



VII.
**The Public Role
in Drafting *The
Galveston Bay
Plan***

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The Galveston Bay Plan Galveston Bay National Estuary Program

Strong involvement by the public has been indispensable to the development of *The Galveston Bay Plan* and will be critical to *Plan* implementation. Public review and comment on *The Plan* are key elements of the Clean Water Act and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidance for National Estuary Programs. The Galveston Bay National Estuary Program (GBNEP) recognized a need for public involvement with *The Plan* beyond the level required by EPA guidance. Consequently the public began to have a strong role early in the development of *The Plan*.

The Management Conference recognized early in the program that the success of the GBNEP would be directly related to the public support and enthusiasm generated by the program to ultimately lead to public support and funding for implementation of *The Galveston Bay Plan*. In the final analysis, creation of public policies in *The Galveston Bay Plan* depends upon a high degree of awareness and involvement of citizens, particularly those whom the policy affects.

Public Participation Activities

Since its inception, GBNEP has conducted an intensive public outreach/education program. When the GBNEP began in 1989, a Citizen's Advisory Steering Committee (CASC) was established. Appointments to this committee included a variety of stakeholder interests: industry, shipping, recreational boating, commercial and recreational fishing, development, agriculture, and environmental groups. The committee has been instrumental in assuring that citizen/stakeholder perspectives are at the forefront of planning. The Public Participation program has been supported by three full-time staff for most of the program and about 25 percent of the GBNEP budget has been dedicated to Public Participation activities. CASC undertook several projects that were aimed at fostering public awareness and involvement with the GBNEP and the development of *The Galveston Bay Plan*. A discussion of the major outreach efforts is presented below.

Speaker's Bureau. Public Participation staff coordinated hundreds of outside speaking engagements by volunteer Management Conference members and staff. Invitations were solicited from diverse organizations for programs involving slide presentations and speeches.

Efforts were made to find new groups to involve in *The Galveston Bay Plan*, and to revisit groups reached in previous years to update on the progress of *Plan* development.

Citizen's Monitoring. This initiative of the GBNEP provided for establishment of a bay-wide citizen monitoring program in conjunction with both the TNRCC and the Galveston Bay Foundation. Through this project, citizens from the bay area have been given the opportunity to directly support Galveston Bay management through "hands-on" activity. Volunteers collect water quality data in the field. This data is intended supplement the existing data collected by agencies, expanding the amount of information available to managers. Citizen monitoring is seen as a significant component of community involvement in the welfare of the estuary. Volunteers develop an enhanced interest in Galveston Bay and *The Galveston Bay Plan*.

BayLine. Since the beginning of the GBNEP, the program has published a quarterly newsletter. *BayLine* has been produced by staff, with articles contributed by a variety of organizations and individuals in the bay area. Content of the newsletter included: updates on the development of *The Galveston Bay Plan*, summaries of the published GBNEP reports, requests for public involvement with volunteer projects, and requests for information and input on specific issues that affect the development of *The Plan*. With a current circulation exceeding 10,000, *BayLine* has been an excellent line of communication with the general public regarding *Plan* development.

Portable Information Display. During the first year of the program a portable information display was designed. Since that time, the exhibit has been taken to dozens of events ranging from boat shows to the annual Bay Day event. The information display alone has reached hundreds of thousands of individuals. Promotional items and educational giveaways designed to help build recognition of the GBNEP and its goals in bay protection were distributed at these events. Exhibiting has provided an opportunity for the GBNEP to "meet the public" and discuss the developing *Galveston Bay Plan*.

Publication Series. The GBNEP has published some 50 documents over the life of the program. Most GBNEP projects conceived to identify status, trends, and probable causes of priority problems were published in a "Green Cover Series" to communicate findings to members of the public involved in review of *The Galveston Bay Plan*. Findings of these technical projects justify and shape *Plan* initiatives and therefore contribute to informed public participation and review. Two Galveston Bay Handbooks were also published. *The Recreational User's Guide* identifies fishing habitat, boating rules, birding areas, and general recreational information about the bay. *The Bay Area Residents' Guide* describes actions residents in the area can take to minimize and prevent non-point source pollution, including recycling information, native plants, and proper fertilizer/pesticide use. Each publication is distributed to all Management Conference members for use within their own agency or organization. Distribution of materials to the general public in the Houston-Galveston area has relied heavily on regional and local libraries - with over 60 libraries on the distribution list - to develop the maximum participation in *Plan* development and general awareness of the need for management of this ecosystem. The documents have also been made available to the public upon request throughout the program.

Galveston Bay Information Center. The GBIC is a bay area center to house the special reference collection of Galveston Bay literature and media for use by the scientific community and general public. This project included two major components. First was creation of a five-year strategic plan for the GBIC, providing a clear vision for the future of the Center. Second is to develop User's Guides describing all aspects and features available for public use.

Videos. Throughout the program, the GBNEP has produced several educational and persuasive videos and public service announcements on comprehensive management of the bay and the ecosystem. These videos have been distributed for educational purposes to various organizations. The videos have been used by the public, for group meetings, in the classroom and in conjunction with the informational booth.

Bay Day. The purpose of Bay Day, a joint effort of the Galveston Bay Foundation and the GBNEP, is to call attention to and celebrate Galveston Bay by providing bay-oriented family activities for all ages, thereby increasing public awareness of the bay's value and diversity of uses. The event is volunteer-intensive with heavy involvement by the GBNEP Public Forum and volunteers from outside organizations. Many activities are education-oriented, with numerous booths and educational activities. The GBNEP Management Conference has determined that this festival is useful for increasing public awareness of the bay and its competing uses and has provided planning funds each year to help assure the event becomes a permanent, self-sustaining endeavor.

Citizen's Pollution Reporting and Response System. This project was operated out of the GBNEP program office and served as an excellent vehicle for making citizens aware of the program and *The Galveston Bay Plan* development process. The project was implemented in 1992 to address some long-standing problems: (1) the inability of many average citizens to report pollution, due to an elaborate mosaic of more than 20 government jurisdictions involved in pollution response; and (2) the lack of any centralized database describing pollution incidents for the bay and its watersheds, to help focus pollution management. The "Hotline" was designed to offer citizens the opportunity to report pollution incidents involving air, land or water, with a single toll free phone call—regardless of which government agency is involved in the response process.

Two user polls involving 240 different citizen callers revealed a highly positive public response to the CPRRS. Following an evaluation by the GBNEP Management Conference of the demonstration phase, the Policy Committee voted unanimously in March, 1993, to permanently implement the program in the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, Houston Region Office. On September 1, 1993, the Citizen's Pollution Reporting and Response System was successfully relocated to that office.

The Role of Public Review in the Development of *The Galveston Bay Plan*

When the GBNEP was getting started, public meetings were held to obtain citizen input on program goals and priority problems in Galveston Bay. Citizens were also brought together to discuss Christmas Bay and Armand Bayou Coastal Preserves, citizens monitoring, and oil spill response. A total of 20 meetings were conducted between April 10, 1989, and April 24, 1991.

The resulting priority problems list included the input of bay area citizens and was used to guide studies aimed at determining the status and trends of the conditions in the bay. Characterization of these priority problems was the first step in developing *The Galveston Bay Plan*.

Between November 9 and 19, 1992, six public meetings were held in the Galveston Bay area to collect public comments about issues affecting management of Galveston Bay and to inform the general public about the developing *Galveston Bay Plan*. (see Table PR-1) These meetings were located in Anahuac, Baytown, Clear Lake, Galveston, Houston, and Lake Jackson. Cumulative registered attendance at the meetings was 337 persons. In a few cases, particularly the Houston and Clear Lake meetings, more people attended than registered. There was a total of 42 speakers at the meetings, 19 of whom submitted written text of their comments, with 11 written comments submitted by mail to the GBNEP office. Verbal comments were from citizens representing themselves, representatives of industry, non-profit organizations, commercial and recreational fishing interests, and local governments. Written comments reflected the same distribution.

TABLE PR-1. Summary of Public Meeting Attendance

Date	Location	Attendance	Comments
November 9	Houston	86	11
November 10	Baytown	58	9
November 12	Clear Lake	90	6
November 16	Galveston	64	9
November 17	Lake Jackson	22	3
November 19	Anahuac	22	3
All		337	42

To prompt comments, the GBNEP issued a 26 page document (plus glossary and appendices) entitled *Managing Galveston Bay: Issues and Alternatives—Public Discussion Summary*. This document was a brief summary of topics discussed by the sixteen GBNEP Action Plan Task Forces charged with developing *The Galveston Bay Plan*. Citizens interested in more technical details were given the opportunity to obtain a larger, more detailed version, entitled *Draft Discussion Items and Possible Management Strategies*. In addition, *BayLine* issue #13 was dedicated entirely to summarizing the Issues and Alternatives Document. This was mailed to approximately 7,000 readers in late November, allowing them time to obtain a public discussion document and submit comments.

The public was made aware of the availability of the summary document and encouraged to attend the public meetings through a variety of forms: news releases to area media; paid display and legal notice advertising ran in *The Houston Chronicle* and *The Houston Post* as well as seven other local papers; articles and notices in environmental group and civic association newsletters; postcards mailed to all *BayLine* subscribers; speeches by staff and volunteers to targeted groups and organizations; and, flyers distributed by conference members and word-of-mouth. One-page "news advisories," or reminders of the meetings, were faxed to radio stations and newspapers in the locale of the meetings one to two days in advance of each meeting. The news releases resulted in several newspaper articles before the meetings, one

television story during the meetings, and numerous radio announcements. An informal verbal survey of meeting attendees indicated that all of these efforts paid off—in other words, each promotion vehicle prompted people to attend a meeting or send in a written comments.

The issues and alternatives document was distributed to the Management Conference members, at meetings of interested groups requesting GBNEP speakers, and to anyone who requested one as a result of advertising and promotion of the public meetings. Numerous Management Conference members assisted in distribution by sharing the document with their colleagues and the entities they represent.

GBNEP staff and volunteers gave presentations at the meetings and answered questions from the audience. Citizens were given time to speak formally to the audience and informally discuss their concerns about the bay with GBNEP staff and Management Conference members. Both GBNEP staff and the citizens in attendance expressed the feeling that the meetings were productive.

Concerns raised by attendees at the meetings included the following issues.

- Reduce toxics and solids discharges to the bay (Baytown, Galveston, and Houston participants).
- Protect wetlands and preserve wildlife habitats (Anahuac, Baytown, Clear Lake, and Houston participants).
- Evaluate dredging and filling impacts on oyster reefs (Anahuac, Clear Lake and Houston participants).
- Enhance freshwater inflow into the bay (Baytown, Clear Lake, Galveston, and Houston participants).
- Encourage public participation and support (Anahuac, Baytown, Galveston, Houston, and Lake Jackson participants).

In addition to the comments received at the meetings, written comments were submitted to the GBNEP office during an open comment period that ended December 31, 1992. Spoken and written comments reflected wide-ranging support for the concept of a comprehensive management plan for Galveston Bay (Table PR-2).

TABLE PR-2. Distribution of Verbal and Written Comments

Participant Affiliation	Verbal Comments		Written Comments	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Unaffiliated Citizens	18	43	12	48
Environmental/Nature Groups	13	31	6	24
Commercial Fishermen	5	12	1	4
Petroleum/Chemical Corporations	3	7	1	4
Industrial Organizations	1	2	1	4
Commercial Fishermen's Organizations	1	2	1	4
Local Government Agency	1	2	1	4
Marina-related	-	-	1	4
Engineering/Consulting	-	-	1	4

Following public review of the Issues and Alternatives document and based on the comments and suggestions received during those meetings, a pre-draft *Galveston Bay Plan* was developed. The pre-draft *Plan* was reviewed and revised by the GBNEP Management Conference and Task Forces numerous times. The pre-draft *Plan* was also reviewed by numerous "focus groups" through an active outreach program sponsored by the GBNEP. These focus groups included industry, environmental groups, local governments, and others. Fifty-six focus group meetings were held between June 1993, and May 1994 (see Table PR-3). The direct involvement of these parties helped shape the draft *Galveston Bay Plan* that was unanimously approved by the GBNEP Policy Committee for release for public review on April 18, 1994.

TABLE PR-3. Schedule of Focus Group Meetings to Present *The Galveston Bay Plan*

DATE	FOCUS GROUP MEETING
June 30, 1993	Greater Houston Partnership/Clean Water Coordinating Council
July 9, 1993	Local Government <i>Galveston Bay Plan</i> Workshop
August 27, 1993	Texas Chemical Council
October 11, 1993	Clear Lake Marina Operators Association
October 13, 1993	Houston Canoe Club
October 15, 1993	Speaker of the House and key staff
October 15, 1993	Lieutenant Governor and key staff
October 21, 1993	Coast Guard Auxiliary
October 26, 1993	City of LaPorte City Manager and key staff
October 27, 1993	East Harris County Manufacturer's Association
October 28, 1993	Governor's key staff
November 9, 1993	Texas Waterway Operators Association
November 19, 1993	Galveston Bay Cruising Association
December 17, 1993	Coastal Coordination Council
January 5, 1994	Soil Conservation Service District Conservationists and Chambers County Landowners
January 6, 1994	Coastal Management Program/ <i>Galveston Bay Plan</i> coordinating session
January 11, 1994	Baytown Advisory Committee
January 12, 1994	General Land Office special area planning session
January 15, 1994	Environmental Defense Fund
January 24, 1994	Liberty County Judge and Commissioners
January 24, 1994	City Council and Mayor of LaPorte
January 25, 1994	City Council and Mayor of Pasadena
January 26, 1994	Galveston County Mayors and Council Members Association
January 27, 1994	City Council and Mayor of League City
January 27, 1994	Houston-Galveston Navigation Safety Advisory Committee
February 1, 1994	City Council and Mayor of Deer Park
February 10, 1994	City Council and Mayor of Galveston
February 10, 1994	City Council and Mayor of Baytown

Schedule Continued

DATE	FOCUS GROUP MEETING
February 14, 1994	Galveston County Mayor and Council members and State Reps. Mike Martin and Patricia Grey
February 2, 1994	City Council and Mayor of Texas City
February 3, 1994	City Council and Mayor of Alvin
February 9, 1994	Clear Lake Council of Mayors
February 15, 1994	Houston Galveston Area Council Board
February 15, 1994	Galveston Bay Foundation Board
February 17, 1994	Houston Yacht Club
February 17, 1994	Harris County Mayors and Council Members Association
February 21, 1994	Harris County/City of Houston key staff
February 24, 1994	Solid and Hazardous Waste Symposium
February 25, 1994	Houston-Galveston Area Council/Texas Clean Rivers Basin Advisory Group
February 25, 1994	City of Houston key staff
February 28, 1994	Brazoria County Judge and Commissioners
February 28, 1994	Chambers County Judge and Commissioners
March 3, 1994	Houston-Galveston Area Council - Natural Resource Advisory Committee
March 8, 1994	Brazoria County Flood Control District
March 9, 1994	Houston Audubon Society
March 21, 1994	Bayou Preservation Association
March 29, 1994	City of Houston Director of Public Works and key staff
March 29, 1994	Governor's Environmental Staff
April 13, 1994	Galveston Bay Conservation and Preservation Association
April 15, 1994	Environmental Trade Fair - Austin
April 21, 1994	Clear Creek Sierra Club
April 27, 1994	Greater Houston Partnership
May 11, 1994	East Harris County Manufacturer's Association
May 20, 1994	Texas Chemical Council
May 24, 1994	Planner's Association Meeting

Between May 18, and June 7, 1994 another round of public meetings was conducted in the Galveston Bay area to offer citizens an opportunity to comment on the draft *Galveston Bay Plan* and to have questions answered. The nine meetings were located in Anahuac, Baytown, Clear Lake, Galveston, Houston, Lake Jackson, LaPorte, and Texas City (see Table PR-4). Cumulative registered attendance at the meetings was 322 persons. There was a total of 77 speakers at the meetings.

TABLE PR-4 Summary of Public Meeting Attendance

Date	Location	Attendance	Comments
May 18	Anahuac	60	15
May 19	Texas City	29	9
May 24	Houston	33	9
May 25	Lake Jackson	13	4
May 26	Galveston	53	6
May 31	Houston	15	3
June 1	LaPorte	25	10
June 2	Clear Lake	56	12
June 7	Baytown	38	9
All		322	77

To facilitate public review of *The Plan*, a summary was produced. This document was a brief synopsis of the problems facing Galveston Bay and the proposed solutions. Persons interested in the details of *The Plan* were invited to request a copy of the larger document from the Program Office. Both *The Galveston Bay Plan* and the summary were made available for review at approximately 60 public libraries in the five-county area. In addition, *BayLine* Issue #18, mailed to approximately 10,000 readers in early May, summarized *The Plan* and encouraged public comment.

**Example Public Meeting Notice
Galveston Bay National Estuary Program**

Public review and comment is invited on the draft of the *Galveston Bay Plan*, to be submitted in final form to Governor Ann Richards and EPA Administrator, Carol Browner in the Fall of 1994. *The Galveston Bay Plan* addresses public health, living resources, habitat, water quality and physical conditions in order to manage Galveston Bay as a single integrated ecosystem. The Galveston Bay National Estuary Program is seeking your comments on this comprehensive plan to help shape the future management of the Bay. Citizens, industry, shipping, business, development and government entities have been working for five years to develop the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan.

Wednesday, May 18, 7:00 p.m.
American Legion Hall
Fort Anahuac Park, Anahuac

Thursday, May 19, 7:00 p.m.
College of the Mainland, Room L131,
Auditorium of Library
1200 Amburn Road, Texas City

Tuesday, May 24, 10:00 a.m.
Houston Garden Center, Auditorium
Hermann Park
Museum of Natural Science, Houston

Wednesday, May 25, 6:30 p.m.
Brazosport Center for Arts & Sciences,
Art Gallery
400 College Drive, Lake Jackson

Thursday, May 26, 6:30 p.m.
Rosenberg Library,
Auditorium
2310 Sealy Avenue, Galveston

Tuesday, May 31, 6:30 p.m.
Tracy Gee Center,
Meeting Rooms A, B, and C
3599 Westcenter Drive, Houston

Wednesday, June 1, 7:00 p.m.
Sylvan Beach Park, Pavilion
1 Sylvan Beach Drive, La Porte

Thursday June 2, 7:00 p.m.
Nassau Bay Hilton
3000 Nasa Road 1, Nassau Bay

Tuesday, June 7, 7:00 p.m.
Baytown Community Center,
Meeting Room
2407 Market Street, Baytown

Please Note: The Deadline for written comments is July 1, 1994.

**Galveston Bay National Estuary Program
711 W. Bay Area Boulevard, Suite 210
Webster, Texas 77598**

**(713) 332-9937
Fax (713) 332-8590**

Citizens were informed of the opportunity to receive a copy of the draft *Galveston Bay Plan* and notified of the nine public meetings being held in the five counties surrounding Galveston Bay through a variety of mechanisms. An official notice for each meeting was sent to the *Texas Register* and legal notices of the meetings were printed in both the *Houston Post* and the *Houston Chronicle* as well as many of the local papers (see box example). A postcard invitation was sent to all *BayLine* subscribers and the schedule of upcoming public meetings was placed on TNRCC OnLine, an electronic bulletin board.

A public education and information campaign (GALVESTON BAY: IT'S NOT JUST WATER, IT'S A WAY OF LIFE!) was also developed in conjunction with the release of *The Galveston Bay Plan* for public review. It was designed to create awareness of the relationship between lifestyles and bay pollution, to inform citizens of the availability of *The Plan*, the opportunity to comment on *The Plan*, and the schedule of public meetings. The campaign included both print and radio media. Two hundred and eighty four radio spots were aired on major Houston-Galveston area stations during drive time and prime time. A total of 37 print advertisements were placed in the *Houston Post*, the *Houston Chronicle*, four local daily papers and twelve area weekly papers, reaching a combined circulation of 2,004,644 people.

In addition to paid advertising, the GBNEP also initiated numerous press contacts. A press conference for major Houston media was held on April 18, 1994 to unveil *The Plan*. Six television stations were represented with reporters and camera crews, and all key print media were present. Media packets were mailed to 355 outlets, both print and electronic in early May. The packet included a news release, a schedule of public meeting dates and locations, recent news clippings, a fact sheet, and the summary of *The Plan*. Regional news releases were sent out just prior to each public meeting. Public Service Announcements were also drafted and distributed to radio stations. This activity generated some 40 requests for interviews, all accommodated by the GBNEP Program Director, and nearly all resulting in a published article about *The Plan*.

A four-minute video about the problems facing Galveston Bay and solutions proposed in *The Plan* was shown at the beginning of each meeting. The Program Director provided an overview of *The Plan* and invited citizens to comment and ask questions. Various members of the GBNEP Policy, Management, Scientific/Technical, and Citizen's Advisory committees participated as members of a panel to discuss various aspects of *The Plan*, and to answer questions.

Response to Public Comments

Public testimony was heard at each of the nine meetings. In addition, participants were provided with forms for written comments, copies of either *The Plan* or the summary, and other background materials produced by the TNRCC, the GBNEP and the Galveston Bay Foundation. Citizens were encouraged to submit written comments to the GBNEP office during an open comment period that ended July 1, 1994. Verbal and written comments were received from a wide range of bay stakeholders (Table PR-5).

TABLE PR- 5. Distribution of Verbal and Written Comments

Participant Affiliation	Verbal Comments		Written Comments	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Unaffiliated Citizens	45	62	18	29
Environmental/Nature Groups	15	19	6	10
Industry	0	0	3	5
Industrial Organizations	0	0	5	8
Marina Related	1	2	0	0
Engineering/Consulting	0	0	3	5
Federal Government	0	0	6	10
State Government	2	3	6	10
Local Government	12	16	15	24

To facilitate response to public comments, staff compiled a summary of all verbal and written comments by action plan. This summary was distributed to the Management Conference and used to guide deliberation. The majority of the comments received by the GBNEP resulted in minor revisions to *The Plan* that served to clarify the intent of the Conference. The major revisions to *The Plan*, as a result of public review of the document, are summarized below:

- Individual actions in *The Plan* (except the support actions) were ranked based on previously ranked goals and objectives. The Habitat section of *The Plan* was reordered to reflect the ranking.
- The Non-Point Sources of Pollution action plan was re-focused to reflect that the Coastal Coordinating Council has no intention of broadening the scope of the Coastal Management Program from the currently proposed rules.
- References to the regulatory use of CZARA Section 6217 Guidance, for any purpose other than a technical resource, were deleted from the Non-Point Sources of Pollution action plan.
- *The Plan* recommends utilization of the Draft Storm Water Quality Management Guidance Manual prepared by the Storm Water Management Joint Task Force as a key aspect of non-point source management.
- *The Plan* does not recommend use of performance based standards for Non-point sources. *The Plan* emphasizes the use of technology based best management practices.
- *The Plan* includes a description of how the major coastal programs (the Galveston Bay Program, the Texas Coastal Management Program, the Clean Rivers Program and the Gulf of Mexico Program) relate to each other.
- *The Plan* recognizes the need to comply with State and Federal historic preservation laws.
- *The Plan* includes a discussion of the Action Plan Demonstration Projects conducted by the program and how the results of the those projects influenced the content of *The Plan*.

Appendix J provides a summary of the major comments received from the public.