



Public Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 15th, 2026
5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

In Attendance:

Organizers:

Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC):

- Cornell Evans, Jr., H-GAC Project Manager
- Rachel Windham, H-GAC Project Manager
- Kendall Guidroz, H-GAC Guest Speaker

In-Person Attendees:

Xavier Alfaro-Lopez (Harris County Precinct 1)
John Berlinghoff (Sims Bayou Coalition)
Charles Goforth (Brays Bayou Association)
Maria Hernandez (Madres del Parque)
Mervin Jen (FOCT)
Brian Koch (Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board)
Jari McCoy (Bayou Preservation Association)
Travis Mcgee (Super Neighborhood 72 South Park)
William Merrell (HDR, Inc.)
Daniel Millikin (Willow Waterhole Bayou Greenspace Conservancy)
Hezron Motoum (N/A)
Kelly Norrid (Texas Parks & Wildlife Department)
Obiageli Onuba (Mina II Society)
Edi Pettitt (FOCT)
Stephen Polnaszek (Super Neighborhood 38 Near Southwest)
Tiernan Pytlak (Bayou Preservation Association)
Tracy Stephens (Sunnyside Civic Club Inc.)
Debra Walker (Sunnyside Community Redevelopment Organization)
Phyllis Wiggins (Super Neighborhood 71 Sunnyside)
Eric (FOCT)

Virtual Attendees:

Zachary Bolick (The Student Conservation Association)
Amy Dinn (N/A)
Walter Funes (Hawes Hill & Associates)
Paola Guzman (Madres del Parque)

Allessundra Harris (NUNCD, INC.)
Forrest Hartmann (City of Houston Houston Health Department)
Sam Hill (Texas A&M Forest Service)
Jen Irving (Houston Advanced Research Center)
Vincent Lowery (Sunnyside TX Chamber of Commerce)
Mayra M. (Madres del Parque)
Evelyn Merz (Sims Bayou Coalition)
Lisa Montemayor (City of Houston)
Hanadi Rifai (University of Houston)
Morton Sager (SPLASHTX)
Robert Snoza (Harris County Flood Control District)
Melva Thornton (N/A)
Fatima Wajahat (Harris County Precinct 4)
Karina Yonekawa-Blest (Friends of Fonde Park)
Melanie Young (N/A)

Meeting Notes:

Welcome and Introductions

- Cornell Evans and Rachel Windham (H-GAC) commenced the hybrid meeting at 5:00 pm by welcoming the attendees. Mr. Evans introduced himself and the participants in the room, then called roll for virtual attendees.

Project Overview and Background, Steering Committee Nominations

- Mr. Evans provided an overview of the Brays and Sims Bayou watershed.
 - The Brays and Sims Bayou watershed is located primarily within Harris County, with a small portion of the western side touching Fort Bend County. Major cities include Houston, South Houston, Bellaire, West University Place, and Southside Place with roadways such as I-45 and I-69 running through the watershed. The watershed is heavily developed, with the exception of a small percentage of forest, wetland and pasture land cover types mostly found in Sims Bayou.
 - Assessments of surface water in the Brays and Sims Bayou watershed indicate impairments for contact recreation use due to bacteria levels in exceedance of the state water quality standard. There are also concerns for aquatic life and general use due to high nutrient levels and depressed oxygen.
 - Mr. Evans explained to the audience how the watershed partnership is structured, including defining the general partnership, workgroups, and the

steering committee. He then announced the members of the steering committee and thanked them for their support.

- Mr. Evans explained how the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) conducts statewide monitoring to assess water quality on several waterbodies throughout Texas. From the results that they produce, an integrated report is generated every two years. Any waterway that exceeds their standards are considered impaired. As part of their Clean Rivers Program (CRP) they have stations set up throughout the watersheds that help them collect parameters of data such as salinity or dissolved oxygen using high frequency sensors, or via sampling conducted by staff members. There are 39 of these monitoring station sites across Brays and Sims Bayou.
- Ms. Yonekawa-Blest inquired about how people that go fishing on Brays & Sims Bayou are notified that it is not safe to do so. It was stated that by an audience member that the Texas Department of State Health Services typically issues consumption advisories on their website. Ms. Yonekawa-Blest responded that signage near the waterbodies is needed as the average citizen will most likely not look up that information before traveling out there. The attendees agreed that signage should be prioritized as an implementation strategy for the watershed protection plan (WPP).
- Mr. Evans gave an overview of the various bacteria sources you may find in a watershed including wastewater, illicit sewage, septic tanks (otherwise known as On-Site Sewage Facilities or OSSFs), pets, livestock, etc. He explained that these sources are categorized into either point or non-point sources, with fecal waste from pets being considered a non-point source, while wastewater discharge is a point source.

Bacteria Source Models

- Before beginning the discussion of the Bacteria Source Models section, Mr. Evans explained to attendees that the section is designed to be subject to feedback and criticism to ensure that the findings are as accurate as possible based on statements from those that live in the watersheds or have knowledge of them.
- Mr. Evans explained that preliminary data analysis conducted by H-GAC indicated that nonpoint source pressures are the major influence of high levels of bacteria throughout both watersheds. However, it was noted that point source pollution can also occur. From H-GAC's preliminary findings, approved methodology was used to estimate potential fecal bacteria source loads throughout the watersheds. This is known as the Spatially Explicit Load Enrichment Calculation Tool (SELECT). It is a GIS-based tool

developed by the Spatial Sciences Laboratory and the Biological and Agricultural Engineering Department at Texas A&M University. SELECT analyses result from the combination of land use and land cover data, known source locations such as outfall pipes, literature assumption values for nonpoint sources (e.g., pet waste, livestock census data, wildlife population density), and stakeholder input. Due to limitations of the model, all references to load estimates throughout the Brays & Sims Bayou watershed refer to potential source loads and not necessarily the actual amounts of fecal bacteria transported into the Brays & Sims Bayou waterways.

- The methodology is modified to weight source load estimates based on distance from the waterways. This is known as the buffer approach. Buffers or zones within a specified distance from a feature (in this case, waterways) are used to differentiate source load estimations by proximity to streams. Essentially this means that loads generated right near streams are more likely to contribute to instream loading. Because the original SELECT model cannot account for the transport of pollutant loads, H-GAC staff had to incorporate the buffers around riparian corridors. Staff then assigned lower loading rates to sources located in areas outside the buffer, which minimizes overrepresentation of sources located farther from waterways. This means that, 100 percent of the waste generated by sources within a 300-foot buffer zone was assumed to impact the stream network. For sources located in areas outside this zone, only 25 percent of the total waste was assumed to be transmitted to the stream network.
- Mr. Evans provided an overview of methods and results for several bacteria sources which included wastewater treatment facilities (WWTFs), OSSFs, dog waste, livestock waste, deer waste, and feral hogs. In order to visualize the spatial distribution of these potential fecal bacteria source load estimates, H-GAC staff split up the Brays & Sims Bayou watersheds into several subwatersheds (based on flow, hydrology, stream complexity, representative CRP stations, etc.) and presented these findings to attendees in the form of maps. For a full explanation of H-GAC's data analysis including the SELECT model, spatial distribution of potential fecal bacteria source load estimates, and how the two watersheds were split into subwatersheds, please see the Bacteria Modeling Report located on the Brays & Sims Bayou WPP website (under Technical Documents): <https://www.h-gac.com/watershed-based-plans/brays-sims-bayou>.
- Mr. Evans also discussed other sources that don't have reasonable methods for quantifying their impacts such as other wildlife, birds, and sanitary

sewer overflows. He then provided an overall summary of each source in the form of pie charts that showcase the estimated percentages of the fecal bacteria source loads from the most current data in 2022, as well as projections of those values out to 2050. There was much discussion and feedback on the weight assigned to each source and how the estimates for the categories of dog waste and other sources/wildlife need to be lowered, while livestock, specifically cattle and horses, should be slightly increased (at least for the Sims Bayou watershed). Conversely, an attendee stated that any non-human source should not be a focus for the watersheds. Concerns regarding infrastructure improvements were made, particularly in the Sims Bayou watershed, and how that should be a priority action item for the WPP. It was unanimously agreed by attendees that deer waste and feral hogs are not a concern and do not have a presence in Brays & Sims Bayou. Ms. Merz stated online that she has only seen 3 feral hogs in the Sims Bayou watershed in the past 30 years. During these discussions, Mr. Norrid provided feedback on possibly including other types of sources such as naturally occurring sources, microbial sources, genetics, etc. to determine their impact. Mr. Evans stated that this has actually been a topic of discussion in the past at H-GAC, particularly by stakeholders during meetings held by the Bacteria Implementation Group (webpage located here: <https://www.h-gac.com/bacteria-implementation-group>) and that stakeholders would like to see these kinds of topics brought up as a concern to TCEQ as well.

Next Steps, H-GAC Implementation & Outreach Resources, and Discussion

- The outlook between the current meeting and the next scheduled meeting (June 2026) was discussed. H-GAC staff plan to take all feedback received during the meeting and meet with workgroups to refine and revise modeling results in May.
- Next Partnership meeting will be held in June to share revisions and begin discussing implementation strategies
- Mr. Evans informed attendees about upcoming volunteer/engagement opportunities sponsored by the Houston FIFA World Cup 2026 Host Committee's Sustainability Committee. Those interested may visit their webpage to stay connected and get involved to take action in the watersheds in between meetings: <https://luma.com/environmentalsustainability>.
- Ms. Guidroz wrapped up the meeting by presenting a segment on H-GAC's Implementation & Outreach Resources. She discussed several opportunities

including the Coastal Communities outreach map, educational display loan outs, the Texas Stream Team program, and the Water Resources Information Map, which makes H-GAC's Texas Stream Team and CRP water quality data available to the public (<https://www.h-gac.com/clean-rivers-program/data/surface-water-monitoring-data>). For a copy of the meeting presentation including associated links discussed during the meeting, please visit <https://www.h-gac.com/watershed-based-plans/brays-sims-bayou>).

Meeting Adjourned at 7:04 pm.

For more information, visit <https://www.h-gac.com/watershed-based-plans/brays-sims-bayou>, or contact project staff:

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