



**Watershed Coordination Steering Committee
Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board
Wharton Regional Office**

**Meeting Summary
Thursday, November 2, 2006**

Attendance

Persons present:

Steven Johnston	*Galveston Bay Estuary Program
Debbie Magin	*Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority
Todd Running	*Houston-Galveston Area Council
Sylvia Balentine	*Lavaca-Navidad River Authority
David Cowan	*Lower Colorado River Authority
Steve Lusk	*San Antonio River Authority
Arthur Talley	*Texas Commission on Environmental Quality – TMDL Program
Laurie Curra	*Texas Commission on Environmental Quality – NPS Program
Nikki Dictson	Texas Cooperative Extension – Texas Watershed Steward Program
Matt Berg	Texas Cooperative Extension – Plum Creek Watershed Coordinator
Monty Dozier	*Texas Cooperative Extension – Soil and Crop Sciences Department
Dale Rankin	Texas Cooperative Extension – Colorado County
Tomas Dominguez	*USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service – Zone 3
Richard Eyster	*Texas Department of Agriculture – Hydrologist
Chris Brown	*Texas Forest Service
David Sager	*Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – Inland Fisheries
Bud Solmonsson	Texas Sea Grant – Dickinson Bayou Watershed Coordinator
Kevin Wagner	*Texas Water Resources Institute
Carter Miska	Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board
Kendria Ray	Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board
Aaron Wendt	Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board
Brian Koch	Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

**WCSC member*

Committee agencies not represented:

Brazos River Authority
Brazos Valley Council of Governments
Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program
Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission
Lower Neches Valley Authority
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service – Zone 4
Nueces River Authority
South East Texas Regional Planning Commission
Sabine River Authority
Texas General Land Office
Texas Parks and Wildlife – Coastal Fisheries
Texas Water Development Board
Trinity River Authority

Call To Order

Brian Koch opened the seventh meeting of the Watershed Coordination Steering Committee (WCSC) of the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board Wharton Regional Office. This meeting was a combination of the September and December WCSC meetings previously scheduled. Self-introductions of those in attendance were made. The meeting was held at the Colorado County Agriculture Building in Columbus, Texas, and was moderately attended by committee members.

Update on Watershed Protection Plans within the Wharton Region

Dickinson Bayou WPP

Bud Solmonsson, from Texas Sea Grant, provided a brief update to the group on the Dickinson Bayou WPP. He introduced himself as the new Watershed Coordinator for the project. In addition to the Dickinson Bayou WPP, he is working to fit the Armand Bayou WPP in to USEPA's 9-elements. The draft plan is slated to be finished in October 2007. Dickinson Bayou is currently under a TMDL for low dissolved oxygen, and is also on the 2004 303(d) list for elevated bacteria.

Bastrop Bayou WPP

Todd Running, from Houston-Galveston Area Council, provided an update on efforts with the Bastrop Bayou WPP. Work on the contract with TCEQ is ongoing, along with the ambient sampling for bacteria at eight sites. The two largest sources of bacteria are failing septic systems, of which around 40-50% are failing, and direct deposition into the bayou from cattle. And ranchers are willing to implement BMPs to address this issue. There has also been considerable involvement from the Brazoria County Commissioners, including installing signs along the roads within the county pointing out the watershed and its relationship to Christmas Bay. Currently, Bastrop Bayou is not listed for any impairment.

Plum Creek WPP

Nikki Dictson, from Texas Cooperative Extension, gave an update on the progress of the Plum Creek Watershed Partnership (PCWP) and WPP. Promotion of the project started in January of 2006 with a media blitz of news releases put out by TSSWCB and TCE, and various meetings with stakeholders. The PCWP has been meeting since April of 2006. The first three meetings were public meetings held in different portions of the watershed to promote and kick off the project. Four steering committee meetings have been held, with the first in May of 2006, and the most recent being October 2006. There are 27 members on the steering committee, all with local interest in the watershed. The five workgroups (Outreach and Education, Agricultural NPS, Urban NPS, Habitat and Water Quality, and Wastewater), comprised of steering committee members, interested participants, and participating agency personnel, have met three times since their formation at the June 2006 steering committee meeting. The Texas Watershed Steward Program has also introduced education modules on watershed protection and stewardship. The steering committee requested a tour of the watershed which was held on July 27, 2006. Tour stops included:

- Plum Creek Subdivision in Kyle at headwaters
- GBRA's Plum Creek sampling site near Umland
- Bar-B-Que Lunch at Smitty's provided by GBRA
- Local History presentation by Donaly Brice
- Lockhart Springs in Lockhart
- Livestock operation along a major tributary of Plum Creek
- Drive on southeastern side of watershed demonstrating oil and gas production
- Lockhart WWTF tour by GBRA

Another request of the steering committee was to check if there were any fish consumption bans for Plum Creek. Upon further research, it was found there are no fish consumption advisories for Plum Creek. There have not been any studies or assessments in the Plum Creek watershed, and TCEQ is working on putting Plum Creek on the list for a phase 1 assessment. Through TCEQ, we became aware USGS gage 08172400 on Plum Creek, which has a 46-year record, was scheduled for discontinuation in October 2006. This led to discussions with USGS and USGS indicated they were aware of this Plum Creek WPP project and would forego discontinuation this next fiscal year. However, this would not exclude USGS, and the funding partner Texas Water Development Board, from potentially including this gage on next year's list. TSSWCB, TxDOT, GBRA and others will continue discussions to keep the USGS gage in use. To satisfy USEPA's 9-elements, it was realized that some modeling to assess loading was necessary, the following will be used:

- Spatially Explicit Load Enrichment Calculation Tool – SELECT
- Load Duration Curves
- SPAtially Referred Regressions On Watershed attributes – SPARROW
- Soil and Water Assessment Tool - SWAT

There is a marketing campaign to develop a logo and brochure for the project. The Outreach and Education workgroup created a branding survey; this survey was given to the rest of the workgroups to fill out with responses and sent to the partnership by email.

Lower Colorado River Authority Anti-Dumping Campaign and Survey

David Cowan from LCRA presented their Anti-Dumping Campaign and Survey. The campaign started in 2002 when a stakeholder from Matagorda County complained about illegal dumping in Tres Palacios Creek. LCRA applied for a CWA 319(h) grant from TCEQ to address the issue. With the grant money, signs were posted, clean-ups were conducted, and outreach tools, such as placemats in restaurants, were distributed, and radio spots featuring Finley the Catfish discouraged illegal dumping. Matagorda County Crime Stoppers also stepped in offering rewards up to \$5,000 for people who report illegal dumping, leading to arrest and conviction of the suspects. This led LCRA to focus on basin-wide dumping, so they received an extension on the grant and were able to survey the basin by helicopter and video their findings. The flyover started in McCulloch County and ended at the coast in Matagorda County. The main river and major tributaries were flown with the survey area extending out 300 yards. Of the 21 counties surveyed, 324 dumpsites were located, with 182 within the 100 year floodplain. One-third of the sites were located in 3 counties. The sites ranged from open fields, pits, and ravines and contents included tires, old cars, household garbage, construction trash, and other various garbage. Next steps in the process include: setting up an advisory panel to prioritize dumpsites, and applying for additional grant money to fund voluntary clean-ups, work with riverside landowners on the issue, and to continue the outreach campaign.

Task Force on Bacteria Total Maximum Daily Loads

Kevin Wagner from the Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI) gave a presentation on the Task Force on Bacteria TMDLs. The TSSWCB and the TCEQ established this Task Force at a Joint Work Session on September 27 2006.

The Task Force members are Allan Jones (TWRI), George DiGiovanni (TAES-EI Paso), Larry Hauck (TIAER) Joanna Mott (Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi), Hanadi Rifai (University of Houston), Raghavan Srinivasan (Texas A&M University), and George Ward (University of Texas at Austin). In addition, a 40 member expert advisory group representing various stakeholder perspectives will provide input to the Task Force for the Report. This Watershed Coordination Steering Committee will act as a supplemental group of expert advisors for the Task Force.

The responsibilities of the Task Force include:

- reviewing USEPA TMDL guidelines and approaches taken by selected states to TMDL and implementation plan development
- evaluating scientific tools, including bacteria fate and transport modeling and bacterial source tracking
- suggesting alternative approaches using bacteria modeling and source tracking for TMDL implementation plan development emphasizing scientific quality, timeliness and cost effectiveness
- identifying gaps in our understanding of bacteria fate and transport requiring additional research and tool development

A timeline of the Task Force was presented and included:

- Oct. 31, 2006 – First Draft sent out
- Nov. 13, 2006 – Comments on First Draft due
- Nov. 27, 2006 – Task Force Meeting/Teleconference
- Dec. 4, 2006 – Second Draft
- Dec. 15, 2006 – Response to Second Draft due
- Dec. 18, 2006 – Task Force Meeting/Teleconference
- Jan. 8, 2007 – Third Draft delivered to TCEQ and TSSWCB

The issues included:

- number of Bacteria impairments (197)
- communication with stakeholders
- modeling
- water quality standards
- bacteria in sediments
- bacteria re-growth

The Task Force will provide TCEQ and TSSWCB with different scenarios to address different bacteria TMDLs statewide.

Path Forward

- Newsletter
- Plum Creek Watershed Partnership Work Group meetings November 7, 9, 14, and 15
- Plum Creek Watershed Partnership Steering Committee December 14, 2006
- Next WCSC meeting March 8, 2007

Adjournment

Brian Koch thanked those in attendance for their active participation in working toward successful coordination of watershed protection planning activities in southeast and south central Texas.