

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATION (PPE)
SUBCOMMITTEE
GALVESTON BAY COUNCIL**

**Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 3, 2025
1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

Virtual Meeting Via Microsoft Teams

Subcommittee Chair: Cindy Wilems, Education Director, Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF)

Subcommittee Vice Chair: Kendall Guidroz, Senior Planner, Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)

Galveston Bay Estuary Program (GBEP) Representative: Zoe Gapayao

Attendees: Cindy Wilems, Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF); Kendall Guidroz, Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC); Tiffany Ritter, Houston Arboretum and Nature Center (HANC); Kara Branch, Black Girls Do Engineer; Paige Breon, Texas A&M University Galveston (TAMUG); Rowena McDermid, University of Houston Clear Lake (UHCL); Pam Smolen, Houston Audubon; Amy Neblett, Artist Boat; Huy Vu, United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA); Morton Sager, Bayou Preservation Association (BPA); Kate Under, National Wildlife Federation (NWF); Carolyn Marie Pope, TAMUG; Sandra Metoyer, UHCL; Melissa Wong, Houston Zoo; Nicole Polwman, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD); Katherine Wilson, Galveston County Health District (GCHD); Eowyn Johnson, Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council (GINTC); Brenda Weiser, UHCL; Treasa Antony, Nature Heritage Society (NHS); Debbie Bush, UHCL; Liz Virgl, American Bird Conservancy (ABC); Brittany McWhorter, Turtle Island Restoration Network (TIRN); Brandi Keller, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and Texas Sea Grant; Stephanie Gray, Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation (CELF); Bethany Foshee, Coastal Prairie Conservancy (CPC); Christina Taylor, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension; Kelli Ondracek, City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD); David Sharp, Exploration Green Conservancy; Valeria Hernandez, Houston Zoo; Andrea Barrera, BPA; Elizabeth Walla, Galveston Park Board; Tara Stafford Ocansy, CELF; Anna Weiss, Vision Galveston; Alenka Cardenas, Bayou City Waterkeeper (BCWK); Lisa Marshall (GBEP); Matthew Abernathy (GBEP); Christian Rines (GBEP); Lindsey Lippert (GBEP); Jenelle Estrada (GBEP); Hope Cole (GBEP)

KPRC Community Outreach

Debbie Bush (UHCL) presented on the KPRC Community Outreach that highlighted seven GBEP-funded projects in the Lower Galveston Bay Watershed on KPRC-TV through 30-second commercial spots, interview segments on Houston Life, and digital banners online.

*PDF of the presentation is available upon request.

Bolivar Peninsula Nature Trail

Pam Smolen (Houston Audubon) presented on the Bolivar Peninsula Nature Trail, which is a nature-based conservation, education and economic development initiative. The project will construct a tourism route connecting 12 world-class sites on Bolivar Peninsula.

*PDF of the presentation is available upon request.

Preliminary Discussion on Subcommittee Collaboration

Zoe Gapayao led a discussion to gather input from the subcommittee on opportunities for collaboration across the other subcommittees (Monitoring and Research, Natural Resource Uses, and Water and Sediment Quality). The input from this discussion will help shape a larger discussion that the subcommittee will have in March. The subcommittee discussed opportunities for collaboration, what other subcommittees may need from PPE and how we can provide more clarity for subcommittees to more effectively collaborate. Notes from this discussion can be viewed on [this whiteboard](#).

Current PPE Project Updates

- Mobilizing the Environmental Education Community through Prairie Education Phase II (NPAT): Phase II is being run by NPAT with some partnership from EIH. Bondi Intermediate School from Pasadena ISD had fieldtrips at Deer Park, where they did insect netting and transects. They'll be working with 8th graders from Bondi. They also had a teacher workshop with updates to come.
- Bay to Schools (GBF): Dr. Carol Waters presented her observations of the three different Engineering Shorelines Workshops at the School Science and Mathematics Conference in November. Final Report coming up.
- Wetland Connections (GBF): There are 13 schools participating in the program this year reaching over 1000 6-12th grade students. All have their campus wetland ponds that students are keeping healthy. Classroom workshops have begun. Each school receives 2 classroom workshops: animal adaptations and engineering shorelines. They are preparing for spring field trips.
- Resiliency in Education and Green Infrastructure (GBF): De Zavala Elementary in Channelview ISD completed their Bay Biodiversity Program (K-5). Every student got 2 classroom workshops and a field trip to the Trinity Bay Discovery Center. Bioswales and land bridge are completed at Trinity Bay Discovery Center. Planning underway for community conversations in the winter and larger event in June.
- Community Outreach (UHCL/KPRC): No further updates than what was presented.
- Stopping Plastics and Litter Along Shorelines in Houston's Bayous and Beyond (SPLASH): Have removed 10,000 pounds of trash already with this project through volunteer, public and private cleanups, and fieldtrips. They have engaged about 3400 people and 4000 students. Spook-a-Clean had about 40-50 volunteers. Final report coming up.
- Drought and Water Conservation Outreach Campaign (HPW): HPW worked with Versa Creative to expand the reach of the campaign and all the work has been completed. They've submitted their task and final report, which have been accepted. Waiting on signatures for the final invoice then the project will be wrapped up.

- Engaging Under-resourced Communities in Conservation Phase II (BPA): Stewards have completed half of the training through the Stormwater University for Green Infrastructure Education. Greens Bayou completed their first event, which was a planting event. White Oak Bayou Association is setting up their Meet the Native Neighbors event for pocket prairie education. Bayou Preservation Association steward, Andrea, is creating a workshop for the Sunnyside community. This will be an education meeting that gets Sunnyside leaders for their thoughts on making the community more resilient. They are focused on doing outreach to younger community members in Sunnyside to incentivize community action.
- Trash Bash (H-GAC): March 28, 2026, registration links are now live, more promotion to come. They'll be working with the Brays and Sims Watershed Protection Plans and will be providing trainings for communities to use the educational games outside of Trash Bash.
- City of Houston Nature Trails Master Plan (HPARD): Still in the procurement process to get the consultant onboard, should be completed in 2 weeks. Then they'll start gathering information for stakeholder meetings. Already internally gathering information of existing nature trails now.
- Texas Envirothon (UHCL): Getting ready for 25th annual competition. They've finalized most logistics for the event, which will be assisted at Stephen F. Austin. They are preparing their first teacher workshop taking place this Saturday. Guest speakers will be covering a number of topics and Cindy Wilems will present a survey for teachers to better understand their needs. Each teacher receives a stipend and equipment for the 2026 Envirothon teams.

Announcements

Ms. Gapayao updated the subcommittee on GBEP's progress on planning the 2026 State of the Bay Symposium and reminded the subcommittee that early registration ends in January. Additionally, the Estuary Program would like to invite any member organizations who would like an outreach table at the symposium to please contact Ms. Gapayao at Zoe.Gapayao@tceq.texas.gov.

UHCL's Environmental Institute of Houston will be celebrating their 35 year anniversary on May 23, 2026. They will be sending out Save the Dates in January for their celebration.

Exploration Green is having a tree planting event on Saturday, December 6, for Phase 5. Please sign up at the website.

CELF is having their annual student symposium at HCC South Campus on March 25, 2026.

Also on March 25, 2026, will be the Texas Plastic Pollution Symposium at Texas A&M Galveston.

Texas Association for Environmental Education Conference will be on October 13-15, 2026, held at Camp Aransas Zoo in Rockport.

There will be an Environmental Educators meet up at UHCL on January 28, 2026. They are hoping to get students involved, so please send information to any students who may be interested. It will be a free event with food. A flier for the event will be included in Ms. Gapayao's follow up email.

2026 PPE Subcommittee Meeting Dates

First Wednesdays in the afternoon:

- March 4, 2026, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.
- June 3, 2026, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.
- September 2, 2026, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.
- December 2, 2026, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Meeting Adjourned