

Meeting Summary
H-GAC REGIONAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

RFMC 7/15/2009

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Frank Rodriguez Jr. (Austin County); Kelly Hamby (Brazoria County); Sidney Lewis (Chambers County); Mark Vogler (Fort Bend County); Michael D. Talbott (Harris County); Lisa Krobot (Matagorda County); Phil Jones (Montgomery County); Andrew Isbell (Walker County); Yancy Scott (Waller County); Monica Martin (Wharton County); Scott Elmer (City of Missouri City); Sarah Metzger (City of Pasadena); Dale Rudick (City of Sugar Land); Blake Kellum (San Jacinto River Authority); Spencer Karr (Trinity River Authority); Scott Hall (Lower Neches Valley Authority); Troy Toland (City of Conroe)

Mark Jordan (Lower Colorado River Authority) was represented by Heidi Carlin

MEMBERS ABSENT:

David Collins (Colorado County); Mike Fitzgerald (Galveston County); Louis Bergman (Liberty County); Cruz Hernandez (City of Baytown); Mike Marcotte (City of Houston); Cathy Dominguez (Brazos River Authority)

VACANCIES:

City of Galveston; three "At Large"

H-GAC STAFF PRESENT:

Carl Masterson; Rachel Powers; Erin Livingston; Jeff Taebel; Andrea Tantillo

OTHERS PRESENT:

Bill Bandiga (Galveston County); Craig T. Meyers (City of Conroe); Brett Sachtleben (PBS&J); Scott Tuma (City of League City); Janis Scott (Public); John Grounds (TFMA); Tim Tietjens (City of La Porte); Daya Dayananda (City of Pasadena); Shashi Kumar (City of Sugar Land)

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at approximately 1:30 PM. Dale Rudick welcomed the Council, followed by self-introductions.

APPROVAL OF APRIL MEETING REPORT

On a motion by Scott Elmer and a second by Monica Martin, the meeting summary was approved by all.

MEMBERSHIP

Carl Masterson reported there were several new members in attendance and asked that each give a brief introduction. Scott Hall, from the Lower Neches Valley Authority, informed the Council that in the H-GAC region they work in Chambers and Liberty County and that they recently acquired the Devers

Canal System. Spencer Karr, from the Trinity River Authority, reported that their main interest is riverine flooding. Frank Rodriguez, from Austin County, stated he had recently taken Sandra Vrablek's position and that he also serves as the Austin County Fire Marshall and heads up the Environmental Department. Phil Jones, of Montgomery County, runs the building and septic department in addition to dealing with the floodplain issues in the county.

PRESENTATION ON THE FLOOD MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

Erin Livingston reported on the recent completion of the Flood Management Handbook. She began with a brief overview of the handbook contents and then reviewed the changes to the handbook since the April RFMC meeting. Changes to the handbook included a new cover photo, a new chapter order, re-ordered topics within each chapter, the addition of advantages and disadvantages in the mitigation and regulation chapters, and additional tables.

Q: What does H-GAC plan to do with the handbook?

A: The next step is to ask the RFMC to approve the handbook and take it to the H-GAC board in August seeking their approval. Once adopted, it will be posted on the H-GAC website with announcements of its availability going out in the C&E newsletter and the H-GAC newsletter. H-GAC will send copies of the approved version to members of the committee and to floodplain managers in the region who might not have a copy.

In general, the handbook was well received by the RFMC. In particular, one attendee praised the format of the handbook, stating that it lent itself very well to pulling out an individual section as a standalone document.

Q: Are we planning to separate the various parts of the handbook so that an individual could download an individual section as a PDF and print it out as a standalone handout?

A: Yes, that has been discussed and is one of the things we will be able to do with the handbook.

On a motion by Andrew Isbell and a second by Monica Martin, the handbook was approved by all for submittal to the H-GAC board.

PRESENTATION ON UPCOMING STORMWATER REGULATIONS & IMPLICATIONS FOR FLOOD MANAGEMENT

Sarah "Sam" Metzger, with the City of Pasadena, reported on the upcoming TCEQ regulations regarding stormwater permits for construction sites and other aspects of how water quantity and quality are related. TCEQ will possibly be giving a limit for total suspended solids (TSS) of 13 nephelometric turbidity units (NTUs) for construction sites over ten acres through their stormwater permits. Samples are to be a grab sample taken within the first 45 minutes of a storm. Sam addressed the question of how local governments will be affected.

Q: Who is responsible for conducting the sampling under each permit?

A: The permit holder for the construction site is responsible for conducting sampling and for reporting results to TCEQ. They report results to TCEQ.

Q: Will cities be responsible for enforcing these permits? What requirements does the local government have in regards to this regulation?

A: Local governments with a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit should be concerned with construction sites in their community, including small sites not regulated by TCEQ. Once TSS enters a permitted MS4, the permit holder becomes responsible under the regulations of their stormwater permit. TCEQ requirements often end up being local enforcement issues.

The difficulty with meeting the TSS requirement is that the BMPs will need to vary from site to site in order to maintain compliance. What works at one site will not necessarily work at another. The EPA has based the TSS limit on studies from the Pacific Northwest and it might not be as achievable here.

The big issue for a local government is time. There is not enough time to monitor all construction sites during a rain event, on top of all of the other work duties.

Sam also discussed the materials that can cause blockages and other problems in the stormwater system. Floatables, tires, and lawn clippings can all cause blockages and capacity problems in the storm sewer.

Sam suggested that Stormwater Management Plans, All Hazards Mitigation Plans, and Flood Management Plans should be coordinated. Many of their topics overlap and the various plans should be addressed as part of the whole. Wharton County is doing just that with their Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan and All Hazards Mitigation Plan.

REPORT BY H-GAC STAFF

TNRIS Mapping Update

H-GAC had previously mentioned that TNRIS might have money available for mapping. The money ended up going elsewhere, but another opportunity is coming up. The Texas Legislature has provided \$1.5 million for mapping, statewide. TNRIS staff are in the process of identifying mapping needs and priorities. TNRIS would like to acquire additional funding from FEMA and believes that a comprehensive list of mapping needs will increase the chances of receiving funds. FEMA has \$22 million in available funds.

Forms were provided for individuals to submit mapping needs. Each stream needs its own form. Completed forms can be submitted directly to the address on the back of the form with a copy to H-GAC.

Comment: When remapping was done previously everyone was asked to submit their priorities. These lists might be helpful in this new prioritization effort.

Scheduled presentation on the Ike Dike

Discussions are occurring regarding possible methods of protecting the Texas coast from hurricanes. Dr. Bill Merrell, from A&M Galveston, has developed the idea dubbed the "Ike Dike," consisting of a seawall extending the entire length of the Galveston County coast with gates at the entrance to Galveston Bay and at San Luis Pass. The West Galveston Island Property Owners Association will be presenting this idea at the August 6, 2009, meeting of H-GAC's Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC). All are welcome to attend.

Bacteria Implementation Group (BIG)

The BIG is the stakeholder group for the bacteria TMDLs going on in the region. Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month and are open to all.

New GIS data available on H-GAC website

This discussion was postponed until the next meeting.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION BY MEMBERS

Dale Rudick opened the discussion asking for possible presentation topics and project ideas. These should be prioritized at the next meeting or prior to the meeting through the use of Survey Monkey.

Enforcement of floodplain regulations

A big part of floodplain management is enforcement of the code. Maybe a District Attorney (DA) or Assistant DA that handles these cases could give a presentation on this topic. Possibly it should be split into two presentations: developing the case and prosecution of the case. H-GAC previously helped put together a primer on environmental regulations and enforcement to help educate judges and DAs on the laws and what can be done legally. Some commented that this might be the biggest issue.

Regional flood alert system

The current alert system belongs to HCFCD. HCFCD just completed a major study of the alert system. One of the recommendations of the study is to build partnerships with other local entities to expand the system. HCFCD could give a presentation on the current status. Maybe information should be included for those that are trying to set up gages.

Q: Is there something that can be done as a region to better coordinate and to make the whole system better and not just by county?

A: Other groups are already involved, Montgomery County, Sugar Land, the Trinity River Authority, and the San Jacinto River Authority. It is called the Harris County Regional Flood Alert System. One recommendation was to have a steering committee to get more involvement from local communities about what their needs are and about the type of system they would like to have. Right now they are not able to add any more gages to the system because of restrictions in radio frequencies. They will be forming a committee and they will be a lot more active.

Q: Is there anything that this group could do to help facilitate?

A: There is definitely a role for the RFMC to play. The group will be notified when a specific need comes up.

Information and education on MS4s

This presentation topic would include information on Phase I and II communities and the requirements for each in the context of flood management. This topic might be more applicable to the NRAC audience, but RFMC members and guests could be invited to attend.

Communication and public information after a disaster

Complaints were received after Hurricane Ike that information on the status of services in the smaller

cities was hard to come by for those that had evacuated. Maybe there should be a discussion to improve this situation for future events.

Create a list of experts available to assist others after a disaster

A statewide Mutual Aid Network is managed by the Texas Engineering Extension Service, Public Works Response Team. Maybe we can do something on a regional level to enhance these efforts, to promote it, or to encourage individuals to volunteer for the program.

Library of CRS applications

This idea was mentioned at a previous meeting and would assist local governments just applying for CRS by providing a source of successful applications for reference.

NFIP regulations

How should we keep up with new NFIP regulations? This topic was also mentioned previously.

Risk assessment models

SSPEED Center, at Rice, has some interesting models regarding risk assessment.

Eco-Logical

H-GAC is leading this project which is an initiative to more formally incorporate an ecosystem approach into long-term transportation planning.

Other announcements

Dale Rudick reported that the legislature just approved the Texas Hurricane Center (THC) at the University of Houston. It should not compete with the Rice University-based Severe Storm Prediction, Education and Evacuation from Disaster Center (SSPEED) as the THC is more focused on prevention and mitigation.

Mike Talbott reported that HCFCD has put in an application to FEMA to be the local delegate for letters of map revision for Harris County and is waiting on the response. If approved, HCFCD would conduct the local review of all map revisions and conditional letters of map revisions for Harris County, working with the local floodplain administrators. HCFCD would also provide technical support for model maintenance, which would be housed and distributed locally. Having everything done locally should speed up the process. If the proposal is approved, they would be willing to give a presentation to the RFMC.

Mike Talbott reported that the THC will have the "Texas Hurricane Conference on Preparedness, Loss Mitigation, Rapid Recovery & Lessons Learned" on August 7, 2009. SSPEED will also be having a seminar, "Hurricane Ike Revisited," on September 14, 2009.

John Grounds reported there is a call for abstracts, due August 7, 2009, for the TFMA fall conference. The conference will be held in Galveston October 13-15, 2009.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting will be October 21, 2009, at 1:30 PM, in Conference Room A of the H-GAC offices.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:00 PM.

DRAFT