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

Meeting Summary
Thursday, March 8, 2007

Attendance

Persons present:

Steven Johnston	*Galveston Bay Estuary Program
Debbie Magin	*Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority
Carl Masterson	*Houston-Galveston Area Council
Miles Hall	*Sabine River Authority
Steve Lusk	*San Antonio River Authority
Holli Swick	Trust for Public Land
Arthur Talley	*Texas Commission on Environmental Quality – TMDL Program
Bill Carter	*Texas Commission on Environmental Quality – NPS Program
John O'Connell	Texas Sea Grant – Matagorda County
Tomas Dominguez	*USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service – Zone 3
Richard Eyster	*Texas Department of Agriculture
David Sager	*Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – Inland Fisheries
Stephen Twidwell	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – Kills and Spills Team
Bud Solmonsson	Texas Sea Grant – Dickinson Bayou Watershed Coordinator
Cecilia Wagner	*Texas Water Resources Institute
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
Lavaca-Navidad River Authority
Lower Colorado River Authority
Lower Neches Valley Authority
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service – Zone 4
Nueces River Authority
South East Texas Regional Planning Commission
Texas Forest Service
Texas General Land Office
Texas Parks and Wildlife – Coastal Fisheries
Texas Water Development Board
Trinity River Authority

Call To Order

Brian Koch opened the eighth meeting of the Watershed Coordination Steering Committee (WCSC) of the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board Wharton Regional Office. 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 and alternates.

Update on Watershed Protection Plans within the Wharton Region

Plum Creek

Brian Koch provided an update of activities from the Plum Creek Watershed Partnership since this WCSC last met in November. At the workgroup meetings in November and January, discussions focused on potential BMPs for WPP implementation, refinement of the LDC and SELECT modeling, and GBRAs outreach to 760 fourth grade students in the watershed through a water quality testing campaign. For the Steering Committee Meeting in December, the initial

LDC and SELECT results for *E. coli* were introduced, including a 59% reduction at Uhland, 12% at Lockhart, and 58% at Luling. The first draft of the WPP was sent out to Stakeholders in February for initial review and comments to be addressed at the next steering committee meeting. Also, this initial draft will be sent out to this WCSC. The First Draft of WPP Document should be complete by August 2007. http://www.pcwp.edu

Armand Bayou
Holli Swick, from The Trust for Public Land provided an overview of the Armand Bayou Watershed Partnership, with the main focus on the Greenprinting effort. There are three phases to Greenprinting, and they include:
Phase I. Watershed Assessment: Identify areas where land conservation provides the greatest benefit to community priorities
Phase II. Exchange: Address issues and identify strategies through an exchange
Phase III. Implementation: Fine-tune strategies and begin locally-driven implementation efforts
The goals of the partnership are outlined this way; Protect Habitat, Protect Water Quality, Reduce Flood Damage, Provide Access and Recreation, and Improve Water Quality. Some of the most critical areas are owned by large refineries, and currently strategies are being developed to further protect these areas. There is also work being done to incorporate USEPAs 9-elements for watershed plans into the Armand Bayou Plan.
http://www.armandbayou.org

Dickinson Bayou
Bud Solmonsson, from Texas Sea Grant provided an update of the Dickinson Bayou Watershed Partnership. The workgroups have been meeting almost monthly with work focusing on forming the WPP. The land use workgroup's task is probably the most challenging because of the various types of land use, and how rapid change is occurring. A new workgroup has been formed for recreation. They will work on different issues affecting recreational use and access on the bayou. One of the local churches has set aside 15 acres of land on the bayou for preservation, which should create a buffer for the bayou, contributing to load reductions. The next steering committee meeting will be on March 27, followed by a partnership meeting in April. http://www.dickinsonbayou.org

Bastrop Bayou
Carl Masterson, from Houston-Galveston Area Council provided an update of the Bastrop Bayou WPP. Their contract with TCEQ has been approved, with a start date of March 16, 2007. Landowners have already come forward, volunteering to implement BMPs.
http://www.h-gac.com

Upper San Antonio River
Steve Lusk from the San Antonio River Authority provided an update of the Upper San Antonio River WPP. The final WPP document was submitted in January 2007, after originally being submitted in July 2006. The major issues holding up completion was there was no timeline in the plan, and the introduction was re-written. A chart that contained USEPAs 9-elements was included in the plan and distributed to the WCSC. This chart basically lays out each element and what entity would be in charge of implementing it. BMPs are expected to achieve the load reductions necessary to attain stream standards for bacteria at base flow. Major load reductions will come from disinfecting water from the zoo with UV treatment. The routine monitoring is completed, and one more targeted event is remaining. The WPP information, including the final WPP document, is located under the "New Information" link on the San Antonio River Authority website. www.sara-tx.org

Texas Department of Agriculture programs targeting Feral Hog Control and Research

Richard Eyster from Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) presented their control efforts for feral hogs in Texas. Texas has an estimated population of around 1.5-2 million feral hogs statewide, and many experts believe the number is higher. Feral hog damage is felt throughout the agriculture community; these animals are very fond of domestic agricultural crops such as corn, grain sorghum, rice, wheat, soybeans, peanuts, potatoes, watermelons and cantaloupe. Feral hogs are omnivorous, and also prey on young lambs, kid goats, shellfish and even fish. They have also been known to kill and eat ground-nesting birds, such as turkey and quail. In addition to damaging crops and livestock, feral hogs are also vectors of several diseases that can lead to losses in agriculture, including: pseudorabies, hog cholera, swine brucellosis, tuberculosis, and anthrax. They are also potential carriers of FMD (foot-and-mouth disease). Texas Cooperative Extension estimates that statewide annual economic damage caused by feral hogs is $51.7 million.

As a result, in 2005 the Texas Legislature appropriated $500,000 to TDA for Feral Hog Research. TDA granted **$**390,500 to Texas A&M University to assess feral hog damage to crops, evaluate current control efforts and to measure economic impact and granted $109,500 to Texas Tech University to develop pheromone and odor combinations which can be used to attract feral hogs to traps and other control locations. The grant will also be used to research reproductive control methods, with the long-term goal to apply these methods on a large-scale basis in

Texas. It has also been noted that feral hogs are potential sources of pathogens affecting many of the streams in Texas, which make pollution reduction efforts such as TMDLs and WPPs more difficult to manage. http://www.agr.state.tx.us

Criteria Review for Selecting the Next Watershed for WPP Development

Brian Koch reviewed the criteria that were used to select Plum Creek as a pilot watershed for WPP development in the TSSWCB Wharton Region Office service area. Suggestions on changes, adjustments, or edits improve and refine this selection process. The criteria include:

Impairment

- Utilize draft 2004 303(d) and 305(b) list and Secondary concerns list
- Assess points per assigned category (e.g. 4a, 4b, 4c, etc…)
- Split 4a and 5a between those with TMDLs underway and those without
- High points for 5a w/o, 4a w/o IP, secondary concern, threat/trend
- Medium points for 5b, 5c, 1, 2, 3, 5a w/, 4a w/
- Review data for trends
- Protection from potential impairments
- EPA priorities and concerns
- If multiple segments and listings within watershed, use category with highest point value
- Change title from "Impairment" (negative) to "Waterbody 305(b) Status" (more positive)

Planning Status

- Planned TMDL or WPP

LULC

- 2001 NLCD is now available
- Use only cropland or all three agriculture (cropland, rangeland, forestland)
- Compare agriculture to developed versus just % agriculture
- Use agriculture statistics from NASS survey
- Number of permitted dischargers (high # = low WPP potential)

Implementation Status

- To evaluate the potential for implementation of BMPs in watershed
- Use TSSWCB Water Quality Management Plan acreage compared to agriculture acreage from LULC above
- HUC-12 is now available for most of the region except for some coastal basins

Size

- Watershed size for realistic management
- High WPP potential for watersheds within target range
- 100 to 1,000 sq mi
- Also 1 million acres (about 1,600 sq mi) suggested as maximum

Ag NPS Potential

- Limitation because best resolution is HUC-8
- Evaluated and ranked watershed potential from 1997 USDA NRCS nation-wide study
- Study examined parameters such as climate, soil characteristics, pesticides and nitrogen loadings from ag sources

Threat or LULC Change

- Best would be 2001 NLCD, which is available
- Next option use US Census Bureau population data
- 1990-2000 change in county with most area in watershed
- Use projections as well as historic change
- Use density versus population change
- Eliminate irregularities by using block-level data instead of county (COGs should be able to help with this)

Member Priority

- WCSC Member entity
- Select top three watersheds within jurisdiction for WPP

Coastal Zone

- Simply Yes or No
- Any part of the watershed in delineated Coastal Zone

Stakeholder Buy-in

- Of these ten "simple" parameters, this one turned into most complex
- Combination of points in four different sub-categories: citizen interest, local government, WCSC member support, and local SWCD interest
- First three (citizen, local government, and WCSC) will be self-ranked by WCSC member entity
- SWCD will be assessed by TSSWCB Field Representatives
- To tie to Texas Watershed Steward, should also include evaluation of TCE County Faculty in each watershed

Criteria for previous watershed selection were sent out before the meeting. **All comments due by April 30, 2007**, to ensure all will be addressed by June WCSC meeting. After the June WCSC meeting, refine criteria spreadsheet. September WCSC meeting, ask entities for priority watersheds. At the December WCSC meeting, select a watershed for WPP development; dependent on TSSWCB FY08 CWA §319(h) grant monies.

Path Forward

- Take comments on refinement of priority assessment for selection of next watershed for WPP development
- Newsletter -Articles, Announcements, and/or Comments
- Next WCSC meeting June 7, 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.