

# Cotton Bayou Watershed Public Meeting

Thursday, January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

## **In Attendance:**

Organizers:

Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)

Steven Johnston, H-GAC Project Staff

Rachel Windham, Presenter, H-GAC Project Manager

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)

Jason Leifester, TCEQ Project Manager

Attendees:

Francisco Carrillo, City of Mont Belvieu

Maria-Theresa Sigua, H-GAC

## **Meeting Notes:**

Welcome and Introductions

- Rachel Windham (H-GAC) commenced the meeting at 9:00 a.m. by welcoming the attendees. She then called roll to give attendees an opportunity to introduce themselves.

Project Overview and Updates

- Ms. Windham provided an overview of the Cotton Bayou funded by TCEQ and facilitated by H-GAC:
  - Levels of the fecal indicator bacteria *Enterococcus* in exceedance of the state water quality standard observed in Cotton Bayou currently do not support recreation use as described in the 2020 Integrated Report of Surface Water Quality produced by TCEQ. This impairment led to the formation of this project which aims to identify sources of bacteria pollution

in the watershed and improve water quality by implementing bacteria source reduction strategies.

- Potential sources of bacteria contamination include wastewater discharge, failing onsite sewage facilities, domestic and wildlife animal waste, and waste from invasive species such as feral hogs.
- Ms. Windham explained that the Technical Support Document has been developed to provide an in-depth analysis of bacteria pollution and ultimately calculate a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) or “budget” for bacteria pollution Segment 0801C of Cotton Bayou.

### Bacteria Sources

- Ms. Windham explained the general methodology and data sources used to estimate potential bacteria loads from a number of nonpoint sources in the watershed including on-site sewage facilities, sanitary sewer overflows, pet waste, livestock waste, feral hog waste, and deer waste. The estimated load requires a 98.82% reduction to meet the TMDL.
- Ms. Windham demonstrated what a 98.82% reduction would look like for each of the sources in practical units but stressed that the prioritization implementation strategies and of source reductions will be decided by the stakeholders.

### Survey

- Ms. Windham invited attendees to participate in a survey that would reflect their anticipated level of concern for each of the previously discussed bacteria sources based on their knowledge of the Cotton Bayou Watershed. This survey will also be delivered to the greater stakeholder mailing list to gather more responses. The results of the survey will guide the prioritization of implementation measures included in the draft Implementation (I-Plan).

### Implementation Plan Strategies

- Ms. Windham provided an overview of the components of an I-Plan including:
  - Strategies - actionable items to address bacteria reduction for a specific management measures associated with specific priority areas and responsible parties
  - Milestones - measurable goals to reflect progress of strategies
  - Schedule – guide for which milestones should be accomplished in the next five years and at what point

- Estimated Load Reductions - estimate of how much the bacteria load will be reduced by implementing the strategies of each management measure converted to an annual load value
- Ms. Windham also explained the usual management measures for which strategies, milestones, schedules, and load reductions are included in I-Plans such as:
  - Promoting safe OSSF use and maintenance
  - Reducing stormwater sources such as pet wastes and illegal dumping
  - Supporting land management initiatives
  - Promoting feral hog management
  - Maintaining and improving WWTF and collection system function
- Lastly, Ms. Windham described the adaptive management methodology of I-Plans which allows for stakeholders to periodically assess plan measures for efficiency and effectiveness

### Next Steps

- The next focus for the project will be to prepare for the development of an I-Plan at a meeting tentatively scheduled for the end of February.
- Ms. Windham also encouraged attendees to reach out with any feedback about the project, as well as any information about environmental quality efforts already underway in the watershed interested in collaborating with the Cotton Bayou effort.

### Discussion

- No further discussions were held.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

For more information about the meeting or the project, please contact Rachel Windham with the information below:

Phone: 713-993-2497

Email: [rachel.windham@h-gac.com](mailto:rachel.windham@h-gac.com)



This project is funded by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and is facilitated locally by the Houston-Galveston Area Council