

Watershed Outreach Workgroup
Thursday, February 5, 2009
9:30 AM to 11:30 AM

Individuals Present:

Jim Robertson (CCFCC); Nancy Sullins (AECOM); Marty Kelly (TCEQ); Kirk Fleener (TCEQ); Kathleen Ramsey (H-GAC); Harvey Denman (Citizen); Tina Petersen (CDM); Linda Broach (TCEQ); Steven Johnston (GBEP); Lauri Thanheiser (Environmental Infrastructure Planning); Linda Shead (Trust for Public Land); Herman Sanders (Harris County); Trent Martin (Harris County); Chip Morris by phone (TCEQ);

H-GAC Staff Present:

Rachel Powers; Erin Anderson

Discussion:

Q: To whom should we take the preliminary draft of the I-Plan?

A: H-GAC staff provided a list for viewing that included the cities, counties, and larger communities within the geographical area for each TMDL. Meeting attendees provided additional groups to contact ranging from garden clubs and environmental groups to the media and TxDOT. Rachel asked people to write down any specific individuals in the affected cities or counties that H-GAC staff should take the I-Plan to. One attendee stressed that to have better luck getting the media to cover a story messages should be targeted, press releases should be sent out regularly, and they should have key words.

The meeting then focused on methods of prioritization/criteria to prioritize the impaired waterways.

Q: How exactly will our prioritization be used?

A: Some things will be applied throughout the region, such as changes in permits. Where we will be picking one segment over another is in a situation like we have some available funding where would the money be best spent or where would we like to do a pilot study.

Anecdotal use data:

- Some anecdotal data seems pretty concrete
- Maybe could prioritize the different methods of witnessed use (UAA highest, rope swings etc. next, then stories of use)
- If we focus on current use we run the risk of missing the point of the plan, people want to use some areas more, maybe we need to look at where there is current community attention, an on-going effort, a focus to make the water quality better
- Maybe we can use anecdotal use data in a less specific way, not a fine line, but broad categories; there is a difference in magnitude between use in some streams; what we have difficulty in differentiating between is very similar streams, in similar settings; we will likely need to use anecdotal data to some degree due to the time constraints of the I-Plan
- EPA requires quantitative data for grant funding

Land use:

- The region is not static, maybe we need to get involved in the planning of new areas to incorporate water quality components, get involved in flood control infrastructure planning
- Maybe we need to look at current land use and future projected land use

Categories of criteria:

- Maybe start with the matrix brought to the last meeting; it has three categories: activity, accessibility and bacteria level; add implementation opportunities as a fourth criteria, also land use changes as a fifth; each category will be given points based on the category description scale, assessment units will be prioritized based on their scores
- Implementation Opportunities might be the number one priority, if there is no will to get it done then it won't happen
- Some of the criteria are really measures of something else, want to make sure we don't double count anything

Other topics:

- Need to also consider when we want to implement the different activities, need to have funding or we won't get to implement anything, this might help with prioritization
- Harris County made a map that depicts the percentage of flow that comes from a WWTF for the different stream segments, most are effluent dominated streams

Upon request, for those just joining group Rachel reviewed the tasks of the Watershed Outreach workgroup. It was stated that it would be helpful to have a list of the tasks displayed at each meeting to keep the discussion on track.

Suggestion:

To have a one page summary of the BIG and the I-Plan, could hand it out at different events/meetings.

Next steps:

- Group criteria
- Assign values to the criteria (not weighting, does a high number mean it's more important, what is the scale)
- Test the values on a couple of assessment units to make sure we come up with reasonable numbers
- Geographical representations for each of the criteria, and then layered (we will be able to note target areas, where we will need to do more investigation)

Next meeting:

- March 25, 2009, 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM, H-GAC, Conference Room C