

BIG Annual Meeting Summary  
Tuesday, May 14, 2013  
9:00 AM to 2:00 PM  
H-GAC Conference Room A  
3555 Timmons Lane, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Todd began the meeting at approximately 9:10 AM. Todd welcomed and thanked everyone for coming. He initiated self-introductions and reviewed the agenda.

2. Certification of Quorum

Sixteen members or alternates were present forming a quorum.

3. Approval of Proposed Alternates and Members

Todd informed the BIG that Montgomery County Commissioner Nowak will appoint a BIG member to represent Montgomery County. Ann Olson was approved to represent the Buffalo Bayou Partnership. The roster will be changed to reflect Ann Olson's BIG membership.

4. Approval of October 16, 2012, Meeting Summary

The meeting summary was approved as written.

5. Public Comment

No public comment was given.

6. TCEQ Approval of I-Plan

Todd Running said that the TCEQ has formally approved the BIG Implementation plan. He said that this has been a "long slog," and that the process began in 2001. He said that every BIG member now has a new addition of the BIG Implementation Plan document signed by the TCEQ.

Jason Leifester spoke for Chip Morris. He said that the process went smoothly and that no public comment was issued. He said that "rock stars" were involved in this process and that the BIG Implementation Plan is a model to be used for all TMDL implementation plans across the state.

Q: When will the I-Plan be formally adopted into the Surface Water Quality Plan?

A: When our commissioners approved the I-Plan it became officially part of the Surface Water Quality Plan. It should have already been adopted. The change does not go through EPA.

Q: Not a separate public notice or comment?

A: There would have been, but we do not solicit additional comment at this point with everything finalized.

Todd played a video about the BIG process that Chip Morris had put together. The video went over very well, and will be available on the BIG website. Todd thanked Jason for bringing the video.

## 7. Consideration of Proposed Changes to the Implementation Plan

Todd said that the workgroups have not proposed changes to the Implementation Plan.

## 8. Review of Water Quality

Next, Todd moved to the review of water quality. He mentioned that the Clean Rivers Program at H-GAC recently developed a Basins Highlights Report, which focuses on five watersheds within the region. Todd stated that the regional monitoring is conducted by 8 local partners (including H-GAC) plus the TCEQ and USGS. Exactly 370 monitoring sites are sampled at least quarterly, and that all of the monitoring is unified under was quality assurance project plan (QAPP). All data is submitted to TCEQ, and the data is used for their assessments. Todd mentioned that H-GAC also sponsors Texas Stream Team volunteer monitors throughout the region. Currently there are 92 monitors who sample at 65 different locations.

Todd stated that the collected data is also used internally to assess stream segments. H-GAC staff members have developed a table, more commonly referred to as the Frog Chart, which portrays stream impairment. The chart includes all fifty one stream segments. Each column represents an impairment parameter: dissolved oxygen, bacteria, chlorophyll-a, nutrients, Dioxin, and other. The number in the column is the percent of stream miles for that segment that is impaired for that particular parameter. If the cell is highlight red, the trend is getting worse, if the cell is highlighted green, the trend is improving. The last column of frogs represents the overall assessment. For instance, a stream with five frogs does not have any impairments or impairment trends. A stream with a one frog assessment is very impaired.

Todd stated that in summary approximately 50% of stream miles in the H-GAC region are impaired for bacteria. 26% of the stream miles are getting better. 17% are getting worse. For DO, approximately 24% of stream miles have an impairment or concern. 4% of streams are showing an improvement and 9% are getting worse. With nutrient concerns, 29% of stream segments have a concern, 20% are improving, and 45% are

getting worse. Todd also mentioned that 25% of the stream segments are impaired for Dioxin, the majority located in the tidal and bay segments.

Q: What is the aggregate period?

A: Seven Years

Q: If a stream is not on this list, what does that mean?

A: What you see are the major stream segments, unclassified segments are not listed.

Q: What caught my eye was Armand Bayou Above Tidal, why is it not included?

A: Armand Bayou Above Tidal is an unclassified segment.

Q: How did you decide that streams are getting better?

A: We looked at significant trends, we conducted trend analyses. We used multiple analyses that supported the same conclusion. We had a very conservative approach.

Q: Is that map in this book?

A: No

Todd also provided a line graph depicting the bacteria geometric means within and outside of the BIG TMDL areas. Since the beginning of the TMDL process the bacteria geometric mean within the BIG area has improved from 8 times the standard to five times the standard. Overall there is a trend of major improvement.

Q: Is this graphic available?

A: Yes, I can make it available and is in our update.

Q: How did the bacteria trends compare to last year's?

A: Improvement is slightly less, worsening is about the same.

Q: Will you be doing watershed characterizations next year?

A: Next year H-GAC will not be doing watershed characterizations. We will be doing watershed characterizations the following year. We will pick watersheds that have a story to tell.

Todd stated that the data that is collected is available to everyone. It is available through the Water Resources Information Map (WRIM). Todd mentioned that H-GAC also has an iPhone water quality application or app. He stated that soon the app will be available on the Google Android platform as well. He stated that in the coming months both the WRIM and iPhone application will also include data in watersheds that are within the H-GAC region; however, they are not part of the Clean Rivers Program basins. The plan is also to make the iPhone app more interactive. Concerned citizens will be able to submit sanitary sewer overflows, failing septic systems, and other water quality

hazards to an H-GAC database, which will then alert the necessary agency based on the GPS location of the event.

Q: Todd, who with H-GAC would be the appropriate contact for the City of Houston to talk to regarding reporting and submitting SSOs and the like? The City would like to be notified at the same time.

A: Bill Bass is the contact.

## 9. Review of Progress

H-GAC staff passed out two documents, the BIG At-A-Glance and the BIG Annual Report. Todd asked the group to review the BIG At-A-Glance. He explained that the document includes a progress table for each implementation activity. He stated that some of the implementation activities began in earnest before the Implementation Plan was formally approved.

Todd said that the workgroups are the ones who have developed and provided the information that you see in both documents. Todd wanted to get everyone's feedback on the report. Todd asked the BIG members if they felt that the process was on the "right path" and also wanted to know the priorities to pursue for the coming year. He asked if anyone had questions regarding the At-A-Glance summary or the Annual Report. He stated that the same template could be used each year for the reports.

Q: Who is the intended audience?

A: Big stakeholders, or folks with some knowledge of the process.

Q: What are the "Most wanted," and the "Most Likely to Succeed" lists?

A: The Most Wanted List has the assessment unit with the highest bacteria levels, within the BIG area. The Most Likely to Succeed List has the assessment units that are barely above the standard and can be early successes.

Q: Do we need more monitoring stations?

A: We have one of the most dense networks of stations within the country. However, we could always have more sampling, especially in upstream locations. Our volunteer monitors help to augment sampling with places that are not professionally monitored.

Q: How are we doing on getting volunteers to monitor E. coli and Entero? How do we get more to test for bacteria?

A: Typically a volunteer must monitor for one full year successfully before we let them know about the bacteria monitoring. We have allowed everyone who is interested to monitor bacteria. Currently we have around 10 monitors. There are some costs we incur to purchase incubators; however, we are trying to expand that facet of the program.

Q: Could the At-A-Glance document be adopted for the general public? It does not do much good to only preach to the choir. This document could go out to community groups, conservation groups, and other interested parties.

A: Yes, we can do that.

Q: Could we also adapt this document to be an insert in monthly water bills for regional MUDs?

A: Yes, that's a great idea.

Q: Instead of "Not Initiated," can we change it to not enough information, or inadequate, limited, or insufficient information? Most of these activities have been initiated; we just haven't gathered the full picture.

A: Yes, we can do that. We can make changes. We will put initiated as an option.

Todd asked the group if they would want initiated to be an option on the At-A-Glance document. The group agreed that it should be an option. The group also agreed that the status for many of the implementation activities should be changed to initiated. The group discussed that the term "Information not Readily Available" should be saved for in the instance of "hitting a brick wall" in the information gathering process. The group also discussed creating a "Hall of Fame" list for helpful entities submitting data and a "Wall of Shame" list for entities that are withholding data. The group also agreed to change the text formatting to black. For the OSSF section, the group also agreed to change "complaint data" to "violation data."

The BIG Members agreed that there has been an adequate level of progress. They also agreed that an insert document, as well as an easily digestible document for the general public should be developed. With the proposed editing and format changes, the group approved the At-A-Glance and Annual Report documents.

## 10. Lunch

## 11. New TMDLs

Jason Leifester gave a brief update on the new or ongoing TMDLs in or near BIG project area. Mr. Leifester stated that new segments will be included within current BIG area watersheds. Three segments will be included in the Houston Metro TMDL. Also, Dr Hauck with Tarleton State is conducting a TMDL on tributaries within the Lake Houston Watershed, and UH is in the beginning stages of conducting a TMDL on Armand Bayou. H-GAC staff will conduct the stake holder coordination and the development of workgroups with Armand Bayou. The stakeholders will have the option of developing their own implementation or they may petition to join the BIG. Also a TMDL in Jarboe Bayou, a small water body south of Clear Lake, will begin the September.

Dr. Larry Hauck, with Tarleton State in Stephenville, gave an update on his work in the Lake Houston watershed. He stated that he is working with TCEQ with EPA funds. His project is conducting a TMDL on listed water bodies within the Lake Houston watershed that were not included within the original TMDL. He stated that this project will follow the same guidelines as the original with slight nuances to the standard TMDL equation.

His project includes Upper and Lower Panther Branch, Bear Branch, and the upper assessment unit of Peach Creek. These streams are 20-30% above the standard. There is also a variation in land use within these streams: Panther and Bear Branch are urbanized and Peach Creek is largely forested. New water bodies, East Fork San Jacinto, West Fork San Jacinto, Crystal Creek, and the upper assessment unit of Lake Houston are new listings and are now included with this TMDL project.

He stated that the TMDL load duration curves will have special considerations for reservoirs that will account for hydrologic interruptions. The formula will include components for retention time that allows for the settling and die off of bacteria. He stated that they will be adding an extra term, which will expand the load allocation term to have separate loadings coming in and out from the reservoirs.

Q: Lake Houston, that is now included in this project?

A: The upper assessment unit is included, which is a transition part of the reservoir. This AU is both Lake and stream like.

He stated that they are moving at a brisk pace with this project. They are planning public meetings this summer.

Q: There are above the standard bacteria levels in Peach Creek?

A: The identification of sources is going to be difficult. Two thirds of the watershed is a national forest.

## 12. Next Steps

Todd asked the BIG members what other actions they would like to see taken during this next year. The group agreed that H-GAC should continue to track wastewater treatment plant permits, especially for smaller package plants, and ensure that bacteria standards are written into the permits. The group also discussed the need for wastewater regionalization and consolidation, particularly with small plants that continue to have upsets.

Q: Would H-GAC get notified if any plants were grandfathered from bacteria permits?

A: We get the renewals, we should see if that does occur. That is something to be aware of.

It was stated that the TCEQ is not grandfathering domestic plants from bacteria levels in permits. Also, all industrial plants that have a domestic discharge will also have bacteria standards written into their permits. The group also discussed the need to change 217 to prevent like for like upgrades to older plants. The group decided that the Wastewater Treatment Facility Workgroup should meet to discuss this issue. The workgroup decided to meet before the next meeting. The BIG also discussed the possibility of the Coordination and Policy Workgroup to develop a utility bill flier. It was also mentioned that H-GAC should encourage for volunteer monitors to sample for bacteria. Also, the BIG agreed to look at the Most Likely to Succeed AU list. It would be a huge accomplishment to get segment delisted based on activities by the BIG. The group also decided to look into holding a series of workshops to utilize and encourage behavioral marketing.

#### 13. Other Business/Roundtable

Q: Did we discuss the distribution of annual report?

A: It will be available on the webpage, H-GAC staff will email a link.

#### 14. Next Meeting Date

Oct 15<sup>th</sup>, spay and neuter May 18<sup>th</sup>, low cost or free spay and neuter.

#### 15. Adjourn