

Meeting Summary
Clear Creek Bacteria TMDL Public Meeting

February 7, 2007

ATTENDING: Linda Broach (TCEQ); Jon-Paul Komar (Harris County SWQ); Susan Karlins (Houston); Steve Johnston (GBEP); Jean Wright (H-GAC); George Guillen (EIH); Karen Atkinson (TCEQ); Torin McCoy (resident); Jim Coody (GHBA); Catherine Elliott (HCFCD)

SUPPORT TEAM PRESENT: Carl Masterson (H-GAC); Mary Jane Naquin; Hanadi Rifai (UH); Ron Stein (TCEQ); Mel Vargas (Parsons)

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS/AGENDA REVIEW

Following introductions facilitator Mary Jane Naquin reviewed the purpose of the meeting and the agenda, and presented the ground rules for the meeting.

PROJECT UPDATE

Dr. Hanadi Rifai (UH) presented a status of the project beginning with a review of the water quality standards for contact recreation and progress of activities conducted or begun in FY 2005 & 2006. Historical data compilation and analysis is complete. Sampling and analysis were conducted in both FY05 & FY06. During FY05 instream and sediment quality were measured and a reconnaissance of pipes discharging into the Clear Creek study area was conducted. In addition, data was gathered on the wastewater treatment plants discharging into the creek. In FY06, the team conducted intensive surveys for flow and water quality, measured instream water quality and continued the pipe reconnaissance begun in FY05. Storm water runoff from tributaries was collected and analysis begun as well as more wastewater discharge sampling. One difficulty is that there is not much instream flow data for Clear Creek. The team tried to get measurements of low, medium and high flow rates.

Dr. Rifai then briefed the group on the watershed characteristics of Clear Creek. During a description of the segments in the study area it was pointed out that the Armand Bayou watershed should be removed from the map as it is outside this study area and Dr. Rifai agreed to do so.

As Dr. Rifai presented information on the historical data for Clear Creek she noted that there are no clear trends in bacteria levels from upstream to downstream. The summer 2005 ambient water samples indicate lower concentrations of bacteria in the upper watershed where there is less development and higher concentrations and exceedences of standards in the lower parts of the watershed where there is more intense development. Dr. Rifai also noted that there appears to be an issue with bacteria concentration in sediment and will recheck the 2005 data.

Bacteria sources in Clear Creek include septic systems, livestock and permitted wastewater treatment facilities. There are an estimated 5,598 households connected to septic tanks, and it was noted that the City of Brookside Village is wholly served by septic tanks. The estimated number of households connected to centralized wastewater collection/treatment systems is 10,419. These estimates were based on the percentage of the Clear Creek watershed contained in all census tracts in and around the watershed. The data revealed that E. coli was below the standard in dry weather except for one permitted wastewater treatment plant and below the standard in wet weather except for one, different, treatment plant. Dr Rifai compared results of the Galveston County Illicit Discharge Study that was concluded in 2001 with her team's pipe reconnaissance of FY06 and noted the similarity of discharge locations.

All in all, Dr. Rifai reported that the upper watershed is in pretty good shape and that for the remainder of this year (FY07) the team will complete the Load Duration Curve/Mass Balance data and analysis, obtain additional source data and initiate load calculations and allocations on a segment by segment basis.

There followed a Comment and Question & Answer Session:

Q: Is the sampling of Enterococcus in tidal waters new?

A: No, TCEQ has monitored Enterococcus in tidal waters since 1999.

Q: What is the status of EPA review of the contact recreation standard?

A: All water quality standards are currently under review by TCEQ. It is a long term process with no end date set.

Q: Is EPA under a lawsuit regarding contact standards for beaches & lakes?

A: Unknown at this time.

C: There is a treatment plant right at Magnolia Creek that shows constant exceedences.

A: The team will look at this more closely.

Q: Is EPA doing research on doing something for “inland streams”?

A: EPA is aware of the problem but there is no program in place to deal with it.

C: There are plans to get health risk data on Clear Creek and to look closely at the association of sources and high bacteria numbers.

NEXT MEETING

It is anticipated that the next meeting will be held in early August 2007.

ADJOURN

Business being completed, the group adjourned at approximately 8:30pm.