

Clean Rivers Program Basin Steering Committee

Wednesday, May 22, 2019

Meeting Summary Notes

The second and final 2019 meeting of the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) Clean Rivers Program (CRP) Basin Steering Committee (BSC) was conducted on Wednesday, May 22, 2019, in conference room C, at H-GAC in Houston. Water Resources Program Manager, Todd Running, conducted the meeting. It was called to order at 2:00 PM.

Members (or their alternates) attending

Randy Acreman
Darrell Gertson
Gordon Pederson
Linda Shead

Dr. Latrice Babin
Sonja Lewis
Kelly “Rodi” Rodibaugh
Shane Simpson

Danielle Cioce
Lisa Montemayor
Christian Rines
Scott Tuma

H-GAC Staff Present

Todd Running, Jean Wright, Bill Hoffman, Jessica Casillas, Kendall Guidroz, Kathy Janhsen, Brian Sims, Justin Bower, and Becki Begley

Welcome

Todd Running, Water Resources Group Manager, welcomed everyone then led introductions of all meeting attendees. Lastly, he reviewed the purpose for this meeting, gave some updates about CRP, and proceeded onto the first presentation.

Presentations

Running gave a presentation on the final 2019 Basin Highlights Report (BHR) as approved by TCEQ. Once again H-GAC is producing a web-based story-map report that features interactive maps. The report is expected to be launched on the web before the end of May after a couple of the links are fixed.

Wright gave a brief update on the FY2020 coordinated monitoring schedule. She reported that most of the partners are keeping their monitoring programs the same as FY2019. Two partners are conducting recons to determine if and where changes will occur. She also discussed several options that are being considered at this time that will assist TCEQ permitting with getting additional information for their needs. Budgetary limitations will dictate which activities will be added to H-GAC and EIH’s monitoring schedules.

Guidroz gave a presentation about Texas Stream Team basics, the number of active volunteers, and where the volunteers monitor. She also announced upcoming training events in the region. Lastly, Guidroz discussed a ‘Data Accuracy Study’ that is pending publication. It is a comparison between results from professional monitoring and volunteer monitoring using the four primary field parameters – temperature, pH, conductivity, and dissolved oxygen. In conclusion, the study reports that results are very similar between these data sets adding value to volunteer monitoring.

Running led a discussion about reducing routine monitoring with the intent to fund targeted monitoring projects and/or special studies. Clean Rivers has been collecting routine water quality data since 1994. In the early years, CRP had the budget to fund special studies that looked at various water pollution issues. Those projects were planned and vetted through the Technical Advisory Group (TAG). Since the budget to CRP partner agencies has not really increased since 2000-2001, the ability to fund these types of projects has dwindled to zero project in the last couple of contracts. However, with the inception of the Bacteria Implementation Group (BIG), a TMDL project aimed at reducing bacteria in area waterways, it has been proven that bacteria concentrations will decline if local entities make special efforts to locate source of bacteria and eliminate or minimize those sources through infrastructure repairs and other similar activities. H-GAC would like reform the TAG to look at routine monitoring efforts to find a way to reduce monitoring efforts, while still meeting requirements of TCEQ, and fund project aimed at reducing or eliminating causes of bacteria and other contaminants. The TAG will tackle the question – what can we do with the existing monitoring programs to free up dollars to create funds for special studies? Linda Shead, Bayou Preservation Association, suggested that targeted monitoring be combined with public outreach efforts and that a project focus on one small watershed so that it might be possible to demonstrate improvements. Others agreed that targeted monitoring of specific parameters was of value. H-GAC estimates that bacteria targeted monitoring costs about half of an average routine monitoring event. Running confirmed that H-GAC is being awarded \$200,000 extra in the next biennium to conduct additional monitoring. Hopefully, the TAG, meeting on a quarterly basis, will be able to help direct those monitoring efforts.

Sims gave a presentation about H-GAC's Homeowner Wastewater Assistance Program which provides assistance to qualifying homeowners to repair or replace their malfunctioning or failing on-site sewage facilities (OSSF). Repairs may include anything from a simple pump-out of the tanks to replacement of the entire system. This Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) is funded by two sources – penalty monies from TCEQ enforcement actions and environmental fines levied by the Harris County District Attorney's court proceedings. As of April 30th, eight OSSF repairs had been completed and two more have been awarded. Eight full OSSF systems have been installed and 13 systems have been awarded to vendors but had not been completed as of the meeting date. There are an additional 25 candidates that have met the qualifications but H-GAC need additional money to address their needs. Sims finished his presentation with photos of before and after stories.

Bower gave a presentation about the 'West Lake Houston Watershed Management Projects' which include developing Watershed Protection Plans (WPPs) for West Fork San Jacinto River (WFSJR), Lake Creek, Spring Creek and Cypress Creek. Bower covered the primary elements addressed when developing a plan. These include identifying bacteria sources and concentrations, dissolved oxygen issues, and sediment reduction. The WFSJR and Lake Creek plan will be completed in 2019, with Cypress Creek running through 2021, and Spring Creek being finished by 2022.

Other Business and Announcements

Running announced the BIG Spring Meeting is set for June 4th at H-GAC. Becki Begley announcement that Solid Waste is working with law enforcement to fund drug drop-off kiosks around the region. Contact her for more information.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 p.m.