

February 22 water quality training focused on Highland Bayou, surrounding Galveston County watersheds

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LA MARQUE – A Texas Watershed Steward workshop addressing water quality issues in Galveston County bayous will be held from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. on February 22 at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Center, 4102 Main Street in La Marque.

The workshop is free and seating will be limited, so participants are encouraged to preregister at <http://tw.s.tamu.edu>.

It is sponsored by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board in coordination with the Galveston Bay Estuary Program, Texas Coastal Watershed Program and the Moses-Karankawa Bayous Alliance.

“The training is open to anyone interested in improving water quality in Galveston County and the surrounding area,” said Phoenix Rogers, AgriLife Extension agent for natural resources, Galveston County. “It is designed to help watershed residents improve and protect their water resources by becoming involved in local watershed protection and management activities.”

Rogers said the workshop will include an overview of water quality and watershed management in Texas, plus will primarily focus on water quality issues relating to Highland Bayou and other watersheds in the Houston-Galveston area.

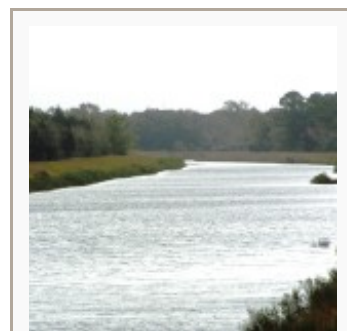
“We will be discussing some of the current efforts to help improve and protect the health of these important water resources,” he added.

The training also provides a discussion of watershed systems, types and sources of water pollution, and ways to improve and protect water quality. There also will be a group discussion on community-driven watershed protection and management.

“Highland Bayou is a critical water resource for the area,” said Steven Mikulencak, Highland Bayou program coordinator with the Texas Coastal Watershed Program. “Highland Bayou and its neighboring watersheds which feed into Galveston Bay, support oyster production, recreational activities, commercial fishing and other economic activities. And the estuaries of these coastal watersheds are considered to be a critical wildlife habitat area by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.”

This workshop is being held in support of ongoing water quality management activities for the Highland Bayou watershed in Galveston County. Highland Bayou has been listed on the state’s list of impaired waters since 2002 for bacteria and low dissolved oxygen. It has since been listed for elevated dioxin and polychlorinated biphenyl levels in edible tissues of marine life found in the bayou. Along with Highland Bayou, several other watersheds in the Houston-Galveston area are also listed on the state’s impaired list for the same impairments and concerns.

Efforts are currently under way to reduce pollutant levels in Highland Bayou by working with local officials, residents and property owners to develop a watershed protection plan. For more information on the watershed protection plan,



A free Texas Watershed Steward training workshop focused on water quality issues in Highland Bayou and other Galveston County watershed areas will be held Feb. 22 at the Texas AgriLife Extension Service office. (Texas AgriLife Extension Service photo)

go to <http://www.mokabayousalliance.org>.

“Management strategies to be included in the plan are intended to provide direction to local stakeholders and deliver educational programming such as the Texas Watershed Steward Program,” Mikulencak said.

“Along with the free training, participants receive a copy of the Texas Watershed Steward Handbook and a certificate of completion,” said Galen Roberts, coordinator for the Texas Watershed Steward Program.

The one-day program offers seven continuing education units in soil and water management for certified crop advisers, seven units for professional engineers and certified planners, and seven continuing education credits for certified teachers. It also offers three general continuing education units for Texas Department of Agriculture pesticide license holders, three for certified landscape architects and three for certified floodplain managers.

“Participating in the Texas Watershed Steward program is a great opportunity to get involved and make a difference in your watershed,” Roberts said.

For more information and to preregister, go to <http://tw.s.tamu.edu/workshops/online-registration> or contact Roberts at 979-862-8070, groberts@ag.tamu.edu or Rogers at 281-309-5064, plrogers@ag.tamu.edu .

For more information on the watershed planning efforts in Highland Bayou and surrounding watersheds, contact Mikulencak at 281-218-6128 or smikulencak@tamu.edu.

Water quality improvement efforts in Highland Bayou are funded through a grant from the Galveston Bay Estuary Program.

The Texas Watershed Steward program is funded through a Clean Water Act §319(h) nonpoint source grant from the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

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