

Meeting Summary
Clean River Program Steering Committee
11/04/04

Stakeholders Present

Guy Grossman, Mary Ellen Whitworth, Jeff East, Dr. Pamela Berger, Linda Shead, Cory Horan, Aaron Wendt, Jim Adams

H-GAC Staff Present

Todd Running, Patrick Horton, Carl Masterson, Ayo Jibowu

Others Present

Dennis Caputo, Polly Witte, Deb Snck-Fahr, Ralph Calvino, Dr. Yu-Chun Su

Welcome and Introductions

Jim Adams welcomed the group and everyone introduced themselves.

Review of Agenda

Todd Running gave an overview of the days agenda

Agenda Items

Watershed Modeling Presentation and Discussion

Todd Running gave the group some background on watershed modeling. He then introduce Dr. Yu-Chun Su from PBS&J to give a presentation on the watershed modeling work they have been doing in the San Antonio River Basin. Handouts of the presentation were given to all meeting attendees.

After the presentation Running led discussion on how the application of this type of work could be used in the H-GAC region. The group talked about the elements that are currently in place in the H-GAC area that could be fed into this type of study. The Land cover classification completed by H-GAC, the flow information gathered by USGS and the Harris County Flood Control District, multiple TMDL in the area and a decades worth of ambient monitoring data all are important steps in preparing a model of this type. The group discussed potential costs of this type of work. The H-GAC Clean Rivers Program cannot afford to contract modeling services on its budget. It would take a consortium of local stakeholders to pay for this type of modeling. It was agreed that a subcommittee of local stakeholders would look into the possibility of modeling in the future. No immediate plans were made3.

Lake Creek Peach Creek, Caney Creek Study Update

Jeff East of the USGS gave a brief update on the Lake Creek, Peach Creek, Caney Creek Systematic Monitoring Study. The study is being done to target an area that has received very little ambient monitoring over the last several years. The area is also experiencing rapid development in the Lake Creek Watershed. This study will help to establish a baseline of data to determine what, if any impacts occur from development in the

watershed. East reported that the study is on track with QAPP development and data collection efforts. That water quality samples that have been collected thus far seem to indicate overall good water quality and relatively high aquatic habitat. East Stated that the draft report for the project would be done in the spring with a final document to follow in August.

Bacteria TMDL Update

Dr. Yu Chun Su gave an update of the Bacteria TMDL. Handouts were given to all attendees. Dr. Su gave background information on the reason for conducting the Bacteria TMDL. The contact recreation standard for bacteria is exceeded in Buffalo and White Oak Bayous. The bayous were selected as pilot watersheds for bacteria TMDLs in the area. It is hoped that future bacteria TMDLs will be patterned after this study. Su discussed the major components of the Study which include data analysis and modeling and a broad array of special investigations. He also added the supporting projects that the Clean Rivers Program is conducting that will assist in the overall development of the final TMDL which include the Bacteria Source Tracking Study and the Bacteria Die-off Study. He then announced the upcoming Stakeholder meeting on Tuesday November 16th.

Bastrop Bayou Study Update

Running gave a brief update on the Bastrop Bayou Risk Assessment Study. HE gave a brief background on the citizen complaints that prompted the need to look at the Bastrop Bayou watershed. Citizens are very concerned about the possibility of elevated bacteria levels within Bastrop Bayou. The Bayou is a major concern because it empties into Christmas Bay, which is one of the last pristine estuaries along the Texas Coast. Running explained that H-GAC was receiving funding from the Galveston Bay Estuary Program to conduct the Risk Assessment, which would ultimately result in a Watershed Protection Plan.

Clean Rivers Program FY05 Budget Amendment

Running led the discussion on the proposed budget changes for the FY04-05 Contract. The budget was increased by a total of \$8,700 that would be used for NELAC training for H-GAC staff and datasonde cable for the Environmental Institute of Houston. A handout with the proposed budget changes was given to all attendees. The proposed changes were approved by the committee.

Discussion of Texas State Board of Engineers Proposal

A group discussion was held to discuss the policy opinion regarding water quality planning in the State of Texas that was written by the Texas board of Professional engineers for adoption on November 29, 2004. The general interpretation of the ‘opinion’ by H-GAC, the NRAC, the Clean Rivers Program, TCEQ and others is that all water quality planning activities must be carried out by or under the direct supervision of a registered professional engineers. What follows are points raised at the Seering Committee meeting, distilled and edited by staff:

- * The policy advisory opinion is far too broad in its assessment that all water quality planning must be brought under the direct supervision of, or be conducted only by registered professional engineers.
- * The stakeholder process used in developing the policy advisory opinion were limited to representatives of the Consulting Engineers Council, TBPE staff and a couple of individuals employed by TCEQ who did not represent the area of water quality planning. Omitted from this process were representatives from agencies and organizations with many years experience in water quality planning including the TCEQ, Councils of Government, Counties, Cities, Galveston Bay Estuary Program, River Authorities, and others.
- * The NRAC is the advisory committee to H-GAC's Board of Directors on natural resource issues in the 13-county Gulf Coast Region. It is a stakeholder group whose members come from diverse professional backgrounds and represents the region's cities, counties, professional organizations, private industry, river authorities, environmental and conservation groups, state agencies and citizens. Also included are a number of registered professional engineers. This diversity of backgrounds is intentional so that multifarious perspectives and skills are brought to bear in H-GAC's water quality planning activities. This approach has succeeded in bringing continuity in water quality planning to the H-GAC 13-county region and has resulted in the creation of many partnerships and regional cooperation.
- * The policy advisory opinion may not have intended what the words say, but without proper and adequate stakeholder input, it poses a threatening situation to professionals active in water quality planning who are qualified to perform water quality planning but are not registered professional engineers.

Following discussion, Chairman Adams and Todd Running invited members to attend the NRAC meeting in the afternoon to discuss the matter further.

Adjourn

Chairman Adams adjourned the meeting