SPRING CREEK
WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

Public Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 3rd, 2020
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

In Attendance:

Organizers:

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

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ):
Jessica Uramkin

Attendees:

Alfonso Tamez (Woodlands GREEN)
Bobby Martin (Harris County Precinct 4 (HCP4))
Brian Koch (Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB))
Brooke Bacuetes (General Land Office (GLO))
Camila Biaggi (Harris County Engineering)
Danielle Cioce (Harris County Engineering)
Desta Takie (City of Houston)
Emily Schwartz (Citizen)
Gail McConnell (Citizen)
Glenna Sloan (Texas Master Naturalists (TMN) - Heartwood)
Jason Naivar (Jesse Jones Park and Nature Center, HCP4)
Jennifer Seale (TMN - Heartwood)
Kathie Herrick (Woodlands GREEN)
Kristin DeBone (TCEQ)
Liz Stone (Jones|Carter Engineering)
Melissa Shewbert (TMN - Heartwood)
Monte Parks (HCP4)
Neil Gaynor (Montgomery County MUD 6)
Patrick Rightmyer (City of Houston)
Paul Nelson (Woodlands GREEN)
Robert Johnston (TMN - Heartwood)
Simone Yoxall (TCEQ)
Steve Ellison (TMN - Heartwood)

Terrilyn MacArthur (The Woodlands Township)
Tom Douglas (Bayou Preservation Association)
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.
- 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.

Document Overview

- Ms. Windham provided a summary of the contents of the watershed protection plan draft. Sections 1 through 4 (Project Background, Watershed Characterization, Identifying Pollutant Sources, and Improving Water Quality) cover material discussed at early Partnership meetings used to develop the Water Quality Data Analysis Summary Report and Bacteria Monitoring Report (both available on the project website). These sections define water quality challenges specific to the watershed. Sections 5 through 7 (Recommended Solutions, Education and Outreach, and Implementation) will require the most thorough stakeholder review as these sections detail the implementation strategies for achieving bacteria reduction and water quality improvement in the watershed. Finally, Section 8 (Evaluating Success) details the metrics for gauging the effectiveness of the watershed implementation plan throughout implementation.
- When asked about whether they would like to review the plan document as a whole or in individual sections, most stakeholders requested to view the whole document. Since some stakeholders also indicated an interest in being able to view individual sections, both options will be made available through the project website.

Implementation Goals

- Reduction Targets
    - Before the meeting, stakeholders on the mailing list received a flyer detailing the concepts behind the calculation of source-specific reduction targets in an effort to improve transparency in the methodology. These calculations were discussed in greater detail at the meeting. Further, a

calculation error in a table used in previous presentations was discussed. The error was specific to a table showing calculations for source-specific reduction targets proportional to each source's contribution to the total load. The incorrect version of the table referenced SELECT model results showing each source's contribution to the total load specific to 2018 (most recently observed data) when 2030 (target implementation goal) data should have been used. This error has been corrected in the Bacteria Modeling Report and will be displayed correctly in all forthcoming materials.

- Using corrected values for source-specific load reduction targets, conversions to representative units were recalculated. This involves the division of a load reduction target by the load produced by the most basic unit of that source (*e.g.*, for pet waste, the most basic unit is the load produced in the daily waste of one dog). The amount of load produced by an individual unit that ultimately contributes to the instream load can vary relative to its proximity to the waterway. Units closer to the riparian zone are assumed to contribute their maximum potential load to the instream load whereas units farther away only contribute a portion of their potential load. In light of this, two methods of conversion from load reduction targets to relative units were discussed:
    - Method 1: Starting with the load reduction target and dividing it by the **maximum load** produced by the most basic unit of that source to determine the **minimum number of units** to target for reduction.
    - Method 2: Starting with the load reduction target and dividing it by the **average load** produced by the most basic unit of that source to determine the **average number of units** to target for reduction.
- Method 1 has been used on previous completed watershed protection plan projects. Assumptions for this method include targeting implementation strategies with direct benefit to riparian areas because sources within the riparian zone are more likely to contribute their maximum load to the instream load. However, as there is some variability in how much load a source contributes to the instream load relative to its proximity to the waterway, it is likely that more units will need to be addressed than those represented in these conceptual calculations.
- Regardless of method, the results are meant to be used as a visualization tool for determining how to distribute implementation effort. 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. These decisions are easier to make through visualizing load reductions in terms of practical units.

- In the current draft of the watershed protection plan, Method 1 was used to calculate representative units. According to feedback received at previous stakeholder meetings, further adjustments were made:
  - Headwaters – As contributions to the total instream load from deer and other wildlife (included in the safety margin) cannot be addressed directly, these load reduction targets will be converted to equivalent representative units for dog and feral hog waste. By increasing implementation efforts relative to dog and feral hog waste to make up for lack of direct measures to mitigate deer and other wildlife, the bottom-line reduction target can still be achieved.
  - Downstream – deer and other wildlife load reduction targets will be converted to equivalent representative units for OSSFs. By increasing implementation efforts relative to OSSFs to make up for lack of direct measures to mitigate deer and other wildlife, the bottom-line reduction target can still be achieved.
- These methods are subject to further review and may be adjusted according to feedback received from stakeholders during the 30-day review period.

- Implementation
  - Goals and milestones for reducing loads were discussed by reviewing tables from Section 7 (Implementation) of the watershed protection plan draft. Both recommended solutions from Section 5 and education/outreach strategies from Section 6 are included in the tables. These tables reflect the strategies discussed at the previous Partnership meeting and are enhanced with more detail regarding the purpose of each strategy, and specific interim milestone goals to achieve. Stakeholder suggested edits received at the meeting are listed below.
  - General comments:
    - Make interim milestone dates consistent
    - Where education and outreach strategies note that materials will be made available on the project website, add that printed materials will also be distributed at meetings and events
    - Reference riparian buffer/tree canopy strategies that occur in multiple focus areas to easily identify overlap
  - Wastewater Treatment Facilities (WWTFs)
    - No edits made during the meeting
  - Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs)

        - No edits made during the meeting
    - Onsite Sewage Facilities (OSSFs)
        - No edits made during the meeting
        - Camilla Biaggi (Harris County Engineering) provided a link to Harris County OSSF webinar information to share with the group:
        - https://www.eng.hctx.net/Consultants/Watershed/Watershed-Seminars
    - Stormwater
        - No edits made during the meeting
    - Pet Waste
        - For strategy E1, added descriptive text to indicate pet waste bag dispensers to distribute at events are handheld
    - Agriculture
        - No edits made during the meeting
    - Deer and Other Wildlife
        - No edits made during the meeting
    - Feral Hogs
        - No edits made during the meeting
    - Conservation and Restoration
        - No edits made during the meeting
- Supportive Research
    - Ms. Windham reviewed other elements included in the Watershed Protection Plan supplementary to the implementation strategies 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 incorporate stakeholder edits to the watershed protection plan received during the meeting. This updated draft will be made available to the stakeholders for a 30-day review period for further edits and comments. An additional Partnership meeting will be held in late July/Early August to discuss edits made to the draft throughout the 30-day stakeholder review.
- 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.
- Tom Douglas (Bayou Preservation Association) requested the partnership mailing list be shared so that stakeholders can contact each other.
- No news was presented and no further discussions were requested.

Meeting Adjourned at 4:00 pm.

For more information, visit http://springcreekpartnership.com,
or contact Rachel Windham at:
Phone: 713-993-2497
Email: rachel.windham@h-gac.com

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