



Clean Rivers Program
Upper Neches River Basin Steering Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday July 13, 2022 1:00 PM

Attendees:

Jeremiah Poling	Angelina & Neches River Authority (ANRA)
Rene Barelás	Angelina & Neches River Authority (ANRA)
Kelli Bunton	Angelina & Neches River Authority (ANRA)
Michael Schramm	Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI)
Duncan Kikoyo	Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI)
Sophie Gartensten	Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU)
Andrew Mullaney	Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU)
Tyler Jones	Texas A&M Forest Service (TAMU)
Leah Taylor	Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research (TIAER)
Manuel Martínez	Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA)
David Villarreal	Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA)
Sally Sowell	Citizen

1. Welcome and Introductions:

Mr. Jeremiah Poling, with the Angelina & Neches River Authority (ANRA) welcomed everyone to the meeting and began with a brief overview of discussion topics on the agenda. In addition, Mr. Poling described ANRA's general administration, environmental, and field operations divisions.

2. Overview of the Clean Rivers Program:

Mr. Rene Barelás, with ANRA, provided a brief history of the with ANRA explained the Clean Rivers Program (CRP), noting the goal of CRP, its funding sources and ANRA's budget allocation.

3. Updates to ANRA's Water Quality Monitoring Program and the 2022 Basin Highlights Report:

Mr. Barelás spoke about ANRA's Clean Rivers Program water quality monitoring for the upcoming fiscal year. Currently, ANRA monitors 37 stations for conventional parameters,

bacteria, and field parameters and one 24- Dissolved Oxygen (DO) monitoring site. Changes for the upcoming fiscal year were mentioned which included adding a 24-Hour DO monitoring on Segment 0615 (Station ID 10622). ANRA is currently sub-contracting an outside lab to analyze Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen (TKN) samples. In order to lower project costs, ANRA is working on bringing TKN analysis to their in-house laboratory. This transition is expected to be completed in early to mid FY 2023.

Mr. Barelas also spoke about the 2022 Texas Integrated report and its recent approval. There are currently 26 impaired segments in the Neches River Basin with four being added on this year's report. This includes Segment 0610 (for excessive algal growth), 0610P (for bacteria), 0612F (for bacteria), and 0613 (for excessive algal growth).

Mr. Barelas also gave a summary of the 2022 Basin Highlights Report for the Upper Neches Basin. This year's highlights report was a watershed characterization of the Piney Creek Watershed. Mr. Barelas shared the historical and current water quality data which include elevated bacteria levels and depressed DO levels, land use land cover types, and hydrology. The focus of the highlights report was to identify several characteristics of the watershed which would be used to address the impaired water body since it does not currently meet the Texas Surface Water Quality standards listed in the 2022 integrated report.

Mr. Poling briefly discussed CRP's education and outreach efforts. Mr. Poling discussed ANRA's rebranding and marketing goals which include a new logo, website, and new goal which increases focus more on public outreach and educational efforts. In addition, Mr. Poling also discussed staff and public training opportunities, community partnerships and support, and public education efforts.

4. WPP, TMDL, and Clean Water Act Project Updates

a. Kickapoo Watershed Protection Plan (WPP): Ms. Leah Taylor, with Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research (TIEAR), gave a project update on the Kickapoo Creek in Henderson County Watershed Protection Plan development project. Kickapoo creek has a bacteria impairment and does not meet the standard for primary contact recreation. Ms. Taylor discussed monitoring locations, data collected, and the current status of the WPP. The WPP is still at its early stages with Ms. Taylor currently writing its fourth chapter (pollutant sources) out of ten. The project is set to be completed by February of 2023.

b. La Nana Bayou and Attoyac Bayou Watershed Protection Plan (WPP):

Mr. Michael Schramm, with Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI), shared updates on behalf of Ms. Emily Monroe, with TWRI, for the La Nana Bayou and Attoyac Bayou WPPs. Mr. Schramm gave a brief overview of the La Nana project. There has been significant progress on the WPP writing with most chapters of the WPP being completed. Management measures and education and outreach chapters are currently being drafted. The next steps for the plan include a public review to be conducted by end of July 2022, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) will begin review by end of July/early August

2022, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will do a final review in Winter 2022/Spring 2023. Upon EPA acceptance of the WPP, a WPP Implementation project has been submitted for funding, and if approved is planned to begin in Fall 2023. The project will focus on outreach, education and working with the City of Nacogdoches and Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU) on erosion control and riparian protection along La Nana Bayou and Banita Creek. The final stakeholder meeting for the La Nana WPP is set for Mid-August 2022.

Mr. Schramm gave a brief overview of the Attoyac Bayou WPP. The Attoyac Bayou Watershed partnership was developed in 2009, a WPP was developed with the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and was accepted by the EPA in 2015, and is a continuous project which has been funded by the TSSWCB and TCEQ. Project partners include ANRA, SFASU, and Pineywoods Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D). For FY2022 project updates, a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) was approved in June 2022 for a new project. As of the most recent update, there has been 65 repaired/replaced On-Site Sewage Facilities (OSSFs), nine more are underway, and 12 more have been planned for remediation.

c. Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and I-Plan Tributaries of the Neches River below Lake Palestine.

Mr. Schramm gave a brief overview of the Middle Neches Watersheds TMDL projects which include tributaries of the Neches River: Cedar Creek, Hurricane Creek, Jack Creek, and Biloxi Creek. Mr. Schramm shared historical data and the creek's impaired statuses. Mr. Schramm discussed the TMDL and I-Plan propositions for the tributaries. A draft I-Plan was developed and submitted to the TCEQ for review in December 2021 and it is currently pending. A public comment meeting was held in April 2022 and should be adopted by the TCEQ in August 2022 and finally the Cedar Creek Addendum will be drafted next year and will add the upstream assessment unit.

d. Ayish Bayou Water Quality Planning: Mr. Duncan Kikoyo, with TWRI, discussed the Ayish Bayou Water Quality project. Mr. Kikoyo discussed the watershed properties, historical data, and its water quality status which includes bacteria impairments. The project it's still in the infancy and there will be more information forthcoming.

5. Guest Speakers

Repatriation of Illegally Collected Alligator Snapping Turtles into native Texas waters:

Mr. Andrew Mullaney, with SFASU, gave a presentation that covered the repatriation of illegally collected alligator snapping turtles in native Texas waters. He discussed the turtle's historic range, its proposed listing for federal protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), its

population vulnerability, and its protection status in Texas, but not in Louisiana. Mr. Mullaney discussed release phases to ensure that the species is being properly released, which included its genetic analysis, site evaluations, health assessment, and tracking their movement. General discussion ensued regarding the data being gathered. Mr. Mullaney explained the current data seems positive, but will not be accurate for several years. General discussion ensued about the travel habits, and eating habits of the turtles.

6. Open discussion for Steering Committee Member Recommendations and Concerns:

An opportunity for open discussion by the group was provided.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.