

Watershed Outreach Workgroup
Wednesday, March 25, 2009
9: 00 AM to 11:00 AM

Individuals Present:

Steven Johnston (GBEP); Marty Kelly (TCEQ); Richard Chapin (City of Houston); Kirk Fleener (TCEQ); Jim Robertson (CCFCC); Linda Broach (TCEQ); Erika McCauley (TCEQ); Nancy Sullins (AECOM); Mike Lindsey, by phone (Montgomery County); Trent Martin (Harris County); Linda Shead (TPL); Barbara Sullivan (TCEQ)

H-GAC Staff Present:

Rachel Powers; Erin Anderson

BIG Reporter

Richard Chapin was identified as the BIG reporter for the April 21 BIG meeting.

Discussion:

Erin briefly described the spreadsheet that was provided. The columns represent the categories for the criteria. The group confirmed that the categories would not initially be weighted differently.

Erin asked for any suggestions for rewording the criteria. "Development threat" was changed to "potential for development." We discussed whether we should use "pathogen count" or "bacteria level" and decided to use both separately (other pathogens as data is available). The #2 item under accessibility should be split. Ramps, trails, developed parks, etc., should be part of accessibility level, while rope swings, fishing bobbers, beer cans should be under activity level. There was discussion of whether to break out "aesthetics" into its own line item. The group then decided to break each of the descriptors into specific line items. "Flow from WWTFs" should be changed to "Percentage of flow from WWTF." The group discussed whether to remove "cost" from the list, not because it is unimportant but because it is difficult to define or quantify at this time.

There was a discussion of whether to include "upstream" or "number of segments downstream" as a criteria, and the group decided to add that to the "Bacteria Level" category. Upstream segments would be prioritized.

In more general terms, we are combining risk (e.g., bacteria levels, activity levels) and implementation success (e.g., funding availability, existing support groups). The analysis essentially looks at these two issues.

Discussion of values

Bacteria levels: we choose the segments with the highest & lowest values.

Upstream/downstream. Values would be based on how many impaired assessment units are downstream (includes the unit being evaluated). More than five downstream AUs would be five, and one less point for each one d/s AU.

Population density: do we use relative values or absolute values? We'll use percentiles—we'll look at a graphic representation at the next meeting and decide. Higher value to highest population. We should probably look at ¼ mile AND ½ mile.

Drinking water: either "is" or "isn't". More points to streams that are drinking water sources.

For activities:

- Evaluate activities of different concern separately:
 - Swimming, SCUBA, snorkeling, jetskiing, waterskiing
 - documented use
 - evidence of use such as rope swings, docks, jetskis
 - frequently observed use
 - occasionally observed use
 - minimal use or no known use
 - Canoeing, kayaking, fishing, wading, incidental contact, graffiti painting
 - Trail use, picnicking, pontoon boat tours
 - documented use
 - evidence of use
 - frequently observed use
 - occasionally observed use
 - minimal use or no known use

Future planned use: The presence of a group that is developing a plan that would increase usage would get a high score.

Mowed channels would score higher than un-mowed channels.

Actual parks next to the channel would score higher.

Concrete lined streams score lower than non-concrete lined channels.

There was a suggestion to work with 'the sampling people' to include a checklist of activity and accessibility.

Should we add proximity of schools? Do the kids live on the other side of the channel from the school?

Add: how many schools are within a ¼ mile from the channel.

Next steps:

- 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
- H-GAC to begin developing 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:

- Tuesday, April 28, 2009, 9:30 to 11:30 am, H-GAC Conference Room B.