

Galveston Bay Coalition of Watersheds

Bastrop Bayou | Dickinson Bayou | Highland Bayou | Jarbo Bayou

Partnering for healthy watersheds.

agrilife.org/coalitionofwatersheds

Tuesday, October 20, 2020 | 1:30-3:30 PM

Virtual Meeting via ZOOM with call in option

MEETING NOTES

Attendees: Celina Gauthier Lowry, Charriss York, Jessica Stell, Mike Mullenweg, Joe Ripple, Chris Whittaker, Robert Michetich, Tink Jackson, Debbie Webb, Sonia Phillips, Michael Shannon, Katie Wilson, Marty Entringer, Phoenix Rogers, Charlotte Cisneros, Steven Johnston, Daniel Albanese, Kendall Guidroz, Barbara Bellows, Dr. Ali Saleh, Elizabeth Kompanik, Stacey Carr, Lindsey Lippert, Christian Rines, Bryan Eastham, Brian Koch, and Chris Morgan

Welcome and Introductions

Celina Gauthier Lowry started the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. Charriss York gave a brief introduction to the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the local office she and Celina are based out of, Texas Community Watershed Partners. Attendees were asked to introduce themselves in chat. Celina asked if there were any elected officials present who would like to introduce themselves. Robert Michetich, City Council La Marque District C introduced himself. The meeting agenda was presented.

The first of five poll questions was administered, “What brought you here?”. *Participants were able to select more than one answer.* These are compiled below.

- 55% I want to hear what nearby communities/organizations are doing to improve water quality in our coastal waterways
- 45% I'm interested in coordinating with other organizations to extend limited resources
- 40% I am a previous Coalition member
- 40% I'm new to the group and am here for an orientation
- 30% I'm interested in how the Coalition can help my organization move forward with existing/planned projects

What is the Coalition all about?

Celina explained the purpose of the Galveston Bay Coalition of Watersheds. She explained that stakeholders in attendance represent four watersheds: Bastrop Bayou, Dickinson Bayou, Highland Bayou, and Jarbo Bayou. Celina discussed the reasons for forming the Coalition, which are to form partnerships to implement existing watershed-based plans in Brazoria and Galveston counties, especially in the four partner watersheds mentioned above. The intent is to share resources and funding to implement similar

implementation measures across all four watersheds, better utilizing and sharing resources. After giving a brief introduction to the terms “watershed” and “watershed-based plans”, she then reviewed all four watersheds to give everyone in attendance basic knowledge about each one.

Another poll question, “Which watershed do you work in?” was administered. *Participants were able to select more than one answer.* These are compiled below.

67%	Dickinson Bayou
62%	Highland Bayou
52%	Jarbo Bayou
43%	Bastrop Bayou
19%	Other

Goals and Action Items Review

The presentation then rounded back to focus on the four existing Coalition watershed areas and the common issues identified in the various watershed-based plans. A review of the efforts completed during the last Coalition cycle in 2017 and 2018 was described including the consolidation of management measures into a top 12 list that led to the development of the Coalition’s goals and action items.

Coalition goals and associated action items were reviewed. The Coalition’s previous intentions were also mentioned:

- Focus on areas others are not already working in
- Supplement other people’s work
- Adaptive management, continuing to evolve the group and focus areas

Projects and Priorities

Outreach Events/Opportunities. The intention of pulling the Coalition back together is to do outreach. To take action by implementing management measures from Coalition watershed-based plans. The Coalition will aim to complete six efforts in the next 12 months. Workgroup meetings to select topic areas for outreach and explore delivery methods will be convened next February. Celina presented examples of topic areas, audiences, and methods of delivery to communicate the flexibility the Coalition has when using the Goals and Action Items as their guide. The unknowns presented by the current Covid-19 pandemic was acknowledged as both restrictive and at the same time, having a potential for inspiring increased creativity during outreach activities. Group Coalition meetings are anticipated to start back up in March. April – September will be the time to take action. To roll out implementation measures within Coalition watersheds.

Celina announced that a survey link would be sent to the Coalition with potential times for two workgroup meetings starting in February following this meeting. The following poll question was administered to serve as a quick show of hands to show a general interest in the workgroup meetings. “Would you like to receive invites for workgroup meetings where we will select specific topic areas for outreach and explore delivery methods?” was administered. 19/20 participants selected “Yes”.

To receive input from the broader Coalition before workgroup meetings, a poll question was administered to see what priorities stakeholders have in their work right now, “What are the top 3 topics for your work or organization that you’d like to see the Coalition help move forward in the next 12 months?” was administered. *Participants were able to select more than one answer.* These answers are compiled below.

- 50% On-site sewage facilities (OSSF or septic system)
- 44% Wastewater infrastructure improvements
- 44% Natural riparian buffers and conservation easements
- 33% Reduce fats, oils, grease (FOG), and wipes in sanitary sewer systems
- 33% Retain and treat stormwater on-site or in regional detention features using green infrastructure
- 28% Dredging needs for Coalition bayous
- 28% Household hazardous waste facility
- 28% Illicit discharges and dumping sites
- 22% Debris in Coalition bayous
- 19% Erosion control, nutrient reduction, and the management of livestock and large groups of animals

A follow-up poll question, “Which people or groups are most important for the Coalition to reach?” was administered as a starting point for the workgroup to have input on the broader Coalition’s audience priorities. *Participants were asked to pick their top 3. Participants were able to select more than one answer.* These answers are compiled below.

- 67% Homeowners
- 61% Elected Officials
- 56% County and Municipal staff
- 44% General Public
- 39% Renters
- 39% Developers/Realtors
- 17% Agricultural Producers
- 11% Large Landowners
- 11% Business Owners

Outreach Strategic Action Plan. Following the workgroup meetings, Celina will put together an Action Plan for Outreach based on the workgroup’s activities to provide a framework for Coalition efforts occurring in the next 12 months. The plan is intended to be done quickly and kept fairly short.

Future Meeting Topics and Activities

Additional conversation topics anticipated during subsequent meetings were mentioned including, the review of goals and action items for updates, a state of water quality report for Coalition watersheds, models of sustainability for the Coalition, funding opportunities, and future project ideas.

The hardcopy binder of meeting materials offered during the previous round of Coalition meetings has been adapted into a continually updated, online version, accessible to stakeholders on-demand. One downside to the electronic version is that stakeholders will not have their notes included in the binder. When meetings return to a face-to-face format, hardcopy binders are expected to be available for distribution to Coalition members.

Attendees were asked what groups or specific people they would like to see represented in the Coalition that they do not see signed in today through chat and reminded not to hesitate to forward meeting notices or forward contacts to Celina for an orientation to the group. Input received is compiled below.

Drainage Districts	County/City Parks Personnel	WCIDs
Road and Bridge	MUDs	HOAs
Industry/Local Refineries	Texas City/La Marque Chamber	
Environmental Consulting	Farmers and Forestry Groups	

Other comments are compiled below.

- Local refineries and businesses can provide local funding
- Check with Coalition agency members for the resources they have available
- Coalition members may be willing to host a table if needed
- When we choose our focus areas, build a timeline of local events/happenings

Guest Presentation

Dr. Ali Saleh and Dr. Barbara Bellows from the Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research (TIAER) at Tarleton State University, presented, “Developing a Strategy to Minimize the Impact of Catastrophic Flooding Events”. The project’s overall objective is to develop an integrated, community-based strategy to alleviate persistent environmental and health impacts resulting from catastrophic flooding such as occurred during Hurricane Harvey. The Dickinson Bayou watershed is the current study area with soil and water sampling and modeling in progress. The approach and use of these modeling tools will apply to other watersheds in the future. Coalition stakeholders were asked for their recommendations for outreach for the current study. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was suggested and a contact will be forwarded to the project team following the meeting by that stakeholder. Stakeholders were also encouraged by TIAER to participate in project activities as they move forward.

Next Steps

Attendees were asked to sign up for workgroup invites if they are interested in participating. A survey will be emailed to the Coalition that contains potential meeting dates for the next two workgroup meetings, beginning in February 2021. A homework assignment was given to each stakeholder to keep the Coalition in mind during project planning and to email Celina efforts that might be related to Coalition efforts, e.g. annual events. Before the February workgroup meetings, Celina will pull together information from this meeting and individual stakeholder conversations for use during workgroup meetings and Coalition planning discussions. Group Coalition meetings are anticipated to start back up in March.