



Meeting Summary
Tuesday, November 17, 2009

Members Present:

Michael Bloom	Ron Kelling	Linda Pechacek
Pat Buzbee	Helen Lane (phone)	Ceil Price
Marilyn Christian	Craig Maske	Kathy Richolson
Carol Ellinger	Cathy McCoy (phone)	Jim Robertson
Catherine Elliott	Michael Mooney	Linda Shead
Teague Harris	Becky Olive	Brian Shmaefsky
Jason Iken	Mitchell Page	Melvin Solomon
Tom Ivy	Raymond Pavlovich	

John Blount was represented by Alisa Max.
Robert Collins was represented by Mike Lindsey.
Joe Ferro was represented by Jesse Espinoza.
Mike Garver was represented by Jessalyn Ballard.
James Tynan Kelly was represented by Bruce Heiberg.
Robert Stokes was represented by Scott Jones.

Members Absent:

Jack Murphy

Guests Present:

Mike Bagstad (CH2M Hill), Tony Bennett (AECOM), Linda Broach (TCEQ), Richard Chapin (City of Houston), Joe Clark (City of Conroe), Cindy Contreras (TPWD), Catarina Cron (Harris County), Tom Douglas (UTSPH), Bryan Eastham (TCEQ), Jedediah Greenfield (City of Houston), Nicole Hausler (PHA), Margret Hines-Dorman (Citizen), Jonathan Holley (HCFCD), Steve Hupp (Harris County), Brian Koch (TSSWCB), Bruce Krewinghaus (SWH 2000), Kim Laird (TCEQ), Jason Leifester (TCEQ), Ed Matuszak (URS), Maria Modelska (University of Houston), John Moss (EcoServices), Jeannette Oden (USGS), Tina Peterson (CDM), Nick Russo (Harris County), Carol Serna (AEI Engineering), Robert Snoza II (HCFCD), Ron Stein (TCEQ), Nancy Sullins (AECOM), Carolyn White (HCFCD), Guyneth Williams (City of Houston)

H-GAC Staff Present:

Justin Bower, Om Chawla, Erin Livingston, Carl Masterson, Rachel Powers, Jeff Taebel

1. Welcome & Introductions

Rachel Powers welcomed and thanked everyone for coming. She initiated self-introductions of BIG members and H-GAC staff. Rachel then reviewed the agenda.

BIG members expressed concern over the agenda item requesting action on two items (priority sources and methodology of prioritization of watersheds). In particular, opinions were expressed that 1) not enough information was provided to make a decision, and 2) such proposals should be coming from workgroups, not staff. The group chose to continue the discussion later in the meeting, as delineated in the agenda.

2. Certification of Quorum

Twenty-nine members and alternates were present, achieving a quorum.

3. Approval of Proposed Alternates

Joe Clark was approved as an alternate for the City of Conroe.

Lisa Miller-Marshall was approved as an alternate for the Galveston Bay Foundation.

Mike Lindsey was approved as an alternate for Bob Collins.

The BIG agreed to invite Michael Turco or another representative of USGS to join the BIG.

4. Approval of October 20, 2009, Meeting Summary

Meeting notes were accepted with a few minor changes as reflected in the handouts. Rachel offered that Cheryl Wapnick, following up from her presentation in January, had provided a few articles relating to the risk of illness from human-source bacteria vs. non-human-source bacteria.

5. Public Engagement Plan Phase I

One final Open House has been scheduled for December 8, 2009, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. No formal presentation will be made at the meeting. Individuals will have the opportunity to obtain information, ask questions, and voice their opinions and concerns. A few hundred Public Engagement Phase I letters have been sent out since the October BIG meeting with information about the upcoming Open House. Additionally, the Association of Water Board Directors sent an email to their contacts in the nine counties where the BIG is operating.

Q: Can the comment deadline be extended to accommodate those being newly elected to office?

A: We will accept comments received after the requested date. H-GAC staff will meet with counties and large cities on an individual basis if they are interested, and a meeting can be arranged after the deadline.

Since the October BIG meeting, Carl Masterson has met with commissioners in Walker County and the judge in Liberty County. Response has been supportive, but generally unexcited.

Rachel Powers announced that the BIG now has a Facebook page and all present were encouraged to become a fan.

6. Workgroup Reports

Three workgroups have met since the October BIG meeting. Summaries were given by workgroup representatives as follows:

Onsite Sewage Facilities (OSSF)

The OSSF workgroup met on November 3, 2009, and had its largest group in attendance to date. The first major topic of the meeting was the data collection effort underway to map OSSF locations. The group discussed possible uses of the maps once they are created, including tracking growth and as a planning tool. H-GAC will provide all Authorized Agents with a template indicating the information being requested. Attendees did not feel an OSSF permit renewal fee would be appropriate. Reasons given ranged from concerns that program costs would outstrip revenues to concerns that a fee would be politically unacceptable. Education was identified as key to success in getting OSSF owners to properly maintain their system.

Wastewater Treatment Facilities (WWTF)

The WWTF workgroup met on November 10, 2009. Decisions made during the meeting include:

- The monthly average bacteria limit should be 63 MPN while the single grab limit will be 197 MPN.
- Bacteria will be sampled from each plant at the same frequency for which other parameters are sampled by the plant.
- Many of the WWTF implementation activities will need to be discussed/re-evaluated at a later date based on the success achieved from other activities implemented.

Monitoring & Plan Revision

The Monitoring workgroup met on November 16, 2009, and began with a presentation on indicator species and their relationship to illness by Tony Bennett, of AECOM. Topics discussed by the workgroup included ambient monitoring and how it doesn't necessarily demonstrate BMP success, testing for enterococcus at all monitoring sites and not saltwater sites, creating a regional database for maintaining data from non-ambient monitoring, and including in the implementation plan the chosen method for administrative tracking.

Two additional workgroup meetings have been scheduled.

- Thursday, November 19, 2009, at 1:30 PM Sanitary Sewer System
- Wednesday, January 6, 2010, at 1:30 PM Watershed Outreach and Coordination & Policy

Over the next few weeks staff will continue drafting the implementation plan and will send out sections, via email, to the appropriate workgroups for comments. The draft will be presented to the BIG in January and H-GAC staff will begin generating buy-in from responsible parties in March. The final draft is scheduled to go to TCEQ in August.

Q: What formal reporting requirements does TCEQ have in regards to an implementation plan?

A: None. TCEQ only requires reasonable assurances that the activities in the plan will be implemented.

Q: When do you plan to get the draft sections to the workgroups so that they can comment?

A: We are working on those that were identified by the BIG in March as the top priorities first so that those workgroups will have a greater amount of time to comment.

Comment: We should try to stay as close to the original schedule as possible, but we should not rush so much that we don't have sufficient time for review.

7. Staff Presentations

Priority Sources

One of the critical elements of the bacteria decision support tool presented at the October BIG meeting was that human sources of bacteria were prioritized over non-human sources. At the March BIG meeting, the sources identified as priorities by the BIG did seem to be predominantly human. Rachel asked the BIG whether human sources should be prioritized over non-human sources. There were no objections.

Methodology for prioritizing watersheds

H-GAC staff identified the data types used in the analysis by PBS&J in Florida and determined the availability of the same data for our region. Erin presented a table that indicated whether H-GAC has the data, H-GAC is working to get the data, someone else has the data, or if the data is currently unavailable. Staff added to the list of data needs items identified by the Watershed Outreach workgroup as information to consider for watershed prioritization.

Q: Are you planning to include the bacteria source testing (BST) in our method? This has the potential to be very expensive and possibly not effective.

A: BST would not necessarily be conducted for every segment or possibly any. Other options such as site surveys could be employed.

Comments made by the BIG touched on the following points:

- Is H-GAC planning to prioritize the watersheds for the implementation plan or is H-GAC going to include in the plan a method that communities can use to

prioritize their watersheds? I'm not sure if we can analyze the existing data in a meaningful way in only two months.

- Generally speaking I agree with prioritizing human sources over non-human sources and the general notion of comparing bacteria level with potential pathogenicities, but I am uncomfortable with saying go forward with this method when we haven't seen anything in writing, without seeing what is really being proposed.
- I do think the plan should include a method for prioritizing watersheds, but we should not prioritize the watersheds at this point in time with the current data.
- I am concerned with the significant costs that were involved in the PBS&J method of prioritization. Perhaps we should spend more money on implementation and less on prioritization.
- I don't think items such as this should be added to the BIG agenda if they did not come from a workgroup.
- I support taking existing data and creating a first draft using criteria from workgroups. It would be useful to do that. How does this change decisions that occur later? I'm not sure the analysis that can be completed in two months will be detailed enough for communities. They may need to do the analysis on their own as implementation begins. Spending a small percentage of the available funds each year to determine where activities should be implemented might be beneficial.
- Possibly the chart should sort out source prioritization and watershed prioritization. Also, we need to watch out for duplicity.
- I think allowing local entities some flexibility in how the prioritization method is implemented is important.

Response: H-GAC has already spent money to gather much of the needed data (e.g., Clean Rivers Sampling data). We should look at how much money this region has to spend per year. I think we will have to come up with some imperfect tool of this type to start gaining consensus of what those first five years will encompass. We will work with the appropriate workgroup to come up with a proposal.

8. Other Business/Roundtable

Status of Houston Metro and Lake Houston TMDLs

There are currently six TMDL documents remaining to be completed and approved: Brays, Greens, Halls, Sims, Eastern Houston, and Lake Houston. On December 9, 2009, the Greens Bayou TMDL will be going to the TCEQ commissioners for approval to release the TMDL for public comment. Once released, the document will be posted on the TCEQ website along with the Technical Document. The plan is to take the other four Houston Metro TMDLs out for public comment after Greens and then Lake Houston will follow.

TCEQ is striving for consistency in the documents. Subsequently, all will follow the Buffalo/Whiteoak models except that only the load duration curve method has been

used. In the TMDLs, all WWTFs will be given half of the current bacteria standard and will remain at 63 MPN even if standards change. A margin of safety will be included in the allocations as only the load duration curve methodology is being used. Also, an allocation for future growth has been included in the WWTF allocation.

Q: Can the BIG see the TMDL documents before they go to the TCEQ commissioners?

A: Yes. The Greens Bayou draft is ready now, but the others are not.

Q: Could you characterize the relationship between the TCEQ and the EPA with the new regional administrator in the water program in Dallas?

A: Currently nothing has changed in regards to emphasis or importance.

Q: Will all WWTFs have to meet the *E. coli* limit of 63 at the same time or different times?

A: It will occur upon the next permit renewal for each WWTF. WWTF will need to comply immediately with the bacteria standard of 126. WWTF will have three years from the issuance of a permit to comply with the 63. New plants would have to comply immediately with 63. Anything included in the implementation plan will be added to permits as well.

9. Next Meeting Date

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be on December 15, 2009.

10. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:15 PM.