



SPRING CREEK WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

Public Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 8th, 2020
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

In Attendance:

Organizers:

Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC):
Andrea Tantillo
Justin Bower
Rachel Windham

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ):
Jessica Uramkin

Attendees:

Becky Martinez (Bayou Land Conservancy)
Bobby Martin (Harris County Precinct 4 (HCP4))
Brian Koch (Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB))
Camila Biaggi (Harris County Engineering)
Diana Foss (Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD))
Emily Schwartz (Black & Veatch)
Glenna Sloan (Texas Master Naturalists (TMN) - Heartwood)
Jennifer Seale (TMN - Heartwood)
Kathie Herrick (Woodlands GREEN)
Kent Walters (Houston Canoe Club)
Liz Stone (Jones|Carter Engineering)
Mac Martin (Texas A&M University Forest Service)
Monte Parks (HCP4)
Neil Gaynor (Montgomery County MUD 6)
Patrick Rightmyer (City of Houston)
Paul Nelson (Woodlands GREEN)
Steve Ellison (TMN - Heartwood)
Sylvester L. "Skip" Reeder III (Houston One Voice)
Teri MacArthur (The Woodlands Township)
Tom Douglas (Bayou Preservation Association)
Trevor Otter (Black & Veatch)
1 Caller

Meeting Notes:

Welcome and Overview

- Rachel Windham (H-GAC) commenced the meeting at 2:00 pm by welcoming the attendees and providing an overview of the meeting agenda. Before the presentation, Ms. Windham sought the Partnership's approval to add Brian Koch (TSSWCB) and Tom Douglas (Bayou Preservation Association) to the Steering Committee. They were both accepted enthusiastically!
- To refresh the Partnership, Ms. Windham provided brief project background discussing the location of the Spring Creek Watershed, the water quality issues common in the watershed and a general characterization of sources leading to fecal indicator bacteria impairments.

Timeline and Reduction Targets

- Ms. Windham updated the Partnership on topics discussed at the February/March workgroup meetings including the concept of a milestone year or end-date goal for implementation of the Watershed Protection Plan. Based on feedback from the workgroup meetings, regular checkpoints will be integrated to improve plan flexibility and provide a better guide for measuring success. These checkpoints can also help to highlight different phases of the project (early, middle, late and ongoing) which will help to indicate where in the timeline specific water quality improvement strategies could be deployed.
- In workgroup discussions, the years 2030 or 2035 were considered as potential milestone years. The argument for 2030 was centered around maintaining momentum and partnership support in order to achieve immediate improvements and curb continued impairments. The argument for 2035 included extra time for implementation and continued flexibility in response to changing conditions in the watershed. After being asked to participate in a poll to select the preferred milestone year, the majority of the Partnership decided on 2030. This was accepted and approved by the Steering Committee as the official implementation goal moving forward.
- With an official end-date in mind, the concept of source-specific reduction targets was discussed. These calculations were derived from defining A) how much daily bacteria load needs to be reduced in each attainment area (Headwaters and Downstream) by the implementation goal year and B) how much of each source-specific load needs to be reduced to achieve that overall reduction. Source-specific reduction targets can be proportional to the relative contribution of each source to the estimated total daily bacteria load. However, the amount of implementation

effort attributed to addressing each source can be redistributed based on what stakeholders deem to be practical or of greater priority in the watershed. The table below shows the reallocation of % implementation effort relative to the % contribution to the total load indicated by the SELECT model by source suggested during conversations with the workgroups:

Source	Headwaters		Downstream	
	Contribution to Total Load (%)	Implementation Effort (%)	Contribution to Total Load (%)	Implementation Effort (%)
WWTFs	0.01%	0.01%	0.15%	0.15%
OSSFs	3.26%	3.26%	3.43%	39.75%
Dogs	25.99%	41.38%	76.14%	50.00%
Cattle	26.73%	13.36%	3.31%	3.31%
Horses	0.19%	0.10%	0.02%	0.02%
Sheep/Goats	12.22%	6.11%	1.51%	1.51%
Deer	0.61%	--	0.18%	--
Feral Hogs	20.99%	35.77%	5.26%	5.26%
Safety Margin	10.00%	--	10.00%	--
TOTAL	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

- In summary:
 - Headwaters – modeled contributions from livestock in the headwaters are expected to decrease rapidly with growing development. To account for this in the implementation effort, the allocation for each livestock source was halved and redistributed equally into dog waste and feral hog reductions. Safety margin and deer allocations were also redistributed evenly into dog waste and feral hog reductions.
 - Downstream – model results indicate that dog waste makes up the majority of the total load. A more practical reduction target of 50% was set for dog waste and the burden was redistributed into reduction of OSSF impacts. Deer and safety margin allocations were also redirected into OSSF remediation in terms of implementation effort.
- After reviewing these changes in implementation effort relative to estimations of source contributions to the total load, the Partnership agreed to tentatively move forward with the associated reduction targets to develop the first draft of the watershed protection plan.

Discussion of Strategies

- Ms. Windham shared discussions held by the workgroups to identify and define bacteria reduction strategies by source. Stakeholders identified where the

Partnership can enhance, support and fill gaps in implementation measures currently underway through the actions of partner organizations. For new proposals implemented as a result of this watershed protection plan development, information is needed on who the responsible parties would be, what the resource needs are and where on the project timeline the strategy would be active.

- Logistics for reducing loads related to the following bacteria sources were discussed:
 - Wastewater Treatment Facilities (WWTFs)

Strategy	Responsible Parties and Contacts	Focus Area	Needs	Timeline
Assist in identifying resources to improve operations	Partnership	Downstream	List funding sources, feedback from partnership	Early, ongoing
Consider regionalization	Utilities, Cities, (Outreach help from NGOs), include new facilities as they come online	Downstream	Coordination, messaging including facility tours/outreach/PSA videos	Ongoing
Recommend increased testing	Utilities, Partnership	Downstream, nutrients in Willow Creek	Identify funding for staff/supplies, Stream Team volunteers	Early, Ongoing

- Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs)

Strategy	Responsible Parties and Contacts	Focus Area	Needs	Timeline
Join the SSO Initiative	Utilities	Downstream	Outreach to facilities	Ongoing
Evaluate lift station generator backup capacity	Utilities	Downstream	Identify funding for staffing/remediation	Early, Ongoing
Identify areas affected by floods	Utilities	Downstream	Currently maintained in SSO reports	Ongoing

○ Onsite Sewage Facilities (OSSFs)

Strategy	Responsible Parties and Contacts	Focus Area	Needs	Timeline
Provide financial support for remediating low income OSSFs	H-GAC	Whole Watershed, special consideration for Tomball area	Staff time to manage remediation	Ongoing
Improve spatial data, help identify priority areas	H-GAC	Whole Watershed	Currently maintained under CWA 604(b) contract, staff time	Ongoing
Convert to sanitary service where appropriate	Utilities, Residents	Whole Watershed, special consideration for Tomball area	Promote conversions (outreach), contract skilled professionals, permits for conversion	Ongoing
Hold residential OSSF workshops	H-GAC	Whole Watershed	Staff time	Ongoing

○ Pet Waste

Strategy	Responsible Parties and Contacts	Focus Area	Needs	Timeline
Install pet waste stations in high traffic public areas	Local Government, Homeowners Associations, Apartment Complexes	Downstream, New Development	Identify funding, HOA sponsors	Early, ongoing
Increase dog parks/capacity	Local Government	Downstream, New Development	May need staff to clean park, outreach in parks, special attention for	Ongoing

			water features	
Sponsor spay/neuter events	Local Government, Homeowners Associations, Local Businesses, Residents	Downstream	Work with vet clinics to distribute info	Ongoing
Consider increased enforcement	Homeowners Associations, Apartment Complexes	Downstream, New Development	Seek political buy-in	Ongoing

o Stormwater

Strategy	Responsible Parties and Contacts	Focus Area	Needs	Timeline
Install drain markers	Local Government, Homeowners Associations	Downstream	Community organization volunteer training, staff time, funding	Early, Ongoing
Identify illicit connections in waterways and channels	Local Government	Downstream	Identify funding for staff time	Early, Ongoing
Promote low impact development; promote water quality features in detention	Local Government, Developers	Downstream, New Development	Promote LID (outreach), distribute H-GAC materials	Ongoing

o Agriculture

Strategy	Responsible Parties and Contacts	Focus Area	Needs	Timeline
Promote and engage in existing agricultural programs	Agencies, Landowners, SWCDs, Extension Agents	Headwaters	Outreach/education	Ongoing

TSSWCB WQMPs, USDA-NRCS Conservation Plans/Farm Bill programs	Landowners	Headwaters	Continued outreach/education, grazing BMPs	Ongoing
Develop manure composting program	Local Government, Stabling Facilities, Commercial Facilities	Headwaters	Raising awareness, coordination, identify contractor?	Ongoing

○ Deer and Other Wildlife

Strategy	Responsible Parties and Contacts	Focus Area	Needs	Timeline
Restore habitat away from riparian areas	Landowners, NGOs, Local Government	Headwaters	Landowner contributions, staff time for management	Early, Ongoing
Manage feeding	Residents, Local Government, Homeowners Associations	Whole Watershed	Exclusionary devices around deer feeders, work with HOAs to explore possibility of feeding ordinances (deer and waterfowl)	Ongoing
Address deer and other wildlife impacts indirectly by compensating with additional response to other sources (e.g., OSSFs ²)	See other strategies	See other strategies	See other strategies	See other strategies

○ Feral Hogs

Strategy	Responsible Parties and Contacts	Focus Area	Needs	Timeline
AgriLife education, technical services	AgriLife	Whole Watershed	Outreach, coordination with AgriLife	Ongoing
Promote and engage in existing agency programs	Residents, Agencies	Whole Watershed	Outreach, coordination with partners	Ongoing
Increase trapping and hunting of hogs	Landowners, Local Government, NGOs, Development, Homeowners Associations (trapping)	Whole Watershed	Identifying funding	Ongoing
Manage feeding	Residents, Local Government, Homeowners Associations	Whole Watershed	Exclusionary devices around deer feeders, work with HOAs to explore possibility of feeding ordinances, education materials (flyer, brochure, web materials)	Ongoing

○ Conservation and Restoration

Strategy	Responsible Parties and Contacts	Focus Area	Needs	Timeline
Promote and engage in existing conservation programs	Agencies, Landowners, NGOs	Whole Watershed	Outreach, coordination with partners	Early, Ongoing
Conserve, restore and	Landowners, Local	Whole Watershed,	Landowner contributions,	Early, Ongoing

maintain riparian buffers	Government, NGOs	Riparian Areas	staff time for management	
Increase tree canopy	Agencies, Landowners, NGOs	Downstream	iTree Hydro modeling, staff time for management, identify funding	Early, Ongoing

o Education and Outreach

Topic	Partners/Programs/Events
Pet Waste	H-GAC Pitch the Poop; Kennel Club; Canine Good Citizen; Woodlands Township Envi. Services; Woodlands GREEN; Scouts/Youth Programs; Woodlands Water Agency (MUDs)
Onsite Sewage Facilities	H-GAC Homeowner Education Workshops; Promote SEP
Sanitary Sewer Overflows	Distribute materials promoting floodwater contact awareness and public reporting through Community Organizations/Utilities
Conservation & Restoration	Bayou Land Conservancy Ambassador Program; Native Plant Society; Texas Master Naturalists; Woodlands Township Envi. Services; Woodlands GREEN
Trash Reduction	Trash Bash; Trash Free Texas Adopt-A-Spot
Lawn Maintenance	Healthy Lawns, Healthy Watersheds; Native Plant Society; Woodlands Water Agency (MUDs); Woodlands Township Envi. Services (overwatering); Woodlands GREEN; Scouts/Youth Programs; Extension
Agriculture	SWCD Leadership Development Workshops; County Extension/Extension Programs, TSSWCB, NRCS
Stormwater	Drain Markers; TCEQ Water Quality/Stormwater Seminars
Fats, Oils and Grease	City of Houston Protect Our Pipes; Woodlands Township Envi. Services; Woodlands GREEN; Woodlands Water Agency (MUDs); Woodlands Township Envi. Services; Woodlands GREEN; Scouts/Youth Programs; GBF (partner?); H-GAC; SJRA

- Supportive Research
 - Ms. Windham reviewed other elements to consider including in the Watershed Protection Plan that would not necessarily reduce bacteria loads but could provide useful context for conditions impacting water quality. Among these are the targeted use of DNA-based source tracking (instream genetic identification of species-specific *E. coli* strains or host DNA specifically) which can both be used to detect illicit discharge or characterize localized spikes in fecal indicator bacteria concentration. Another important task includes coordination with flood management efforts and projects modeling environmental effects and costs of management decisions.
- Continue Partnership
 - Lastly, Ms. Windham points out that the next step to consider after the Watershed Protection Plan is completed and approved will be to seek a watershed coordinator to guide plan implementation and continue to coordinate with local governments, organizations and stakeholders.

Next Steps

- Following this meeting, Ms. Windham will begin drafting the watershed protection plan based on the timeline, reduction targets and implementation strategies discussed with the Partnership as well as follow-up conversations with stakeholders during the drafting process. This draft will be completed before the next meeting of the Partnership in early June.
- As always, the Partnership will seek opportunities to collaborate with partners on environmental and water quality efforts in the watershed.

General Discussion, News and Questions

- Ms. Windham concludes the meeting by calling for any Partnership news and inviting discussion/questions.
- Mr. Douglas shared an invitation to the Houston Sierra Club virtual meeting on April 8th starting at 7:30 where he will present. <https://www.meetup.com/Houston-Sierra-Club-Outings/discussions/>
- Paul Nelson (Woodlands GREEN) and Teri MacArthur (The Woodlands Township) also shared a meeting invitation to the next Woodlands GREEN Lecture on April 29th at 7:00 pm where Ms. MacArthur will share a talk on invasive plants. <https://www.thewoodlandsgreen.org/lectures>

Meeting Adjourned at 4:10 pm.

For more information, visit <http://springcreekpartnership.com>,
or contact Rachel Windham at:
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