

LCRA Clean Rivers Program Meeting Notes

June 20, 2011

Matagorda Bay Nature Center

Opening Remarks

The meeting began at 9:00 am with a welcome and an outline of the day's schedule. Donna Clendennen welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda. After stakeholder introductions, presentations described below were made.

Allocating Environmental Flows – presentation by Cathy Wakefield, Colorado River Basin and Bay Expert Science Team (BBEST).

The Colorado and Lavaca Rivers and Matagorda and Lavaca Bays Basin and Bay Stakeholder Committee and Expert Science Teams were created by the 80th Texas Legislature in recognition of the importance that the ecological soundness of river, bay, and estuary systems and riparian lands have on the economy, health, and well-being of our state. Each Basin and Bay Expert Science Team will develop an environmental flow analyses and a recommended environmental flow regime for their specific river basin and bay system.

The Colorado River and Matagorda Bay committee is responsible for reviewing data from the Colorado River basin from above Silver City (near the headwaters) to Matagorda Bay. Approximately \$140,000 has been allocated for travel and meeting and other related expenses.

The committee will rely on existing data during the review process. Ms. Wakefield reported that data from LCRA dating back to the 1980's will be utilized as well as data from other state agencies. In addition data gathered during the LCRA/SAWS negotiations will be utilized.

The committee consists of ten (10) members. The committee has been charged with reporting their findings and making recommendations to the stakeholders group by March, 2011. The meetings will be open to the public. Information on upcoming meetings can be found on the [TCEQ website](#).

Endangered Freshwater Mussels – Presentation by David Cowan, LCRA

A pending decision by the US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) on freshwater mussels could impact how water is allocated in Texas. Attention has been focused on freshwater mussels due to a petition by Wild Earth Guardians to the USFWS to add certain freshwater mussels to their endangered species list. Fish & Wildlife Services found the petition to be warranted which triggered a year-long review process. The federal agency has until February of 2011 to reach a decision on the request to add the mussels to the endangered species list. The options available to FWS include:

- Not include the mussels on the list;
- List them as endangered; or
- Find the request warranted but precluded. This decision could be made if FWS finds the petition valid but the need to allocate funds to other species is more pressing.

If the mussels are included on the Federal endangered species list this could result in more scrutiny of water resources. Protecting the habitat of the mussels may become part of water strategies in the future.

LCRA and other state agencies do not believe there is adequate scientific evidence to make a decision at this time. State agencies will continue to keep a close eye on the decision making process and will report progress to stakeholders.

In November, 2009, Texas Parks & Wildlife (TPWD) added 15 freshwater mussels to the state's threatened species list. Five of the freshwater mussels found on the proposed Federal listing have been found in the Colorado River Basin.

Dinophysis and its impact on Texas Bays – presented by R.J. Shelly, Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)

In mid April, 2010, DSHS crews found elevated levels of the Dinophysis organism entering Texas bays from offshore waters, indicating a bloom was occurring where Texas oysters are harvested. The toxin produced by Dinophysis, okadaic acid, can accumulate rapidly in shellfish tissue and cause diarrhetic shellfish poisoning, or DSP, in people who consume oysters, clams or mussels. DSP symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, nausea and cramping. Due to the bloom the majority of Texas coastal waters were closed to harvesting of oysters, clams and mussels on April 23, 2010.

Detoxification normally occurs quickly as oysters filter material and toxins from their system. The Dinophysis organism does not kill fish. It may result in some stained water if the bloom is heavy.

This is the second incident of Dinophysis being detected in Texas waters. The last incident occurred in 2008 which also resulted in waters being closed to harvesting of oysters. Aerial photos of the 2008 bloom as well as additional information on dinophysis can be found on the [DSHS website](#).

Basin Updates

Monitoring Updates – David Cowan, LCRA

The annual Coordinated Monitoring meeting was held in April, 2010. During that meeting updates by each agency were given on sampling locations. Close to 200 sites are monitored in the Colorado River Basin by various agencies and volunteer monitors. A list of all monitoring sites is located on the web at <http://cms.lcra.org>.

Comments from stakeholders included a request to monitoring near the Van Vleck sewer outfall location and downstream of neighborhoods along Caney Creek with failing On-site sewage facilities.

Mid-Texas Coast Bacteria Study – Natalie Bell, TCEQ

TCEQ is beginning a program to address areas of concern of impairment for bacteria in oyster harvesting areas along the Texas coast. The Texas Department of State Health Services is responsible for classifying oyster harvesting areas based on their evaluation of potential risk to public health. TCEQ analyzes data from DSHS to determine which waters to list as impaired.

To date, TCEQ has compiled a list of stations in the impaired areas and gathered all data associated with those stations from the DSHS and state databases. The next step will be to analyze the station by station data and determine the magnitude of bacteria impairment for each bay. TCEQ hopes to have the data analysis completed and results provided to LCRA and stakeholders by the Spring of 2011. The outcome of this project will be an Implementation Plan that will address local stakeholder concerns based on sources of impairment.

Update on the Caney Creek Recreational Use Study – Natalie Bell, TCEQ

The University of Houston – Clear Lake (UHCL) completed a study to assess the appropriate recreational use category for Caney Creek above tidal (segment 1305) the Spring of 2010. This segment was chosen by TCEQ as a candidate for a potential change in the designated or presumed recreational use.

Twenty-one (21) survey sites along Caney Creek were assessed during the study. The 21 sites were located in areas where the water body is accessible to the public and has the highest potential for recreational use. Seventy-nine individuals were contacted for interviews. Of those, 52 responded to the interview request. Recreational use was observed at 11 of the 21 sites.

UHCL is compiling a final report and will submit it to TCEQ in August, 2010. A public meeting will be held in the near future to present the results of the survey. LCRA will notify CRP stakeholders of the meeting date and location when announced.

Colorado River Basin Highlights Report 2010 – David Cowan

The Basin Highlights report for 2010 has been released to the public. The report is available on the [LCRA website](#). The report includes:

- An overview of the Clean Rivers Program;
- Monitoring and assessment effort;
- Special projects;
- Outreach and education efforts; and
- New initiatives