



MEETING MINUTES

UPPER NECHES RIVER BASIN STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, June 17, 2021 10:00 AM

Online via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Jeremiah Poling	Angelina & Neches River Authority (ANRA)
Carla Ethridge	Angelina & Neches River Authority (ANRA)
Casity King	Angelina & Neches River Authority (ANRA)
Kimberly Wagner	Angelina & Neches River Authority (ANRA)
Becca DuPont	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)
Tim Cawthon	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)
Luis Medina	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)
Sean Willis	Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD)
Kyle Wright	USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Jason Villwock	USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Emily Monroe	Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI)
Narayanan Kannan, PhD	Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research (TIAER)
Jessica Staggs	Dallas Water Utilities
Tiffany Klis	Dallas Water Utilities

I. Welcome & Introductions

Mrs. Carla Ethridge, with Angelina & Neches River Authority (ANRA), welcomed everyone to the meeting and began with a brief overview of discussion topics on the agenda. She explained the operations of ANRA and its structure.

II. Overview of the Clean Rivers Program

Mrs. Carla Ethridge, with ANRA, provided a brief history of the Clean Rivers Program (CRP), noting its funding sources and purpose. ANRA's CRP budget by category was presented and it was noted that the FY 2018-FY 2019 contract was extended through FY 2021 and extra funding was received from TCEQ for this purpose. This was reflected in a

table with a budget breakdown for the full contract period.

III. Updates to ANRA's Water Quality Monitoring Program

Mrs. Carla Ethridge, with ANRA, 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. ANRA is now analyzing Chlorophyll-a and Pheophytin in house, as well as trying to get Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen analyses brought in-house as well.

Mrs. Ethridge also gave a summary of the 2021 Basin Highlights Report for the Upper Neches Basin. She shared that the historical and current water quality data of the Neches River Basin includes elevated bacteria levels, depressed dissolved oxygen, mercury and dioxin in edible fish tissue, and quite a few concerns for nutrient levels. The focus of the Highlights report was on public involvement, so she went through some highlights of public education and outreach efforts.

IV. Update Water Quality in the Neches River Basin

Mrs. Emily Monroe, with TWRI, shared the Water Quality Updates in the Neches River Basin presentation on behalf of Anna Gitter from the TWRI. Mrs. Monroe discussed the projects that Anna is involved with in the Neches River Basin. There are two projects Anna is currently working on; the Tributaries of the Neches River Below Lake Palestine and the Angelina River Above Sam Rayburn Reservoir. The Tributaries of the Neches River Below Lake Palestine Project (known as the Middle Neches Project) includes Jack, Cedar, Hurricane, and Biloxi Creeks located in Angelina County, specifically, Hudson and Lufkin. These creeks are impaired for elevated *E.coli* bacteria. A Technical Support Document has been published online and is available for public review. The stakeholder process has begun for I-plan development. The Angelina River Above Sam Rayburn Reservoir Project (known as the Angelina Project) consists of West Mud and Mud Creeks. This project is a characterization project that will result in a Watershed Characterization Report. This Report should be completed by the end of the calendar year.

V. Attoyac Bayou and La Nana Bayou

Mrs. Emily Monroe with Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI) presented updates on the Attoyac Bayou Watershed Protection Plan Projects and the La Nana Bayou Watershed Protection Plan Development Project. The Attoyac Bayou WPP Implementation Facilitation & Water Quality Monitoring project was a two year project that wrapped up in May of this year. A new project will begin in the fall. She also gave an update on the Attoyac OSSF Repair and Remediation Project. This is an ongoing project that provides assistance to low income households that need help with failing or non existent septic systems. This project also provided software to Rusk County to track OSSFs in the county. 65 systems have been installed or repaired in total since the beginning of these projects. A new project will be starting in the fall that will fund 20 additional systems and include

an education and outreach mail out portion to raise awareness regarding septic system maintenance. Ms. Monroe then provided an overview for the La Nana Bayou Watershed Protection Plan. The first stakeholder meeting will be held in Nacogdoches in August. This project is specifically to develop the Watershed Protection plan for La Nana Bayou.

VI. Kickapoo Creek in Henderson County Watershed Protection Plan

Dr. Narayanan Kannan, with TIAER, spoke about the Kickapoo Creek Watershed Protection Plan Development Project. He gave an overview of the water quality of Kickapoo Creek, and previous water. The characterization project ended this spring, and the WPP development project will begin in the fall. The new project will continue the routine the dissolved oxygen monitoring that was conducted in the characterization, and increase stakeholder involvement during the WPP development process.

VII. La Nana Bayou WPP Development Project Update

Dr. Gregory spoke about projects in the La Nana Bayou watershed. La Nana Bayou has a bacteria impairment on all three assessment units. A watershed characterization project was completed last year. As part of that characterization, ANRA collected data monthly on three sites on La Nana Bayou for one year. That sampling was completed in February of 2019. TWRI and ANRA also collected bacteria samples across the watershed in two larger scale sampling events in 2018. 25 sites were sampled on a single day for exploratory purposes in the spring, and 75 sites were sampled on a single day for investigative purposes in the winter. Funding has been secured for a project to develop a La Nana Bayou Watershed Protection Plan. That project has an anticipated start date of September 1, 2020. The next steps will be to form a Watershed Stakeholder Group, begin the planning process, and attempt to have a plan developed and accepted in 2022.

VIII. Impacts of Feral Hogs on Habitat and Water Quality

Mr. Sean Willis, Wildlife Biologist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department gave a presentation that covered, in detail, the negative impacts that feral hogs have on habitats, other wildlife, and water quality. In addition to those negative impacts, feral hogs can spread diseases to livestock and other animals, as well as humans. Feral hogs can contribute to the *E.coli* bacteria loads in water. Mr. Willis listed the different ways to control hog populations and combat those negative impacts. Texas just recently approved a poison for controlling hog populations.

IX. Best Management Practices for Water Quality

Mr. Kyle Wright, State Water Quality Specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service provided an overview of what the NRCS is and what services they offer. The NRCS provides technical assistance and financial assistance for landowners and develop

conservation plans to meet any resource needs. As a portion of the conservation plan, they offer best management practices to address those resource concerns. Concerns specifically addressed in this presentation is water quality. Practices to improve water quality include, but are not limited to, access control fencing, filter strips, nutrient management, grazing plans, and riparian buffers.

X. Open Discussion for Steering Committee Member Recommendations and Concerns

An opportunity for open discussion by the group was provided.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 AM.