

Cotton Bayou Watershed Public Meeting

Thursday, March 9th, 2023
5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

In Attendance:

Organizers:

Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)

Steven Johnston, H-GAC Project Staff

Rachel Windham, Presenter, H-GAC Project Manager

Attendees:

Bill Thompson, City of Mont Belvieu

Ricardo Villagrand, City of Mont Belvieu

Meeting Notes:

Welcome and Introductions

- Rachel Windham (H-GAC) commenced the meeting at 5:30 p.m. by welcoming the attendees. She then invited attendees an opportunity to introduce themselves.

Project Overview and Updates

- Ms. Windham provided an overview of the Cotton Bayou funded by TCEQ and facilitated by H-GAC:
 - Levels of the fecal indicator bacteria Enterococcus in exceedance of the state water quality standard observed in Cotton Bayou currently do not support recreation use as described in the 2020 Integrated Report of Surface Water Quality produced by TCEQ. This impairment led to the formation of this project which aims to identify sources of bacteria pollution in the watershed and improve water quality by implementing bacteria source reduction strategies.

- Potential sources of bacteria contamination include wastewater discharge, failing onsite sewage facilities, domestic and wildlife animal waste, and waste from invasive species such as feral hogs.
- Ms. Windham explained that the Technical Support Document has been developed to provide an in-depth analysis of bacteria pollution and ultimately calculate a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) or “budget” for bacteria pollution Segment 0801C of Cotton Bayou.

Implementation Plan Strategies

- Ms. Windham provided an overview of the components of an I-Plan including:
 - Strategies - actionable items to address bacteria reduction for a specific management measures associated with specific priority areas and responsible parties
 - Milestones - measurable goals to reflect progress of strategies
 - Schedule – guide for which milestones should be accomplished in the next five years and at what point
 - Estimated Load Reductions - estimate of how much the bacteria load will be reduced by implementing the strategies of each management measure converted to an annual load value
- Ms. Windham also explained the usual management measures for which strategies, milestones, schedules, and load reductions are included in I-Plans
- Ms. Windham described the adaptive management methodology of I-Plans which allows for stakeholders to periodically assess plan measures for efficiency and effectiveness
- Based on the results of the bacteria source survey shared at the January meeting and results of an analysis of potential bacteria sources, the management measures listed below will be prioritized in the following order in the draft I-Plan for Cotton Bayou:
 - 1) Reducing stormwater sources such as pet wastes and illegal dumping
 - 2) Supporting land management initiatives
 - 3) Promoting feral hog management
 - 4) Promoting safe OSSF use and maintenance
 - 5) Maintaining and improving WWTF and collection system function
 - On reviewing these priorities and the associated data, representatives from Mont Belvieu suggested that agricultural activity is not prominent in the watershed. Further, they suggested that inputs from the portion of the watershed south of I-10 may be driving the impairment on Cotton Bayou.

Next Steps

- The next focus for the project will be to develop a draft I-Plan. This draft will be reviewed with stakeholders in the summer.

Discussion

- No further discussions were held.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

For more information about the meeting or the project, please contact Rachel Windham with the information below:

Phone: 713-993-2497

Email: rachel.windham@h-gac.com



This project is funded by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and is facilitated locally by the Houston-Galveston Area Council