

Watershed Outreach Workgroup
Wednesday, December 10, 2008
2:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Individuals Present:

Jim Robertson (CCFCC); Nancy Sullins (AECOM); Alisa Max (HCPID-WPG); Lythia Metzmeier (TCEQ); Marty Kelly (TCEQ); Kirk Fleener (TCEQ); Rodney Adams (TCEQ); Kathleen Ramsey (H-GAC); Richard Chapin (City of Houston); Harvey Denman (Citizen); Tina Petersen (CDM); Miguel Galvan (TCEQ); Brian Shmaefsky (Lone Star College); Chip Morris by phone (TCEQ); Mike Lindsey by phone (Montgomery County)

H-GAC Staff Present:

Rachel Powers; Erin Anderson

Brainstorming Session:

Rachel explained that the table everyone had been given would be used in the final I-Plan report to present the workgroups' recommendations. The table format was taken from the San Antonio River Area Bacteria TMDL at the advice of TCEQ. One good thing about the table is that it includes the nine elements needed for 319 funding eligibility.

- Two main tasks
 - Prioritize waterways to focus on first
 - Communicate to the public the work being conducted
- TCEQ has done a Use Attainability Analysis (UAA) for Whiteoak and Buffalo Bayous, they plan to do this for streams throughout the region although this is a very long-term goal, this could be a recommendation we make that these be conducted
- TCEQ had H-GAC do a microbial risk assessment/UAA, TCEQ did not want to put their name on it because H-GAC found that it would be very difficult, complicated and expensive, the kind of UAA they are interested in does not address risk, hard to justify spending a lot of money if there is no risk
- H-GAC was asked to give a ballpark figure of use of five different waterways, did two studies:
 - a telephone survey – found adults don't go swimming, some children do, numbers for the different waterways were virtually the same, indicates that anecdotal data cannot be used
 - had people physically observe in the park on the same five waterways – found the same info, in terms of prioritization they found no difference between use in the different waterways, therefore anecdotal data could not be used to prioritize
- Ability to fix a bacteria problem is money driven, if there isn't money to implement activities for a particular watershed it doesn't matter what the risk is
- The Kansas study is different from our area, that study was rural and ours is primarily urban, TCEQ seems supportive of this study though

- Prioritization methods
 - Look at pathogen count not bacteria count (human health risk, per CDC there have been no reported cases of illness from the waterways in the region in 15 years of monitoring, Harris County has had no workman's comp claims from illness due to contact with the waterways)
 - Use (anecdotal data)
 - Cost
 - Bacteria levels (this is what the TMDL directs us to do, regardless of risk or any other criteria)
 - UAA
 - GIS (highlight stream segments with high population densities)
 - Percent of base flow from WWTFs (these are the more dangerous EC)
 - Community needs (where the community wants to make them swimmable)
 - Base on drinking water sources since there doesn't seem to be a health risk during contact recreation
 - Work from upstream to downstream
 - A matrix which includes activities taking place, accessibility of the segment, and bacteria level (this is what the H-GAC study did, they found there was no difference between segments and so couldn't prioritize)
 - A matrix including accessibility, recreational uses, leads to a drinking water source, waterway characteristics (quantity of flow, seasonal variation, average depth, natural or man-made banks, quantity of aquatic life)

Clarification:

TMDLs deal with assessment units. Each assessment unit is a part of a segment. Cypress Creek is a segment. Buffalo Bayou is a segment.

For Research workgroup:

Applicability of EC as indicator bacteria in a coastal environment

For next meeting:

- Bring Kansas study
- Bring H-GAC studies

Next meeting:

Thursday, January 22, 2009, 1:30 PM to 3:00 PM, H-GAC offices, Conference room C