



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

**Meeting Summary
Thursday, November 3, 2005**

Attendance

Persons present:

Steven Johnston	*Galveston Bay Estuary Program
Todd Running	*Houston-Galveston Area Council
Sylvia Balentine	*Lavaca-Navidad River Authority
David Cowan	*Lower Colorado River Authority
Tomas Dominguez	*Natural Resources Conservation Service – Zone 3
Rocky Freund	*Nueces River Authority
Miles Hall	*Sabine River Authority
Rebecca Reeves	*San Antonio River Authority
Laurie Curra	*Texas Commission on Environmental Quality – Clean Rivers Program
Arthur Talley	*Texas Commission on Environmental Quality – TMDL Program
Diane Boellstorff	Texas Cooperative Extension – Soil and Crop Sciences
Nikki Dictson	Texas Cooperative Extension – Texas Master Watershed Steward
Mark McFarland	*Texas Cooperative Extension – Soil Fertility and Water Quality
John O’Connell	Texas Cooperative Extension – Matagorda County Marine Agent
Shane Harrington	*Texas Forest Service
Cindy Contreras	*Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – Coastal Fisheries
David Sager	*Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – Inland Fisheries
Susan Benner	Texas Sea Grant
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
Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority
Lower Colorado River Authority – Board of Directors
Lower Neches Valley Authority
Natural Resources Conservation Service – Zone 4
South East Texas Regional Planning Commission
Texas Department of Agriculture
Texas General Land Office

Call To Order

Aaron Wendt opened the third meeting of the Watershed Coordination Steering Committee (WCSC) of the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) Wharton Regional Office (WRO). Self-introductions of those in attendance were made. The meeting was held at the Colorado County SWCD in Columbus, Texas and was moderately attended by steering committee members.

Update on Watershed Coordinator Activities

Aaron Wendt provided an update on activities conducted since the second WCSC meeting in June 2005. Aaron Wendt assumed statewide Watershed Coordinator Duties on August 1 for TSSWCB. Brian Koch was introduced as the new Regional Watershed Coordinator in the WRO, and will be attending the “Essential Elements for Successful Watershed Planning” conference in Fayetteville, Arkansas December 5-9. Updated programs links on the TSSWCB website were discussed and the URLs will be sent out when the updates are completed. Also, the WCSC website was previewed, which will be more in-depth and specific to the WRO. Monthly newsletters on the progress and activities of the WCSC, including information on relevant meetings, demonstrations, or events related to pollution abatement in the watershed, will begin in January 2006. Also, information on new or emerging technologies and efforts to evaluate or implement them within the watershed will be available. Post conference evaluation on the *Partnering for Water Quality Improvements: Implementing TMDLs in Texas*, September 2005 was given, and a common theme of the need for Coordinated Watershed Protection Planning was apparent throughout breakout sessions and participant evaluation. TSSWCB is pleased to be taking the initiative with projects such as this WRO WPP project. A Texas based watershed management planning as well as a Watershed Coordinator Roundtable are potential projects stemming from conference proceedings.

Texas Master Watershed Steward (TMWS)

Nikki Dictson introduced the Texas Master Watershed Steward program, which is a Water Quality Curriculum designed to enhance stakeholder involvement in watershed protection plan initiatives. Public participation is the focus of the TMWS program and is the best means for addressing local water quality concerns. Stakeholder education will include the nature and function of watersheds, potential impairments, and strategies for watershed protection, including Best Management Practices to prevent or correct impairments caused by NPS pollution. The pilot study in collaboration with this TSSWCB WRO Watershed Coordinator will select an impaired waterbody from the 303(d) list as a target watershed. MWS educational trainings will be provided to the local stakeholder group to enhance their knowledge of watershed management and water quality issues. The TMWS facilitate local participation in the watershed plan development process, assist in forming an action committee to identify priority issues to target from the Watershed Protection Plan, and support the development of requests and/or proposals for funding local efforts to improve water quality. The TMWS website <http://mws.tamu.edu/> was also viewed.

Discussion and Approval of Priority Criteria Assessment Parameters

Aaron Wendt led a discussion on the approval of priority criteria assessment parameters. Ten parameters were introduced:

- 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
 - 1992 NLCD is outdated but nothing more current uniform across entire Wharton Region
 - 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
 - Limitation because best resolution is HUC-8
- Size
 - Watershed size for realistic management
 - High WPP potential for watersheds within target range
 - 100 to 1,000 mi²
 - Also 1 million acres (about 1,600 mi²) 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 compare 1992 and 2001 NLCDs, but 2001 not yet 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 two 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 Master Watershed Steward, should also include evaluation of TCE County Faculty in each watershed

Each parameter would be evaluated and scored independently and then weighted against each other to obtain overall watershed score. Percent weight of each of the ten parameters to the overall score will be determined by polling WCSC and taking average of weighting %. All individuals present received a list of the ten parameters and were asked to attribute a % (to total 100%) to each of the parameters. Most meeting participants filled out the form and submitted it.

Several WCSC have overlapping service areas/watersheds. Propose to take the average score of watersheds submitted by multiple WCSC entities.

Discussions on other topics included:

- Will it follow the EPA 9 element plan for WPPs?
- Reviewing EQIP plans
- WPPs on segments of watersheds

Watershed Inventory

Watersheds within the 40 SWCDs and 47 counties of the Wharton Region service area include 48 HUC-8 watersheds. Aaron Wendt reviewed GIS shapefiles of delineated watersheds. Using TCEQ classified segments as basis for watershed delineation. Shapefiles in possession are missing coastal watersheds. WCSC members, especially Clean Rivers Program partners, are requested to submit coastal watershed delineations at a tighter resolution than HUC-8. NRCS is developing a statewide/nationwide Watershed Boundary Dataset at the HUC-10 and HUC-12 level. However, currently this WBD does not have coastal watersheds delineated either.

Path Forward

Action Items

- Next meeting December 15, 2005
- Finalize priority assessment in MS Excel
- Need coastal watershed delineations as ArcView shape files
- Members and Brian Koch fill out assessments
- Brian Koch tabulate results
- Brian Koch and Nikki Dictson finalize plan of attack for the watershed
- December 15 meeting review watershed prioritization and plan of attack
- Beginning of calendar 2006 – start planning process in selected watershed

Adjournment

Aaron Wendt thanked those in attendance for their active participation. Today's discussions on watershed selection criteria will allow this project to complete this phase of the workplan and move toward planning our first WPP in the watershed with the greatest need, and the greatest opportunity for success.