



**Animals & Agriculture Work Group
DRAFT Meeting Notes
December 18, 2012
1:00 pm to 3:00 pm
H-GAC Conference Room A, Second Floor**

Attendees

Brian Koch (TSSWCB), Steven Mitchell (TPWD), Rachel Powers (H-GAC), Mary Purzer (AECOM)

Call to Order/Welcome/Introductions

Rachel called the meeting to order and initiated self-introductions.

Review Notes from Last Year

Rachel provided the notes from last year in case they were needed for reference.

Update on I-Plan Approval Process

The TCEQ unanimously approved the BIG I-Plan on January 30, 2013. The approved version included the changes to the I-Plan that had been discussed at previous BIG meetings. None of the changes were in the references sections.

Review Annual Report format

Rachel explained that the conceptual format for the annual report was developed in collaboration by the BIG and agreed to at the BIG mid-year meeting in October 2012. The report will consist of three main components:

- 1) At-a-Glance: The At-a-Glance section will be one 11x17 paper that includes cover page with a photo; a table of implementation activities, proposed milestones, and an evaluation of progress; and a sheet with background information, a map, and high-level review of progress overall.
- 2) A printed report: In addition to a narrative overview, the printed report will include information about progress and goals for each of the strategies in the plan. Each strategy will be described by a narrative description preceded by a tabular summary sheet, which will include recommendations from the workgroup to the BIG regarding progress, achievements, focus for the coming year, and revisions to the I-Plan.
- 3) Web-based support documents: If additional information, such as lengthy tables, are necessary, these will be provided in an on-line format.

Review Implementation Progress-- The workgroup reviewed progress for each of the implementation activities, as follows.

Implementation Strategy 7.0: Animals & Agriculture

- 7.1: Increase Participation in Existing Programs for Erosion Control, Nutrient Reduction, and Livestock Management
 - Texas Water Resources Institute has created a series of publications as part of the new Lone Star Health Streams Program. One of the goals of the program is: "...the protection of Texas Waterways from bacterial contamination originating from livestock operations and feral hogs..." Brian Koch provided copies of some of the publications:
 - Reducing bacterial contamination of waterways
 - Beef Cattle Manual
 - Feral Hog Manual
 - Horse Manual
 - Improving Water Quality of Grazing Lands Fact Sheet
 - Lone Star Healthy Stream Program Fact Sheet
 - The group did discuss agricultural exemptions granted by appraisal districts, which may promote having more animals on a property than might be desirable for bacteria loading purposes. H-GAC will track progress resulting from other TMDL implementation activities.
 - Rachel provided a copy of the Ag BMP Effectiveness Table, developed by Texas Water Resources Institute for the Carter's Creek TMDL. Lone Star Healthy Streams has fact sheets about Ag BMPs for reducing bacteria: The program also provides fact sheets for agricultural BMPs for livestock: <http://lshs.tamu.edu/bmps/>.
 - Rachel attended meetings of many of NRCS Local Work Group Meetings, at which decisions are made at the county level regarding priorities for EQIP funding. She provided information about the BIG and encouraged the work groups to consider bacteria as decisions about funding priorities were made. While drought recovery was a common issue at the meetings, many of the priority practices are already among the recommended BMPs that are prioritized. Rachel plans to follow up and look at allocation of funds to see if relatively more funds are allocated to BMPs specific to reducing bacteria.
 - Rachel reminded the work group of the Inventory of Program Participation: Environmental Working Group Farm Subsidy Database, which has data at a more granular level than the NRCS reports. (<http://farm.ewg.org/>)
 - H-GAC has been participating in a project of The Conservation Fund to study the effectiveness of economic incentives to increase participation in voluntary programs. Hopefully, some of the study will be in the BIG project area.
- 7.2: Promote the Management of Feral Hog Populations
 - The TSSCB has awarded a grant to the AgriLife Extension to administer a statewide feral hog program. As part of the grant, an extension agent will be assigned to an area slightly larger than the H-GAC region to provide workshops and technical assistance. While the program is statewide, the special attention in the region is in part because of a similar grant application that H-GAC made for similar services. [Contact Mark Tyson at mark.tyson@ag.tamu.edu (979) 845-4698.]
 - Texas A&M Agrilife Extension has developed a "Feral Hog Community of Practice" (http://www.extension.org/feral_hogs) that includes a website,

webinars, and publications. (The work group meeting was immediately preceded by a group viewing of one of the webinars.)

- The Texas Department of Agriculture sponsors the “Hog Out Month County Challenge,” with monetary awards for the counties that provide the most education (one point per person) and take the most hogs (half point per hog). The number of counties in the region increased this year, and included the following counties: Austin, Chambers, Fort Bend, and Montgomery. We are hopeful that BIG Counties will be among the top ten contestants next year.
- Pork Chopper: It is possible to get a list of landowner agreements and Aerial Wildlife Permits from the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. Pork Choppers apparently are one of the most effective feral hog management tools.
- [Harris County informed us after the meeting that they had received a significant grant for feral hog management in the Addicks and Barker Reservoirs. More info next year!]

Confirm Recommendations to the BIG for Annual Report

The work group reviewed the draft Implementation Strategy Cover Sheets for the two strategies: Stormwater & Land Development and Construction.

There were 3 attendees including no BIG members and 1 alternate (which is more than last year).

The group did not recommend changes for the At-a-glance table.

The proposed wording for Progress was appropriate.

The proposed wording for Achievements was appropriate.

The proposed wording for Focus was appropriate.

The group did not recommend revisions to the I-Plan.

Adjourn

BIG Annual Meeting: Tuesday, May 14, 2013

[Tentative date for next meeting: Early November 2013.]