

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

**Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 4, 2025
1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

Hybrid Meeting Via Microsoft Teams and In-Person

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); Kate Unger, National Wildlife Federation (NWF); Pam Smolen, Houston Audubon; Christina Taylor, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension; Brandi Keller, Texas A&M AgriLife/Texas Sea Grant; Jaden Kelly, Texas A&M Forest Service; Sam Hill, Texas A&M Forest Service; Morton Sager, Bayou Preservation Association (BPA); David Sharp, Exploration Green Conservancy; Eowyn Johnson, Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council (GINTC); Debbie Bush, University of Houston Clear Lake (UHCL); Ashley DeLeon, Harris County Precinct 4; Eduardo Hernandez, Nature Heritage Society (NHS); Elizabeth (Schneider) Walla, Galveston Park Board (GPB); Katie Wilson, Galveston County Health District (GCHD); Grant Moss, Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD); Carolyn Pope, Texas A&M Galveston; Rachel Weaver, Native Prairies Association of Texas (NPAT); Anna Weiss, Vision Galveston; Stephanie Gray, Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation (CELF); Wendy Reistle, UHCL; Tresea Antony, NHS; Melissa Wong, Houston Zoo; Christine Wehrli, Houston Audubon; Brittani Flowers, BPA; Tara Ocansey, CELF; Tiffany Ritter, Houston Arboretum and Nature Center (HANC); Alenka Cardenas, Bayou City Waterkeeper (BCWK); Barbara Fouts, NHS; Yvette Stewart, Audubon Texas; Huy Vu, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); Amy Neblett, Artist Boat; Cecelia Pham, Houston Public Library (HPL); Kelli Ondracek, HPARD; Lisa Marshall (GBEP); Matthew Abernathy (GBEP); Christian Rines (GBEP); Lindsey Lippert (GBEP); Jenelle Estrada (GBEP); Hope Cole (GBEP)

Roots to Rivers: Conservation Education and Partnership with the Texas A&M Forest Service

Jaden Kelly, a program specialist II with Conservation Education, and Sam Hill, a woodland ecologist with Water Resources presented on topics such as forest benefit to Galveston Bay, the W.G. Jones State Forest, and programs like Project Learning Tree, Virtually Wild! Texas, Texas Envirothon, Texas Woodlands Clinic, and more. This presentation can be viewed through [this link](#).

*PDF of the presentation is available upon request.

Member Spotlight: Nature Heritage Society

Eduardo Hernandez, the executive board president, gave a general presentation on NHS's history, target audience of participants, and the organization's regional footprint. He also mentioned the Witness Series and E.R. and Ann Taylor Park, a greenspace that NHS helps to steward that is part of GBEP's Riparian Restoration Initiative with UHCL. This presentation can be viewed through [this link](#).

*PDF of the presentation is available upon request.

Continuation of Discussion on Subcommittee Collaboration

Zoe Gapayao informed the subcommittee that GBEP will be hosting a meeting for members of all subcommittees in May. In preparation for this May meeting, the subcommittee continued their discussion on how to best collaborate across the four GBEP subcommittees. We spent most of the time adding many points for our PPE elevator pitch. We also noted questions and asks we may have for other subcommittees during the May meeting. There was a conversation about collaborating more with the Water and Sediment Subcommittee regarding engagement with local government groups. 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): Last Spring field trips have been scheduled for May at the end of the school year. They are currently working on the summer camps.
- Wetland Connections (GBF): Finished up classroom workshops with the schools and held the first field experience at Sweetwater Preserve with a school from Goose Creek ISD. They have decided to increase levels of career engagement and are including GIS into the program. Students will survey water quality at Sweetwater Preserve, which incorporates a 15-minute lesson for teachers to teach them how to use the data.
- Resiliency in Education and Green Infrastructure (GBF): They conducted a tree planting with 6 students and planted 14 trees. They have many plantings for freshwater and prairie plants scheduled for school groups in the next few months. Bioswales and the pond deepening have been completed, and rain barrels are getting set up. The bridge is almost finished. The open house will be on June 13 that partners will receive an invitation for.
- Community Outreach (UHCL/KPRC): Debbie Bush presented on this project at the State of the Bay Symposium. This project finishes at the end of the month, so they are working on the final report and getting everything ready for invoices.
- Stopping Plastics and Litter Along Shorelines in Houston's Bayous and Beyond (SPLASh): This will wrap up at the end of August. They've exceeded their metrics for amount of trash collected, people engaged, and number of small cleanups conducted. Their final large clean up will be in July in conjunction with the World Cup sustainability efforts.
- Engaging Under-resourced Communities in Conservation Phase II (BPA): White Oak Bayou steward coordinated their Meet the Native Neighbors event at the West 11th Street Pocket Prairie. They were able to engage the public to participate in the event

and had great support from stakeholders. Greens Bayou steward will have their role extended until the end of March due to additional funding in the contractual area. They will be able to complete their Green Up Greens Bayou Program and the tree plantings planned. The BPA steward biked a majority of Sims Bayou taking notes of impacts and created an impact report that they submitted to H-GAC for their watershed protection planning. She also created a packet of stakeholder groups and community organizations within the Brays and Sims Bayou watershed. The final report is expected in April.

- Trash Bash (H-GAC): March 28, 2026. They had some issues with sites, so they are down to 11 sites this year. They've been working with outside groups to borrow the Trash Bash educational games to be used outside of the event itself.
- City of Houston Nature Trails Master Plan (HPARD): The consultant has been onboarded to help create the masterplan. The consultant will visit this month. HPARD team has already been mapping out existing trails and habitats associated with them. Drafts of the plan to come.
- Texas Envirothon (UHCL): They've conducted 2 teacher workshops (December and January). Texas A&M Forest Service and GBF helped out as partners. They were able to offer students a \$200 stipend for attending the workshops. There are 16 teams signed up for the state event on March 28-30th in Nacogdoches, Texas. They are still waiting on a final contract with Mountain and Waves Film. The storyboard has already been written. Field trip is scheduled for the Winston 8 Ranch.

Announcements

Ms. Gapayao thanked everyone who attended the State of the Bay Symposium. Ms. Gapayao mentioned that GBEP will be sending out the date for the May meeting for all subcommittee members.

Lindsey Lippert announced that the June NRU meeting will focus on RESTORE projects. The speaker will go into detail about new requirements and this next round of funding. Anyone who would like the Teams link can reach out to Ms. Gapayao (zoe.gapayao@tceq.texas.gov) or Ms. Lippert (lindsey.lippert@tceq.texas.gov).

Texas Plastic Pollution Symposium will be held on March 25 at Texas A&M Galveston. Registration is completely free, but it is filling up quickly. Please head to texasplasticpollutionsymposium.com to register.

Ms. Lippert announced that the Texas Bays and Estuaries Meeting will be on April 22nd.

Brandi Keller announced that NestFest will be held this coming Tuesday.

Coastal Prairie Conservancy will be hosting their ribbon cutting ceremony for the Katie Prairie Welcome Center at the Indiangrass Preserve.

Stephanie Grey announced that CELF had to postpone their student symposium to May 15 with a change in location to Rice University.

Future 2026 PPE Subcommittee Meeting Dates

First Wednesdays in the afternoon:

- 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