



WATER AND SEDIMENT QUALITY SUBCOMMITTEE GALVESTON BAY COUNCIL



Meeting Minutes Wednesday, December 11, 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), Celina Gauthier Lowry (TX A&M AgriLife), Fouad Jaber (TX A&M AgriLife), Michael LaMontagne (UHCL), Steven Johnston (H-GAC), Jenny Oakley (H-GAC), Rachel Windham (H-GAC), Kendall Guidroz (H-GAC), Cornell Evans (H-GAC), Shane Simpson (SJRA), Sam Hill (TFS), Moriah Brewer (Moriah Lynn Consulting), Katie Wilson (GCHD), Dini Adyasari (TAMUG), Maggie Sager (TIRN), Nicholas Kosmas (Buckson Landscape Architects), Anna Weiss (Vision Galveston), Michael Roberts (The Coastal Trust), Jari McCoy (BPA), Grant Moss (BPA), Natasha Zarnstorff (GBF), Casey Taylor (Public), Roberto Vega (TCEQ), Nicole Hall (TCEQ), Kirsten Vernin (HARC), Erin Kinney (HARC), Vanessa Hulse (HARC), Jennifer Irving (HARC), Stephanie Glenn (HARC), Ryan Bare (HARC), Lisa Marshall (GBEP), Lindsey Lippert (GBEP), Morgen Zander (GBEP), Jenelle Estrada (GBEP), Zoe Gapayao (GBEP), and Matthew Abernathy (GBEP).

Approval of the September 11, 2024 minutes – Ms. Rines opened the meeting with approval of the minutes. Mr. Johnston motioned to approve the minutes and Mr. Koch seconded. The minutes were approved with no changes.

New Business

Presentation: *Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan: ERAP and Equity Strategy* Update and Discussion — Moriah Brewer, Equity Consultant; Stephanie Glenn, Ph.D., and Erin Kinney, Ph.D., Houston Advanced Research Center

Presentation: *Strategic Implementation of Green Infrastructure Best Management Practices in the Double Bayou Watershed Project Update* — Kirsten Vernin, Houston Advanced Research Center

New Member Spotlight: Nicholas Kosmas, Buckson Landscape Architects

**Presentation, notes, and Q&A available upon request.*

Subcommittee Business

Subcommittee Bylaws Discussion: Ms. Rines introduced a conversation around updating the Subcommittee bylaws. She explained that the need to look at the bylaws arose during the September meeting when the Subcommittee could not come to a consensus on project recommendations and so the decision had to go to vote. There was confusion during the voting process as to who was eligible to vote and who was considered a member. As it's currently written in the QUORUM AND VOTING article of the bylaws, "The Subcommittee shall attempt to reach all decisions by consensus. If consensus cannot be achieved, a simple majority vote of those members and proxies present shall be taken on a motion that is made and seconded." Ms. Rines mentioned that all other subcommittees have met and that she had incorporated changes to the bylaws based on those conversations that she'd like feedback on.

The following changes were made to the Subcommittee bylaws and presented to the members for discussion:

- 1) Format updated to more closely follow the Council bylaws, making formatting consistent across all Subcommittees.
- 2) All references to the Galveston Bay Plan were updated to the Second Edition.
- 3) Member was redefined as a "member organization", whereas the "organization" is defined as an overarching entity, and does not distinguish between divisions, sections or laboratories. Subcommittee coordinators will maintain a spreadsheet that identifies every subcommittee member and what "member organization" they belong to. This will be added as an appendix to the bylaws and will be shared with the subcommittee.
- 4) A requirement was added that members must be present at two of the four meetings per year to be eligible to vote. The project selection meetings in September can count toward attendance. Subcommittee coordinators will keep track of attendance throughout the year and communicate voter eligibility prior to the September meeting. Members may send a designated proxy that would count toward attendance.

- 5) ARTICLE VIII. WORKGROUPS was added to allow workgroup to be appointed for issues of concern.

Other Notes:

The updated requirements do not prevent anyone from submitting a proposal, but they may not be eligible to vote.

Subcommittee coordinators have sent or are sending out the updated bylaws with a request for additional edits and they will be voted on in March.

Project Updates from WSQ Project Mangers

- Houston Parks and Recreation Department Water Management Plan (HPARD) – Ms. Rines announced that the Draft Water Management Plan has been submitted and is currently under review.
- Clear Creek Watershed Protection Plan (H-GAC) – Ms. Windham announced that the WPP has been completed and accepted by the EPA. The team is now focusing on its outreach efforts and is looking to host one more workshop in the watershed before the contract ends in May.
- West Lake Houston Basin/East Fork WPP/Cotton Bayou TMDL (H-GAC) – West Lake Houston Basin: Ms. Windham announced that the West Lake Houston Basin project is working to implement the already developed watershed protection plans for Cypress Creek, Spring Creek, Lake Creek and the West Fork of the San Jacinto River. Funding was acquired to purchase pet waste stations and Mr. Evans has been coordinating with partners to distribute them. So far, commitments have been made with Harris County Precinct 3 and the City of Conroe. The team is also working on a small grant with Texas A&M Forest Service to do some tree plantings with an event scheduled tentatively for either February or March 2025. There is also a Texas Watershed Stewards workshop with Texas A&M AgriLife in the Cypress Creek Watershed on February 18.; East Fork WPP: The development of the WPP wrapped up this year and the team was recently notified that it has been accepted by the EPA. The team is now wrapping up the Executive Summary and will add it to the project website as soon as it's completed.; Cotton Bayou TMDL: The project had a public meeting in Mont Belvieu on December 10 for the tidal portion of the project. The team is currently working to add the above tidal portion of the watershed to the overall TMDL. The draft QAPP has been submitted to TCEQ and is currently under review. The team is looking forward to starting work on that project and should begin early in the new year.
- Watershed Protection Plan Development for Greens Bayou (H-GAC) – Mr. Evans announced that the data analysis and modeling has been completed, and the project will now be moving into the public phase. The first public meeting will be held tomorrow, December 12 from 5:00 -7:00 p.m. at the North Houston District Office or online via Zoom. The registration link was posted into the meeting chat.

- Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) Demonstration Site Development for Greenspace Education in the Galveston Bay Watershed (TX A&M AgriLife) – Mr. Jaber announced that the team organized and put on a rain garden workshop at the Houston Community College Katy Campus on November 20. The event was very well attended with a cap of around 30 attendees due to limited funding for lunch. The workshop included a morning lecture and the planting of two rain gardens in the afternoon. The project still has funding, and the idea is to hold another workshop sometime in 2025 to install additional best management practices to showcase, such as a rainwater harvesting system and shoreline stabilization planting. The team has requested a contract extension and Mr. Jaber announced that he just saw the approved amendment come through his email for signature.
- Strategic Implementation of Green Infrastructure Best Management Practices in the Double Bayou Watershed (HARC) – Mr. Bare announced no updates beyond what Ms. Vernin had mentioned during her project update presentation.
- Digging Deeper: Addressing Soil Health to Improve Water Quality in the Lower Galveston Bay Watershed (TX A&M AgriLife) – Ms. Lowry announced that the first of two soil health workshops was held the end of October at the Houston Community College South Campus. The idea is to have one workshop on both the east and west sides of the bay, so the next workshop will be somewhere east of the bay. The workshops are targeted toward practitioners and those working on large landscapes in both suburban and urban areas. The workshops are focused on soil health but also bring in information on universal best management practices that are going to help improve the health of the soil. Practices that increase filtration, build organic matter, and reduce runoff are being covered. The workshop had around 50 attendees, so a great turn out, with five speakers. A municipality was also able to share some of their soil health rebates offered to utility customers. USDA NRCS was able to bring out a rainfall simulator that participants were able to view for a more hands on portion of the workshop. Representatives from the Wildlife Habitat Federation and the Texas State Soil & Water Conservation Board were among the speakers. Practitioners from the Houston Parks Board, Herman Park Conservancy, Harris County, and Independent School Districts, and many others were in attendance. The team is looking at Chambers County for the next workshop, so the team is in talks with Mont Belvieu to get that planned. It will be held sometime in late February or early March, so be on the lookout for that announcement.
- Supporting Permeable Alternatives to Conventional Pavement in the Lower Galveston (TX A&M AgriLife) – Ms. Lowry announced that the team is just getting started with this scope. Currently, she is working to engage the Coalition of Watersheds stakeholder group. This group will be used to help identify barriers to implementation of these best management

practices and then an example project will be developed from which estimates will be collected. Coincidentally, several connections were made at the rain garden workshop that was mentioned. Ms. Lowry requested that any subcommittee members please send her any connections to permeable pavement installers, suppliers, etc. as she is working on building a list of estimates to inform future adoption. This will help to bridge the gap of communities not knowing where to go and how much these things cost. One of the outcomes of this project is a whitepaper, so this is a building block of developing that paper.

- Targeted Microplastics Monitoring in the Waters of Galveston Bay and its Tributaries (USGS) – Ms. Rines announced that the project has just gotten started and is in the process of developing the project QAPP.
- Repair and Replacement of Failing On-Site Sewage Facilities (OSSFs) for Homeowners in Disadvantaged Communities with Vulnerable Populations (H-GAC) – Ms. Guidroz announced that the team is currently working on an analysis to identify communities with large amounts of potentially unpermitted or failing septic systems. This task should be completed by the end of this month or early next month. After that, the team will work to pull together a priority list, at which time, they will start reaching out to selected communities to begin scheduling homeowner workshops. The team will also be working to finalize the outreach material to be used in those workshops.
- Enhancing Clear Creek Watershed Protection and Galveston Bay Plan through Community Engagement and Monitoring (BPA) – Mr. Moss announced that he has been working to gather and create outreach materials and identify locations for the installation of pet waste stations. He will begin reaching out to stakeholders after the new year to start conversations around the installation of those stations. They will also be simultaneously conducting outreach through various outlets such as tabling at events, targeted social media ads, etc. He is also working to identify areas where they hope to hold Texas Stream Team trainings and will coordinate with Ms. Guidroz to make sure they are spacing out their trainings to prevent overlap and better cover the region.
- Application of Rapid Methods of Microbial Source Tracking to Assess the Source of Fecal Contamination to Western Galveston Bay (UHCL) – Ms. Rines announced that the contract is nearing execution.
- BIG I-Plan/Chocolate Bay (H-GAC) – Chocolate Bay: Mr. Johnston announced that the Chocolate Bayou project is an I-Plan that is combining Chocolate, Mustang, and Halls Bayous. The Mustang and Halls Bayou TMDLs documents are with the Commission process right now for adoption. There will be a public meeting on January 22 in the evening at 6:00 p.m. at the Alvin Public Library in Brazoria County.; BIG I-Plan: Mr. Johnston announced that the process for updating the plan is taking longer than expected, so hopefully that will wrap up soon. The team is going to be conducting targeted monitoring for Greens Bayou, if anyone

is interested in that watershed and wants to participate in a meeting. The team is also planning monitoring for Halls Bayou, so that will be done in conjunction with the Greens Bayou Watershed Protection Plan beginning in January/February 2025.

- Galveston Bay Coalition of Watersheds Dickinson Bayou/Highland Bayou WPP (TCWP) – Ms. Lowry announced that the Galveston Bay Coalition of Watersheds meets quarterly and has established three workgroups: fats, oils, grease, and wipes, green infrastructure, and debris in bayous and dredging. The group is currently funded by a Section 319 TCEQ grant and is in the implementation phase.

Roundtable/ Partner Announcements and Updates:

Ms. Lippert announced that the Armand Bayou expansion project, which is about 1,100 acres, is scheduled to close on December 16. The acquisition will have 50/50 rights split between the Harris County Flood Control District and Armand Bayou Nature Center.

Mr. Abernathy announced that the Texas Plastic Pollution Symposium is going to be coming back to Houston and will be held at the Houston Zoo on Thursday, April 3.

Ms. Windham announced that H-GAC's Clean Waters Initiative (CWI) will host a workshop on Microplastics in Surface Waters on February 25. Registration will soon be available on the CWI website.

Ms. Lippert announced that the Gulf Coast Canine project will be coming back to Galveston. They will have a town hall meeting sometime in January if you were unable to attend the first one. More information is on the Back the Bay website.

Ms. Zarnstorff announced that GBF will be having their annual crab trap removal event on February 22 with a rainout date of March 2. If you know anyone with boats, please send them her way.

Ms. Oakley announced that the Clean Rivers Program Basin Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for January 14 and will have both an in-person and virtual option. A registration link was dropped in the meeting chat.

Old Business

Upcoming GBEP meetings:

B&P Meeting – Wednesday, January 8, 2025 (1:00pm-3:00pm)

GBC Meeting – Wednesday, January 15, 2025 (9:30am -12:30pm)

WSQ Subcommittee Meetings

- Wednesday, March 12, 2025 (1:30pm-3:30pm)
- Wednesday, June 11, 2025 (1:30pm-3:30pm)
- Wednesday, September 10, 2025 (1:30pm-3:30pm)
- Wednesday, December 10, 2025 (1:30pm-3:30pm)

Adjourn