations by GBEP staff covering the projects and programmatic costs being proposed.

Regarding the Assessment of Coastal Groundwater Quality and Dynamics in San Jacinto River Waste Pit Superfund Site proposed to the Water and Sediment Quality Subcommittee, Matthew Tilimon asked for clarification on the site location. Mr. Stokes responded with the location and that it is an existing federal superfund site. Christian Rines also noted that the performing party did state that their work would contribute to the ongoing monitoring efforts of the site.

Ms. Shead asked for clarification on the changes to the information packet that was sent out to the GBC members most recently. Ms. Marshall responded that there was no substantial changes to the packet for the Section 320 projects other than the order of the projects. There were some slight changes to funding for two of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) projects, that would be discussed with the BIL projects later in the meeting.

Regarding the Evaluation of Green Infrastructure to Reduce Microplastic Pollution in Galveston Bay project budget, Mr. Stokes asked for clarification on the request for approval for funding for fiscal 2027 funds as to whether those funds would be bound for fiscal 2027? Ms. Rines responded that, yes, if it was approved as it was proposed, there would be funds from the 2027 budget that would be bound to this project, with the caveat that the performing party might find additional funding for the project, which would then free up the 2027 funds.

There were no other questions regarding the programmatic or subcommittee projects to be funded through Section 320 and state funds.

Action Item: Approval of each item in the proposed work plan

Mr. Stokes called for the approval of each individual program area as presented. After the motion and second, there was the opportunity for discussion and then to either vote or abstain.

Lindsey Savage (Texas Parks and Wildlife; TPWD) stated that as TPWD was the performing party for one of the Natural Resource Uses (NRU) projects, that she had a conflict of interest and would be abstaining from voting. Ms. Shead commented that she was not sure if she would be working on one of the NRU projects, but that she would be abstaining due to potential conflict of interest as well.

Program Area	Motion	Second	Abstain
Programmatic	Linda Shead	Dianna Ramirez	Huy Vu, Kelly Mills, Mike Lee, Ana Partin
WSQ	Brian Koch	Glenn Clingenpeel	Huy Vu, Jonathan Holley, Matthew Tilimon, Todd Running, Kelly Mills, Mike Lee, Ana Partin
NRU	Glenn Clingenpeel	Todd Running	Huy Vu, Lindsey Savage, Kelly Mills, Bob Stokes, Mike Lee, Linda Shead, Mike Lange, Ana Partin
PPE	Brian Koch	Linda Shead	Huy Vu, Todd Running, Kelly Mills, Elizabeth Fazio Hale, Mike Lee, Ana Partin
M&R	Dianna Ramirez	Jonathan Holley	Huy Vu, Ana Partin, Matthew Tilimon, Lindsey Savage, Kelly Mills, Mike Lee, Dean Southward

Presentations & Discussion of Fiscal 2025 BIL GBEP Work Plan: A series of short presentations by GBEP staff covering the projects and budget being proposed

Ms. Marshall provided a brief overview of the project selection process followed by presentations by Morgen Zander and Jenelle Estrada summarizing the three projects proposed for funding through the BIL.

Mr. Stokes then called for a motion to approve the proposed BIL projects.

Program Area	Motion	Second	Abstain
FFY 2025 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law	Dianna Ramirez	Linda Shead	Huy Vu, Ana Partin, Winfred Colbert, Kelly Mills, Mike Lee, Dean Southward

GBC Members Roundtable: News and Announcements

Todd Running (H-GAC): The Bacteria Implementation Group fall meeting will be on Oct. 29, 2024, from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. at the H-GAC offices.

The Natural Resources Advisory Committee will meet on Nov. 7, 2024, from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

There is a Clean Waters Initiative workshop on pathogen indicators on Nov. 20, 2024, from 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Brian Koch (TSSWCB): On Sept. 20, 2024, the Section 319 RFP through the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board closed. A total of 22 proposals were received and are being reviewed.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and the Texas Community Watershed Partners are hosting a soil health workshop at Houston Community College South on Oct. 29, 2024, from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Kelly Mills (TCEQ): TCEQ’s 2026 Surface Water Quality Assessment Advisory workgroup meeting is on Nov. 7 from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. The meeting will be in building B, room 201A on the TCEQ campus. The meeting is also hybrid, and interested parties can contact Kelly Mills for the link to the online meeting.

Bob Stokes (GBF): Bike Around the Bay will be held Oct. 19 – 20, 2024 and to remember to keep an eye out for cyclists during the event.

Glenn Clingenpeel (TRA): Mr. Clingenpeel announced that repairs to the Lake Livingston dam would be completed soon.

Caimee Schoenbaechler (TWDB): The TWDB recently completed a project with Texas A&M University-Galveston to develop and implement a coast-wide three-dimensional hydrodynamic model to replace the old model. It is being implemented to support the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program, but the model will be available to support scientific and engineering studies for water planning and management. If you have ideas for uses, please contact Ms. Schoenbaechler. Ms. Schoenbaechler is also able to help coordinate a presentation about the new model for a future GBC meeting.

On Oct. 15, 2024, the TWDB Coastal Science team deployed a scientific monitoring buoy in west Galveston Bay. This is the first of several deployments planned for Galveston Bay. It is a fixed, floating buoy that monitors for meteorological and water quality data. This is near real-time data that will be shared with the GBC as soon as it is available.

Albert Gonzales (Low-income Communities): Mr. Gonzales expressed his interest in having a list of all the GBC members, their affiliations, email addresses, and phone numbers so that he could contact them if he had questions or matters to discuss.

Mr. Gonzales also suggested that in an effort to help GBC members get better acquainted, GBEP staff could randomly place GBC member nameplates at seats prior to the GBC meetings to mix up the seating arrangement to allow for additional networking.

Mr. Stokes responded that regarding the GBC member information, he would talk to Ms. Marshall outside of the meeting to determine what is permitted and follow-up with Mr. Gonzales. Regarding the second point, Mr. Stokes expressed interest in discussing an off-line social gathering and to investigate options for that, if it is of interest. He also stated that he is available by phone or email, should Mr. Gonzales need to reach out to him on matters regarding the GBC.

Katie Wilson (GCHD): Ronnie Schultz’s position was not filled after he retired, so if there are air or water concerns or questions, please contact Katie Wilson.

Laura Norman joined GCHD from the Galveston County Office of Emergency Management and GCHD is working to expand their programs and become more engaged in the community.

Public Comment:

Doug Peterson (Sierra Club): Doug Peterson is involved in several community endeavors throughout the region and over the past month, that has organized two flood protection meetings. Mr. Peterson is also involved with the Clear Lake City Water Authority and Exploration Green. These efforts, and others, are a great way to share information and raise awareness about concerns in the region.

He also noted that he is a candidate for state representative in House District 129 and he hopes everyone gets out and votes.

Mr. Stokes commented that organizations like the GLO, USACE, and Jim Blackburn have presented about flood mitigation projects in the region, but that it has been a while and might be worth getting updates on projects for the GBC.

Other Business: N/A

Adjourn: Ms. Fazio Hale motioned to adjourn the meeting, and it was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Upcoming Galveston Bay Council Meeting Dates: Jan. 15, 2025, April 16, 2025, July 16, 2025, and Oct. 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, GBC members are welcome to propose alternate dates to the GBC.