

Cotton Bayou Watershed Public Meeting (GoToWebinar)

Tuesday, April 28th, 2020
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm

In Attendance:

Organizers:

Andrea Tantillo, Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) – Meeting Facilitator

Steven Johnston, H-GAC – Meeting Moderator

Rachel Windham, H-GAC – Presenter, H-GAC Project Manager

Gerrad Hofmans, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) – TCEQ
Project Manager

Attendees:

Bill Thompson, Mont Belvieu

Cullen Francis, Mont Belvieu

Dalton Rice, Mont Belvieu

Doug Going, Cove

Elizabeth Kompanik, TCEQ

Gary Rabalais, Jones Carter

Jean Wright, H-GAC

Nikki Fitzgerald, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, Chambers County

Ricardo Villagrand, Mont Belvieu

Scott Swigert, Mont Belvieu

Sharon Parker, Cove

Stacey Carr, TCEQ

Steve Barry, Jones Carter

Steve Floyd, Mont Belvieu

Todd Running, H-GAC

William Sagastizado, Jones Carter

Meeting Notes:

Welcome and Introductions

- Andrea Tantillo (H-GAC) commenced the meeting at 5:30 pm by welcoming the attendees and reviewing GoToWebinar functions for asking questions and making comments throughout the presentation. She then introduced the speaker, Rachel Windham (H-GAC).

Project Overview and Preliminary Findings

- Rachel Windham provided an overview of the Cotton Bayou Watershed Characterization Project funded by TCEQ and facilitated by H-GAC:
 - Bacteria levels in exceedance of the state water quality standard observed in Cotton Bayou currently do not support recreation use as described in the 2018 Integrated Report of Surface Water Quality produced by TCEQ.
 - The Watershed Characterization Project objectives are to characterize bacteria concentrations in Cotton Bayou and to identify potential sources leading to high bacteria levels throughout the watershed. These preliminary steps will lead to the development of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) assessment.
 - Preliminary results indicate bacteria levels exceed state water quality standards at both monitoring stations (18696 and 18697) on Cotton Bayou. Load duration curve analyses indicate that:
 - A combination of point and non-point source pressures are leading to high levels of bacteria in the waterway, and
 - Great reductions are needed to comply with state water quality standards at high flows for station 18697 and all levels of flow for station 18696.
 - Potential sources of bacteria contamination were reviewed as well as calculations for estimating sources relative to the land area of the Cotton Bayou Watershed. These sources include wastewater discharge, sanitary sewer overflow, failing onsite sewage facilities, and domestic and wildlife animal waste.

Discussion and Public Comment

- Steve Barry (Jones Carter) indicated that current predictions for land development in the Cotton Bayou watershed may be underestimating what is planned to take place.

- Nikki Fitzgerald (Agrilife) asked if bacteria source tracking is being conducted in this watershed.
 - Bacteria source tracking efforts are not taking place in the Cotton Bayou Watershed in relation to this project, however this would be a good item to discuss during later phases of the project when specific reduction strategies are determined.
- In the general discussion, a clarification was made on how stream flow was calculated for flow and load duration curve analyses. As there is no current flow gage on Cotton Bayou, streamflow was estimated from a nearby USGS gage on Goose Creek by adjusting flows observed on Goose Creek by watershed area relative to that of Cotton Bayou.
- Ricardo Villagrand (Mont Belvieu) asked for clarification on impairment in the waterbody vs. the watershed and also asked about the possibility of expanding sampling efforts in the watershed.
 - While the 2018 Integrated Report of Surface Water Quality produced by TCEQ specifically indicates that Cotton Bayou is an impaired waterbody. The watershed area is assumed to contribute to this impairment as the source of point and non-point contamination.
 - An increase in the number of monitoring sites could help to develop a better understanding of sources. H-GAC and Mont Belvieu will discuss potential action strategies for expanding monitoring in the Cotton Bayou Watershed.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:30 pm.

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

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Email: 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