



MEETING MINUTES

UPPER NECHES RIVER BASIN STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, June 17, 2019 1:00 PM
TEXAS FORESTRY ASSOCIATION
1903 ATKINSON DRIVE, LUFKIN, TX 75901

Attendees:

Jeremiah Poling	Angelina & Neches River Authority (ANRA)
Dylan Coleman	Angelina & Neches River Authority (ANRA)
Matthew McBroom	Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU)
Hannah Lucia	Lower Neches Valley Authority (LNVA)
Dennis Bedar	Lower Neches Valley Authority (LNVA)
Robert Speight	North East Texas Municipal Water District (NETMWD)
John Payne	Sabine River Authority (SRA)
Gary Pandolfi	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Jeff Reid	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Erik Orzak	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Becca DuPont	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)
Mike Prater	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)
Lucas Gregory	Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI)
Anna Gitter	Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI)
Emily Monroe	Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI)
Chantal Cough-Shulze	Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI)
Leah Taylor	Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research (TIAER)
Don Lymbery	County Judge, Angelina County
Sally Sowell	Diver's Depot
Dawn Lumda	Nacogdoches County Environmental
Manuel Martinez	Texas Department of Agriculture

I. Welcome & Introductions

Mr. Jeremiah Poling, with Angelina & Neches River Authority (ANRA), welcomed everyone to the meeting and began with a brief overview of discussion topics on the agenda. He

explained the operations of ANRA and its structure.

II. Overview of the Clean Rivers Program

Mr. Poling 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 a majority of funds relate to personnel expenses to carry out the work of the Program. The presentation highlighted ANRA's water quality monitoring activities in the Upper Neches River Basin.

III. Updates to ANRA's Water Quality Monitoring Program and The 2019 Basin Highlights Report

Mr. Dylan Coleman, with ANRA, spoke about the updates that ANRA is planning for its Clean Rivers Program water quality monitoring for the upcoming fiscal year. Currently, ANRA monitors 37 stations for conventional parameters, as well as bacteria, and field parameters. ANRA does not currently collect Chlorophyll-a and Pheophytin at every site they monitor due to budgetary issues arising from sending those samples to a third party laboratory. For fiscal year 2020, ANRA hopes to begin analyzing Chlorophyll-a, Pheophytin, and Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen (TKN) in house. This should allow ANRA to resume analyzing Chlorophyll-a and Pheophytin monitoring, and add TKN monitoring at all 37 sites. ANRA will also be collecting 24hr Dissolved Oxygen at two monitoring sites for FY 2020.

IV. Update on Kickapoo Creek Watershed Characterizations Project

Ms. Leah Taylor from the Texas Institute of Environmental Research (TIAER) discussed a project TIAER is working on in the Kickapoo Creek watershed north of Lake Palestine. The project is in its early stages, and water quality monitoring is expected to begin in the next few months once they have final approval of the project's Quality Assurance Protection Plan (QAPP) by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Kickapoo creek is on the list of impaired waterbodies due to elevated bacteria levels. There is also a need for additional Dissolved Oxygen data. TIAER performed a recreational use attainability analyses (RUAA) in 2014. After review of that data, TCEQ determined that the existing bacteria standard was appropriate. Therefore, the creek is still on the list, and further action is needed. This project will assess the watershed, and attempt to identify sources of pollution, and also educate and engage local stakeholders. TIAER will monitor nine sites in the watershed monthly for standard parameters, and three of those sites will also have 24 hour Dissolved Oxygen monitoring performed. TIAER hopes to begin monitoring next month. A website for the project is in development. The project is intended to run for two years.

V. Updates on Nonpoint Source Grant Projects in the Neches River Basin

Dr. Lucas Gregory from the Texas Water Resource Institute (TWRI) gave an update on several different waterbodies in the southern portion of the Neches River basin that are being addressed by a project that TWRI and TCEQ are working on. He spoke about and illustrated how the bacteria numbers have changed over seventeen years of sampling at the sites in this region.

Dr. Gregory provided an overview of what a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is and what it consists of compared to a Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) and then discussed the future plans for the watersheds that are addressed by the project in the southern portion of the basin.

Ms. Anna Gitter with TWRI presented updates on the Angelina Watershed Characterization project and the Middle Neches TMDL project. The Angelina project has been going on for just over two years. Water quality monitoring for the project is complete and the characterization report is being written. The Middle Neches Project is also a characterization project and will be wrapping up in August. The Middle Neches project includes Jack, Cedar, Hurricane, and Biloxi Creek watersheds. These watersheds are all either impaired or have concerns for elevated bacteria levels. A watershed characterization report looks at the hydrology, water quality, land cover/land use, potential pollution sources, and other factors in the watershed that can affect water quality. The reports should provide a basis for future water quality improvement efforts.

Ms. Emily Monroe with TWRI discussed the two projects ongoing in the Attoyac Bayou Watershed. One project is monitoring water quality at five monitoring sites in order to document the effectiveness of Best Management Practices (BMP) that have been put into place through the efforts of the Attoyac Bayou Watershed Protection Plan (WPP). The WPP was published in 2014. The three main BMPs that the project focuses on are Water Quality Management Plans for Agriculture, On-Site Sewage Facilities (OSSF), and Feral Hogs. The project recently hosted an OSSF training event for professionals such as OSSF designers and installers. The second project is an OSSF Remediation and Replacement Program. This project repairs or replaces OSSFs for lower income families in the watershed. The project is expected to repair or replace 23 OSSFs. Both projects are being extended into 2012.

Dr. Gregory spoke about the La Nana Bayou Project. This is another watershed characterization project. 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 in the spring, and 75 sites were sampled on a single day in the winter. As with the other watershed characterization projects, this data collection will help inform future efforts to improve water quality in the watershed. A proposal for a future watershed protection plan project to address water quality and

possibly flooding is in the planning stages with TWRI, SFA and ANRA.

Dr. Matthew McBroom with Stephen F Austin State University (SFA) provided an update on the Attoyac Bayou WPP BMP effectiveness monitoring project. The update provided an overview of data collected over the past two years. Projects have been active in the watershed since 2004 and have included monitoring, meetings, educational opportunities, as well as BMP implementation assistance. One assessment unit in the lower part of the watershed has shown enough improvement that it has been removed from the impaired list for the draft 2016 integrated report. Bacteria values for the remainder of the watershed remain higher than the standards, but nutrient values do appear to be within the allowed ranges.

VI. Texas Freshwater Mussels of Conservation Concern

Mr. Gary Pandolfi, from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), spoke about Fresh Water Mussels in general. Mr. Pandolfi introduced Mussels and discussed what they are, where they live, how they reproduce, how to distinguish different species, and an overview of the ecology of a fresh water Mussel. Mussels are important because they provide an ecological service by filter feeding and cleaning the streams in which they reside. An adult mussel can filter 5-50 gallons of water per day. They are also an indicator organism, like a canary in a coal mine. There are approximately 52 species of Mussels that reside in Texas. Mussels of concern in the Neches Basin are the Triangle Pigtoe, Louisiana Pigtoe, and the Texas Heelsplitter. FWS is assessing the species, and when a decision has been made it will be published in the federal register after public discussion.

Mr. Erik Orsak from FWS Arlington office spoke about mussels specific to the Neches Basin. He described some of the threats that Freshwater Mussels face in the basin: Change in hydrology, changes in land use, stressors such as habitat change, and the structure of the neighboring animals. The Triangle Pigtoe has been reclassified as the Texas Pigtoe since the initial study began, and will therefore not be eligible for listing on the endangered species list. The Louisiana Pigtoe and the Texas Heelsplitter are still potentials for listing. Mr. Orsak also spoke about several of the different Voluntary species protection programs that US Fish and Wildlife administers, such as the Working Lands for Wildlife and Landowner Incentive Program. Mr. Orsak outlined the benefits of each program and the process to participate in said programs.

VII. Open Discussion for Steering Committee Member Recommendations and Concerns

An opportunity for open discussion by the group was provided.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:29 PM.