

Galveston Bay Coalition of Watersheds

Bastrop Bayou | Dickinson Bayou | Highland Bayou | Jarbo Bayou

Partnering for healthy watersheds.

<https://agrillife.org/coalitionofwatersheds/>

Tuesday, May 14, 2024 | 1:30-3:00 PM

Virtual via Teams

MEETING NOTES

Attendees: Meagan Thibodaux, Chaise Cary, Lindsey Lippert, Christian Rines, Georgia Carmack, Ivan Langford, Dickinson's Water District – Notetaker, Kendall Guidroz, Katherine Wilson, Cornell Evans, Natasha Zarnstorff, Elling Mann, Cesar Garcia, Hector Renteria, Debra Webb, Nicole Plowman, Jack Murphy, Proy Chalitruangkul, Julie Cain, Celina Gauthier Lowry

Welcome and Introductions

Individual introductions started with the project team from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's Texas Community Watershed Partners office, Celina and Julie. The meeting agenda was presented.

What is the Coalition all about?

A brief history of the Coalition was provided including the intent for forming the group – to form partnerships to implement existing watershed-based plans in Brazoria and Galveston counties. To share resources and funding to conduct similar implementation actions across all four watersheds, better utilizing and sharing resources. After a brief introduction to “watersheds” and “watershed-based plans”, an overview of each Coalition watershed was shared.

Results from the March 2024 poll question, “What brought you here today” was shared. The “Which watershed do you work in?” poll was administered, and results reviewed.

Participants were able to select more than one answer.

24%	Bastrop Bayou
29%	Dickinson Bayou
21%	Highland Bayou
18%	Jarbo Bayou
9%	Other

Coalition goals and associated action items were presented and the process to consolidate watershed plan management measures into a Top 12 list (in 2017) was described. Common issues identified in the various watershed-based plans were highlighted including, on-site sewage facilities, stormwater runoff, and illegal dumping, and others. The Coalition's previous intentions were also mentioned: focus on areas others are not already working in; supplement other people's work; and adaptive management, continuing to evolve the group and focus.

Attendee comments:

- Why is Moses Bayou included on the Highland bayou map? [The Highland Bayou Coastal Basin Watershed Protection Plan includes several coastal watersheds including Moses Bayou].

Projects and Priorities

Exercise 1. Establish Priority Topics

The first exercise narrowed down ten priority topics areas to begin to shape new priorities and implementation actions across Coalition watersheds. Coalition Top 10 topics either remained in the *Prioritize Now* section or were moved to *Revisit Later*. *Revisit Later* topics will remain priorities for the group, but are considered on "standby" or "as conditions change". Some of the guiding questions during the exercise were:

- Are there education or outreach opportunities?
- Does it benefit multiple watersheds?
- Are we the group to implement the idea?

Attendee comments by topic:

- Reduce fats, oils, grease (FOG). Enforcement needs and maintenance needs on grease traps (if traps are present). Oil and grease in sanitary sewer are not removed during wastewater treatment. Focusing on restaurants, manufacturers and car washes more impactful than residential. County health departments have data for grease traps. Apartments. Commercial trap inspections: identify locations with sanitary overflows and grease blockages.
- Natural riparian buffers and conservation easements [land preservation]. Not a focus for this group. GBEP and other groups cover this. Mostly happens in the Bastrop and Highland watersheds.
- Household hazardous waste. Very expensive. Recent event advertised with Keep Dickinson Beautiful [Dickinson Bayou watershed]. Free recycling services available through Keep Pearland Beautiful. May not be a priority. Unknown status for recycling drop off at Jack Brooks Park [Highland Bayou watershed].

- Wastewater infrastructure. Not often funded outside of the community. Low interest loans.
- Drainage and dredging. Watershed-wide issue. The Dickinson Bayou drainage group is active. Federal funding for big drainage projects. Dredging not always the solution. Sometimes channelization. The Coalition priority for dredging originally specific to Dickinson and Highland bayous.
- Suggestion made to have designated Point of Contact within the Coalition for further discussion on specific topics as they arise. For OSSFs, maybe H-GAC Coastal Communities or the local Health Districts. For Riparian, maybe GBEP Natural Uses coordinator.

Prioritize Now (in no particular order):

- Reduce fats, oils, grease (FOG) and wipes in sanitary sewer systems
- Debris in Coalition bayous; Dredging needs for Coalition bayous
- Retain and treat stormwater on-site or in regional detention features using green infrastructure

Exercise 2. Breakout Sessions for Project Brainstorm

Once the topic areas were narrowed down, instructions for the breakout discussion were provided. Participants were asked to create a pool of project ideas including target audience and delivery method. They each chose one breakout discussion to join from the following three topic areas: (A) Green Infrastructure; (B) FOG and wipes; (C) Debris in bayous and Dredging

Report Out

Following the breakout discussions, a representative from each topic area shared project ideas with the group. Each group took turns, round robin style, sharing one project idea at a time.

Reduce fats, oils, grease (FOG) and wipes in sanitary sewer systems

- Commercial properties. Involving the Chamber of Commerce. Coordination similar to apartment manager outreach in 2021.
- Apartment complexes to reach the most people. Coordinating with apartment managers using welcome packages to new residents. New managers at new complexes are more receptive.

Debris in Coalition bayous; Dredging needs for Coalition bayous

- Water quantity focused discussion.
- Texas Coastal Study.
- Hydrologic study associated with upstream growth.

Retain and treat stormwater on-site or in regional detention features using green infrastructure

- Interest for floating wetland at the UTMB League City campus. Boys scouts for outreach. Plant donations. Project as a trial for future installations.

The three focus areas prioritized in the 2021 Strategic Action Plan for Outreach were shared to compare with the meeting discussion above: (A) FOG and Wipes in Sanitary Sewers, (B) Debris in Bayous and Illegal Dumping, and (C) Dredging-Erosion Control-Riparian Buffers.

Announcements

HEB Trees for Texans \$5,000 grant open to municipal/government organizations and 501c3 to increase tree canopy. Due June 7 with award notifications in July - https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScz3D8eZb8UL3Wsf96ICK5-RMbj6933QmvXh3_38bZDGLuw5A/viewform

Lone Star Healthy Streams workshop (free) May 16 from 1-5 p.m. in Angleton. Topics: watershed function, water quality, voluntary best management practices for grazing livestock, weed management of pastures, wild pigs, and onsite sewage facilities to minimize bacterial contamination - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lone-star-healthy-streams-tickets-884252271347>

Next Steps and Future Meetings

Attendees were asked to email project ideas from the breakout groups by May 22 to Celina.lowry@ag.tamu.edu. A survey for availability will be emailed before the next meeting is scheduled. The meeting agenda will be informed by the pool of ideas generated at this meeting where the group will continue to shape Coalition priorities and implementation actions for the coming months. Attendees were asked if they would attend in-person, if held at the Galveston County Extension Office at Carbide Park in La Marque.

Next meeting date: June or July 2024, Carbide Park, La Marque