



Coordinated Watershed Protection in Southeast and South Central Texas

Volume 1, Issue 5

July 2006

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Update from the Regional Watershed Coordinator

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Hello everyone and welcome to the July issue of our newsletter. We are finishing another busy month within the region. On July 11, TSSWCB staff met with staff from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 (USEPA) and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to discuss selecting a "priority watershed". This priority watershed would allow all three agencies to focus resources to achieve water quality improvement while at the same time demonstrating agency cooperation and collaboration and achievement of USEPA's performance measures. In selecting Plum

WCSC Meeting Schedule

September 7, 2006

December 7, 2006

March 8, 2007

June 7, 2007

Creek an intensified spotlight has been placed on our on-going Plum Creek Watershed Protection Plan project.

On July 20, I attended the Lavaca-Navidad River Authority's Clean Rivers Program meeting in Edna. An overview of the Matagorda Bay System Freshwater Inflows Study was provided by Angela Rodriguez from the Lower Colorado River Authority. This current

study updates a study completed prior to changes in the volume of freshwater inflow resulting from completion of a diversion channel. The Colorado River had emptied directly into the Gulf of Mexico but the 1992 diversion channel directed flows to West Matagorda Bay. The study examined inflows from the Colorado and Lavaca River Basins, as well as Coastal Basin inflow, into the eastern end of West Matagorda Bay. The volume and frequency of freshwater inflows affect biological productivity and maintain suitable habitat for marine life.



West Bernard Creek in eastern Wharton County; photo by Brian Koch

Gregg Easley from TCEQ gave an update on the dissolved oxygen Use Attainability Analysis for the Lavaca River above Tidal (segment 1602). The 2006 Water Quality Assessment of the basin was also given,

along with updates and highlights from the past year.

On July 24 the San Antonio River Authority held a public meeting concerning the Upper San Antonio River Watershed Protection Plan. Impaired by elevated bacteria concentrations, the ongoing TMDL project indicates that the San Antonio Zoo is a major source of bacteria. The draft WPP, which is available at http://www.sara-tx.org/site/water_quality/water_qual_mon/wpp/SARA_WPP_Draft_Report.pdf, describes structural BMPs the Zoo could implement to reduce bacteria. Additionally, non-structural BMPs such as public outreach are described which address urban nonpoint sources contributing to bacteria loadings. This WPP will be presented to the Bexar Regional Watershed Management program for approval. BRWM is a partnership among Bexar County, the City of San Antonio, the San Antonio River Authority and 19 suburban cities, who've joined together in a regional approach to manage flood control, storm water and water quality.

On July 25 the Sabine River Authority hosted an Adams and Cow Bayous TMDL project meeting in Orange. For the contact recreation impairment, modeling results indicated that for both Adams and Cow Bayous, the majority of *E. coli* loadings are from failing septic systems with pasture land use as the second major source. For the dissolved oxygen impairment, modeling results were presented for both biological oxygen demand and ammonia nitrogen. For BOD in both Adams and Cow Bayous, the major source was failing septic systems with point sources second in Adams Bayou and forest land use second in Cow Bayou. For ammonia in Adams Bayou, point sources accounted for the majority of loadings with failing septic systems second. In Cow Bayou, major ammonia sources were also failing septic systems and point sources but septic ranked first. The next stage will be to develop the actual TMDL

and once it is approved stakeholders will develop an Implementation Plan.

The Dickinson Bayou Watershed Partnership held a steering committee meeting in Dickinson, where an update of the TMDL was given. Also a presentation on the history of Dickinson Bay was given by Alecyia Gallaway, Historian with the Environmental Institute of Houston. Susan Benner gave updates on the WPP, including the outline of the WPP and an overview of the boat tour in May, which highlighted some of the activities along the bayou and work group progress from their meetings in June. For more information on the Dickinson Bayou Watershed Partnership please visit: www.dickinsonbayou.org.

For more information please visit: www.tsswcb.state.tx.us/programs/wharton_wcsc.html

Update from Plum Creek

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July proved to be a very busy, yet productive month in the development of a Watershed Protection Plan for Plum Creek.



Plum Creek near the confluence of Clear Fork Creek in Caldwell County; photo by Brian Koch

We started the month with the news that the project will be receiving more

attention from USEPA, and hopefully this will help us achieve our goal of de-listing and restoring the water quality in Plum Creek.

On July 11, we began three consecutive days of Work Group meetings with the Water Quality and Habitat Work Group, following with the Agricultural NPS Work Group, the next evening. Then on the 13th, we met with the Outreach and Education Work Group, Urban NPS and Stormwater Work Group, then Wastewater Infrastructure and Industry Work Group. With these meetings, we continued discussion of concerns identified by the Work Groups at the June 20 Steering Committee meeting. There was great discussion within each group, and we feel this will ultimately lead to improved water quality in Plum Creek.

On July 27 we invited Steering Committee members, Work Group members and supporting agency staff to participate in a tour of Plum Creek from its headwaters in Kyle to Luling, where it eventually joins the San Marcos River.

We started the day at Lockhart, then drove up to Kyle and met at the Plum Creek Community Club House. Speakers included Dan Ryan from the City of Kyle, and Peter French, Developer of Plum Creek Subdivision, and City Engineer Myra Gopp. They described the development and design of the community, focusing on green space, water quality protection, water quantity, and habitat protection.

From there, we drove to the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority's (GBRA) monthly monitoring site in Uhland on Plum Creek Road.

Lee Gudgell, Brian Lyssy, and Jonathan Bode from GBRA discussed sampling procedures used to monitor Plum Creek, including biological assessments, flow data, and water quality sampling.

Then we moved down to Lockhart for a Bar-B-Que Lunch at Smitty's which was graciously provided by GBRA. During

lunch Donaly Brice from the Texas Historical Commission and the Caldwell County Genealogical and Historical Society spoke about the history of Plum Creek and Caldwell County. After lunch we ventured over to Lockhart Springs at Lockhart City Park.



Lee Gudgell from GBRA explains the methods in taking biological assessments, which is one type of monitoring done on Plum Creek; photo by Brian Koch

Moving down the watershed we stopped at local agricultural producer, Don Meador's leased pasture on the West Fork of Plum Creek. His operation is a fine example of good land stewardship that protects water quality and habitat. Continuing southward we traveled through the Luling Oil Field to show the group the vast petroleum activity within the Plum Creek Watershed.

We ended the tour by getting a closer look at GBRA Lockhart wastewater plant at FM 20 on Plum Creek, Jason Eeds and Angel Castillo were our tour guides at the plant. We would like to thank all the participants on the tour, and everyone who took time from their busy schedules to help with the tour.

We also want to thank all those who provided lunch and refreshments – GBRA, City of Kyle, Caldwell-Travis Soil and

Water Conservation District, and Hays County Soil and Water Conservation District.

For more information on the Plum Creek Watershed Partnership, please visit: <http://pcwp.tamu.edu> or contact Nikki Dictson or myself at the information below.



GBRA Staff explain the processes involved in treating wastewater at their FM 20 plant outside of Lockhart; photo by Brian Koch

Plum Creek Watershed Partnership Meetings

August 10
PCWP Technical Advisory Group; First Lockhart National Bank 1-4pm, Lockhart

August 10
PCWP Steering Committee; First Lockhart National Bank 6-8:30pm, Lockhart

Unique Partnership Preserves a Texas Coastal Treasure-Armand Bayou

Lorri Jones, Texas Cooperative Extension, Houston LJones@ag.tamu.edu

A partnership involving five cities, Harris County, 15 state and federal agencies, and a growing number of corporate and private non-profit organizations has released a plan for protecting the Armand

Bayou Watershed in the Greater Houston area. The Armand Bayou Watershed Plan addresses flood control and water quality and quantity in this important environmental asset on the southeast edge of Houston, as well as the entire Gulf Coast.

John Jacob, environmental quality specialist for Texas Cooperative Extension and the Sea Grant program, said if development on the watershed and environmental practices continues on the same course as the last decade, the environmental cost will be high.

"Most of the remaining unprotected habitat, prairie potholes and coastal flatwood forests will be lost," he said. "There would be increased conflict between those protecting the habitat and those trying to reduce flooding, and water quality in and around the bayou will continue to degrade." Extension and the Sea Grant program joined with the Houston-Galveston Area Council about seven years ago to begin coordinating efforts in the region among the state and federal agencies, the municipalities and private projects.

"Each agency or city had projects on the table, all having a limited scope or jurisdiction for addressing the ideal of preserving the watershed," Jacob said. "However, a watershed doesn't follow jurisdictional boundaries." The partnership began to grow through public education of city governments and community groups and networking with other state and federal agencies, all which have similar goals.

With new funding and additional resources, the Armand Bayou Watershed Partnership was officially organized in 2002 and began developing a plan that would take advantage of each entity's strengths and specific jurisdiction.

Initially, the watershed was assessed for the state of its habitat, water quality, storm water management, and outreach

and educational programs available.

"The muscle behind this plan is the broad spectrum of the partnership," said Linda Shead, current Armand Bayou Watershed Partnership chair and program director for The Trust for Public Land.

"We have representatives involved with flood control, water quality, habitat, water supply and conservation, and city and county governments, and we realized from the beginning there were challenges that kept each of us from realizing our individual goals."



The Great Egret is one bird species which depends on the preservation of the Armand Bayou Watershed; Photo by Jack Lewis, Texas Department of Transportation.

Phase one was completed with the release of the written plan, which outlines:

- The historical, geographical and environmental description of the watershed;
- The mission and goals of the partnership and watershed plan;
- The state and federal legislation that governs the partnership's action plan;
- A description of state and federal agencies as well as the private organizations and businesses and the role each plays in success;
- Description of tools and methods identified to date; and

- Tools for measuring progress and success.

Last summer, the Trust for Public Land led the partnership in mapping, setting priorities and developing action steps. The maps indicate natural resource areas, developed and undeveloped areas, and critical areas to address first, based on set priorities, Shead said.

The partnership hosted the Stewardship Exchange during the first week in May. Members of the partnership met with local resources as well as representatives from successful entities facing similar issues around the country.

Following the Exchange, the partnership has begun to identify specific tasks, resources and coordinated actions to realize their mission. Jacobs described the partnership as the beginning of a "new era" in Texas watershed management.

"It is very unusual to have this many institutions develop a plan, particularly a plan everyone can agree on," he said. "If we want to manage watershed integrity so that it will be sustainable for our future, then we can't manage by jurisdictional boundaries of counties and cities, or by the disciplinary boundaries of flood management, water quality, and habitat protection."

August Water Quality Meetings in Southeast and South Central Texas

San Antonio River Authority Clean Rivers Program Steering Committee
August 24 1-4pm
SARA Boardroom San Antonio

Announcements

TSSWCB Wharton Region Water Quality Management Plan Training
August 22 9am-12pm Winnie
August 24 9am-12pm Edna
Call the Wharton Regional Office for more details at 979-532-9496.

Contact Information

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