

Ag/Wildlife/Habitat/Feral Hogs

Work Group Meeting Summary

Armand Bayou I-Plan

June 10, 2013

H-GAC: Aubin Phillips

Meeting Attendees: Steven Mitchell (TPW), Danielle Cioce (Harris County), Diana Foss (TPW), Brian Koch (TSSWCB), Linda Broach (TCEQ)

This meeting was held at Armand Bayou Nature Center. Participants made self introductions before getting started with the meeting.

The meeting started with Brian Koch giving a presentation on the programs offered by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board. Brian specifically talked about Water Quality Management Plans – these are site specific plans developed by local Soil and Water Conservation Districts for agricultural lands based on lists of approved practices. The benefits to the landowner include an operation plan, improved water quality, and a certified plan detailing what is allowed. Currently, Brian is not aware of any of these plans in the watershed. The local SWCD is the Harris County Soil and Water Conservation District. These plans can be done for ag leases as well as for property owners, if a property is sold the plan can stay with the property or be redone. Cost shares can only be done once per property owner under a plan. If the plan is not followed, it will be de-certified, and cost shares will have to be paid back. The state max for funds available to landowners is \$15,000, some SWCDs have lower limits, this covers up to 75% of implementation costs.

The rest of the meeting was spent discussing the implementation activities from the BIG plan that have to do with agriculture and feral hogs. The group thought it would be good to know how many agricultural properties there are in the watershed and what their acreages are. TPWD talked about their landowner field days that they hold and how maybe these could be used to cross-educate about the ag plans as well as about wildlife issues. The TPWD already has a working list of landowners that might be able to be tapped into. These workshops involve speakers (maybe they could have a presentation about Armand Bayou, WQMPs, or feral hogs or OSSFs or riparian areas.) These would be a good education and outreach component.

For feral hogs, these are mostly the landowner's responsibility. There is a feral hog workshop produced by Texas A&M Agrilife extension, we could see about having one in Armand Bayou watershed, or possible joining with Dickenson Bayou. These events tend to draw very large crowds.

One thing that the group thought might be missing was an implementation activity having to do with riparian repair and created or constructed wetlands. There are a few areas of the watershed where this could be helpful in helping filter the water before it reaches the waterways. There was also some discussion about whether or not this would even be doable from the flood control perspective. It is possible there may be something in the stormwater section about this.