

Cotton Bayou Watershed Public Meeting

Tuesday, August 23rd, 2022
2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

In Attendance:

Organizers:

Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)

Kendall Guidroz, Presenter

Virgie Hall, Zoom Coordinator

Steven Johnston, Staff

Andrea Tantillo, Zoom Coordinator

Rachel Windham, Presenter, H-GAC Project Manager

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)

Jason Leifester, TCEQ Project Manager

Attendees:

Darla Branch, Chambers County Environmental Health and Permitting

Jason Galloway, City of Mont Belvieu

Grant Moss, Bayou Preservation Association

Dustin Schubert, City of Mont Belvieu

Ricardo Villagrand, City of Mont Belvieu

Natasha Zarnstorff, Galveston Bay Foundation

Meeting Notes:

Welcome and Introductions

- Rachel Windham (H-GAC) commenced the meeting at 2:00 p.m. by welcoming the attendees. She then introduced Kendall Guidroz of H-GAC who shared information about the Texas Stream Team program. After Ms. Guidroz' presentation, Ms. Windham introduced the TCEQ project manager and other H-GAC staff.

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. This document is currently being reviewed by the TCEQ.
- Ms. Windham explained the concept behind TMDL calculations. For Cotton Bayou, the TMDL will be calculated as the load at the criterion level at the 95th percentile of flows. Components of the TMDL include:
 - Margin of Safety (MOS): 5% of the criterion load at the 95th percentile of flows to account for variance
 - Wasteload Allocation for Wastewater Treatment Facilities (WLA_{wwtf}): an allocation for the permitted load expected from wastewater; this component includes an allocation for future growth anticipated between the present day and 2045
 - Wasteload Allocation for Stormwater (WLA_{sw}): an allocation for the permitted load expected from stormwater
 - Load Allocation (LA): an allocation for all other unregulated sources of bacteria pollution

Bacteria Sources

- Ms. Windham explained the methodology and data sources used to estimate potential bacteria loads from a number of nonpoint sources in the watershed including on-site sewage facilities, sanitary sewer overflows, pet waste, livestock waste, feral hog waste, and deer waste. The estimated load requires a 98.82% reduction to meet the TMDL.

- Ms. Windham demonstrated what a 98.82% reduction would look like for each of the sources in practical units but stressed that the prioritization implementation strategies and of source reductions will be decided by the stakeholders.

Next Steps

- The next focus for the project will be the refinement of bacteria source estimates through stakeholder feedback to prepare for the development of an implementation plan (I-Plan).
- Ms. Windham asked attendees whether they would prefer to form specialized work groups or maintain the public meeting format held on a more frequent basis moving forward. Representatives from the City of Mont Belvieu expressed a preference for more frequent public meetings.
- Ms. Windham also encouraged attendees to reach out with any feedback about the project, as well as any information about environmental quality efforts already underway in the watershed interested in collaborating with the Cotton Bayou effort.

Discussion

- No further discussions were held.

Meeting Adjourned at 3:15 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