

MONITORING AND RESEARCH SUBCOMMITTEE GALVESTON BAY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 10, 2025
9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Subcommittee Chair: George Guillen, University of Houston Clear Lake (UHCL)

Subcommittee Vice Chair: Mike Lee, United States Geological Survey (USGS)

GBEP Representative: Jenelle Estrada

Call to Order, Introductions (Via Microsoft Teams)

Attendees: Anna Armitage (TAMUG), Sarah Belles (ABC), Guilherme Corte (TAMUG), Jan Culbertson (Citizen), Stephen Curtis (TPWD), Danielle DeChellis (UHCL), Jim Dobberstine (LC), Vivienne Foroughirad (TAMUG), Mandi Gordon (UHCL), George Guillen (UHCL), Amanda Hackney (Black Cat GIS), Jen Irving (HARC), Erin Kinney (HARC), Yina Liu (TAMU), Zulimar Lucena (USGS), Chris Marshall (TAMUG), Sherah McDaniels (UHCL), Vanessa Mintzer (GBF), Theresa Morris (TAMUG), Jenny Oakley (HGAC), Alyssa Quackenbush (GBF), Hanadi Rifai (UH), Melanie Rogers (UHCL), Michael Shields (TAMU), Chloe Stifler (ABNC), Katie Wilson (GCHD), Matthew Abernathy (GBEP), Hope Cole (GBEP), Zoe Gapayao (GBEP), Lindsey Lippert (GBEP), Lisa Marshall (GBEP), Christian Rines (GBEP).

Approval of September 10, 2025 meeting minutes – Motion to approve by George Guillen and a second by Chloe Stifler.

Spotlight Presentation: Vivienne Foroughirad, PhD., Texas A&M University at Galveston

Dr. Vivienne Foroughirad is a professor at Texas A&M at Galveston and presented on her past and current research projects. Dr. Foroughirad leads the Cetacean Behavior and Genetics lab which focuses on studying cetacean behavior and genetics primarily in small delphinids such as bottlenose dolphins. Dr. Foroughirad was a part of a long-term sampling and monitoring program with over 40 years of data in Australia called the Shark Bay Dolphin Project. She currently works on boat and drone-based monitoring for dolphins in Galveston Bay to capture samples and increase the amount of available data.

The Distribution and Fate of Tire Rubber-Derived Chemicals in Galveston Bay Update, Michael Shields, PhD., Texas A&M University

Dr. Michael Shields presented a project update on The Distribution and Fate of Tire Rubber-Derived Chemicals in Galveston Bay. Dr. Shields described the discovery of the toxicity of 6PPD-quinone (6PPD-Q) on Coho Salmon in the Pacific Northwest and the high likelihood that it is in Galveston Bay estuary. The project goal was to 1) use samples already collected from previous Galveston Bay sampling trips to determine the concentration of 6PPD, 6PPD-Q and transformation products in the water and

sediment and 2) investigate the partitioning and transformation through laboratory experiments. They have found that 6PPD-Q is detected in water and sediments near or in the Houston Ship Channel with higher concentrations in the sediments. Additionally, 6PPD-Q demonstrated photodegradation in sunlight, but it also generates transformation products that may warrant future study.

A Collaborative Approach to Assess the Status of American Eel in Texas, Stephen Curtis, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Stephen Curtis presented on American Eels in Texas. Mr. Curtis described that the eel lifecycle has been largely based on eels along the Atlantic Coast leading to the need for more information on eels along the Gulf and within Texas. The project goals were to generate a population assessment and learn more about juvenile eel recruitment. They collected eels from rivers across Texas and recorded distribution, abundance and life stage data. The recruitment window for glass eels across Texas showed a gradient from December to May for estuarine tidal water and February to May for non-tidal freshwater.

Preliminary Discussion on Subcommittee Collaboration

Jenelle Estrada led a discussion to gather input from the subcommittee on opportunities for collaboration across the other subcommittees (Public Participation and Education, Natural Resource Uses, and Water and Sediment Quality). The input from this discussion will help shape a larger discussion that the subcommittees will have in 2026. The subcommittee discussed opportunities for research collaborations, wanting the chance to discuss priorities across the subcommittees before finalizing them in June, and how we can incorporate prioritization for projects that incorporate other subcommittee goals while often requires increased funding. Full notes from this discussion can be seen on [this whiteboard](#).

Project Updates:

- Monitoring Ecosystem Indicators for Science-Based Restoration and Enhancement - TAMUG (Hui Liu): There are three sample cruises left and they are working on finishing sample analysis while drafting the final report.
- The Distribution and Fate of Highly Toxic Tire Rubber-Derived Chemicals in Galveston Bay - TAMU (Michael Shields): They are working on the sorption experiment and the upcoming task reports.
- Evaluating Galveston Bay's Resilience to Ocean and Coastal Acidification - HARC (Erin Kinney): The QAPP was approved and deployment of the monitoring equipment is scheduled for December or January.
- Establishment of an Oyster Sentinel Program for Tracking *Perkinsus marinus* (Dermo) in Oysters of Galveston Bay - UHCL (Mandi Gordon): The QAPP was approved, and field sampling has begun.
- Tracking Perkinsus Marinus (Dermo) Infection in Sun-Cured Oysters - UHCL (Mandi Gordon): The project is underway, and a field and desk audit is planned for early 2026.
- Monitoring to Assess Long-term Restoration Success in Galveston Bay Wetlands - TAMUG (Anna Armitage): Just wrapped up the first field season and had to make some method adjustments in the field so a QAPP amendment is in progress.

- Regional Monitoring Database - HARC (Ryan Bare): The new contract has been executed and the QAPP amendment is underway to update the QAPP with the new timeline.
- Developing Molecular Tools for Demographics and Distribution of Galveston Bay Estuary System Sea Turtles - TAMUG (Christopher Marshall): They are working on drafting the QAPP and are waiting for contract execution.
- State of the Bay 5th Edition - HARC (Erin Kinney): The contract was just executed, and a contract kick-off meeting will be scheduled soon.

Announcements/Path Forward Items:

- WSQ Subcommittee meeting: Wednesday, December 10, 2025, 1:30 p.m.- 3:30 p.m.
- B&P Subcommittee meeting: Wednesday, January 7, 2026, 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- GBC meeting: Wednesday, January 21, 2026, 9:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m.
- M&R 2026 Subcommittee Meetings
 - March 11, 2026 (9:30-11:30am)
 - June 10, 2026 (9:30-11:30am)
 - September 09, 2026 (9:30-11:30am)
 - December 09, 2026 (9:30-11:30am)

Adjourn