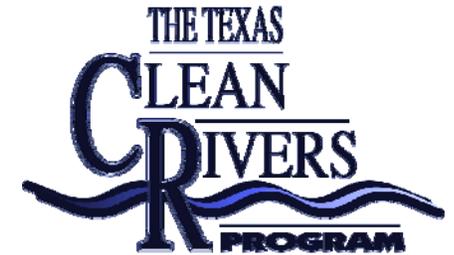


# Bringing People Together to Make a Difference in Water Quality

Clean Rivers Program Statewide Stakeholder Meeting Summary  
October 11, 2006



## MEETING OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Report on accomplishments and activities
- ▶ Receive feedback on challenges
- ▶ Share information and lessons learned
- ▶ Discuss the future focus of the program

## OPENING STATEMENTS

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Commissioner, **Larry Soward**, addressed the audience with his considerations for the future. His major discussion points included:

- enhanced communication and **collaboration between all entities** involved in water quality to achieve greater efficiencies and reduce duplication of effort
- embrace new **technology**
- find ways to **connect different pieces** of the water quality puzzle, such as ground water and surface water, and water quality and water quantity

Texas State Senator, **Kip Averitt**, provided his view of water quality issues for the state and how the Clean Rivers Program provides a framework for addressing those issues. His major discussion points included:

- **water quality issues are unique to a location** and this necessitates local stakeholder involvement to ensure solutions are appropriate, adequate, and achievable in each watershed
- **“grassroots”** efforts supported by the [Clean Rivers Program](#) have provided the **framework for successful water quality management**
- underlying all intelligent water quality decisions is the **scientific information...** this takes time and money before action can be taken
- The Senate Natural Resources Committee will be focusing on [Senate Bill 3](#) which was developed to address **instream flows**. Stakeholder groups will be formed by river basin and a set of advisory groups will review recommendations through a detailed process.

### Stakeholder Driven Nutrient Reductions in Lake O' The Pines

Walt Sears, General Manager for the [Northeast Texas Municipal Water District \(NETMWD\)](#), described efforts to reduce nutrient loads entering the lake. The NETMWD approaches projects with the tenet that, first "we figure out what needs to be done, then we find the right funding". They have combined efforts from a variety of sources to address the water quality issue: [Supplemental Environmental Project\(SEP\)](#) funding was used to replace failing septic systems; [Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board](#) worked to get site specific nutrient management plans on poultry operations; citizen groups collaborated to clean up illegal dump sites; the NETMWD worked with local houseboat owners and marinas to properly dispose of black water; TCEQ's [Total Maximum Daily Load](#) assessment indicated a need to reduce point source outfalls by 56%.

**Lessons Learned:** There is no substitute for firsthand knowledge of stakeholders and once you have a source identified you can find organizations and grants to fund corrective action. Keep your stakeholders informed and part of the solution.

**Question and Answer:** (Q)How do you prioritize your efforts on the ground? (A) The stakeholders prioritize, then we seek the funding from industry, cities, grants, individuals, etc.

### Clear Streams Initiative

Phil Ford, General Manager for the [Brazos River Authority \(BRA\)](#), and Frank Espino, Regional Director with the TCEQ, described their experience with the Clear Streams Initiative which was aimed at addressing stream water quality and management of rock quarry operations. This initiative began when a group of stakeholders expressed their concern over siltation of streams and destruction related to poorly managed rock quarries. The BRA and the Clean Rivers Program (CRP) responded to this stakeholder concern by adding 9 monthly stream water quality monitoring sites, installing four automated stormwater samplers, and conducting two intensive biological monitoring events to characterize the effects of quarry operations in the Brazos River watershed between Lake Possum Kingdom and Lake Granbury. The TCEQ responded by conducting investigations at quarry operations and found some lacked the stormwater controls needed to control silt-laden run-off. Senate Bill 1354 was passed to enhance regulations for this stretch of the river, named after the author John Graves. The Senate Bill named the stretch of the river "The John Graves Scenic Riverway".

**Lessons Learned:** The TCEQ and the river authorities were able to coordinate efforts to respond to a stakeholder concern. Standard water quality monitoring methods may not adequately characterize the effects and load related specifically to quarry operations. Citizen groups helped identify locations of quarries. Stakeholders may have perceptions very different from water resource organizations and a great deal of care should be taken to ensure perceptions are well understood and discussed.

**Question and Answer:** (Q1)Would this effort have occurred without citizens? (A1) No. It is important for people to organize and express their concerns so that resource management agencies can act on their input to achieve better stewardship of our water resources. (Q2)Were the perception problems with the stakeholders or the elected officials? (A2)Both. Resource management agencies get complacent over time and stakeholders feel that the stream should have water quality that cannot be realistically attained. When the stakeholders care, the legislature cares.

### Supporting Stakeholder Recreational Activities in the San Antonio River Basin

Mike Gonzales with the [San Antonio River Authority](#) discussed their experience with enhanced stakeholder interest in recreation on the San Antonio River. The water quality on the river downstream of San Antonio has been improving which is increasing interest in new parks and canoeing opportunities. In order to support this increased interest, the San Antonio River Authority began an intensive water quality monitoring effort, with respect to bacteria concentrations in the river, and developed a web site ([www.riverrec.org](http://www.riverrec.org)) for up-to-date information on water quality in the river.

**Lessons Learned:** A stream's use may be defined by its water quality; if you improve it the uses will increase as will stakeholder interest. The web is a wonderful tool and it can be used very effectively to support stakeholder needs and disseminate information.

**Question and Answer:** (Q) Do stakeholders have conflicts between motor boats and paddlers? (A) No, debris prevents motor boats and there are no boat ramps.

### Helping Rapidly Developing Communities Address Water Quality Challenges - Special Study of Cotton and West Fork Double Bayous

Todd Running with the [Houston-Galveston Area Council of Governments \(HGAC\)](#) discussed the way in which HGAC coordinated a CRP special study to assist in determining the appropriate aquatic life use for two bayous northeast of Houston. The bayous are listed on the [TCEQ's 303\(d\) List of Impaired Waters](#) for low dissolved oxygen and are categorized as needing a review of the water quality standards. Several small-scale water quality monitoring efforts were done prior to HGAC's effort to adequately characterize the water bodies. This special study was conducted to provide scientific and detailed data to support the TCEQ's permit actions relating to a couple of wastewater permittees. This special study was coordinated with the TCEQ's Water Quality Standards Team and the HGAC Clean Rivers Program Technical Advisory Group. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) was the organization that conducted the field sampling and biological identification, and laboratory analysis was done by the Trinity River Authority (TRA).

**Lessons Learned:** A project is only as successful as the original design allows; coordinating with all organizations involved is essential. The Clean Rivers Program framework allows for quick prioritization and funding of this project by committee approval. Clean Rivers Program partners can leverage their long-term relationship with other program partners to jointly accomplish a task.

**Question and Answer:** (Q) How were you able to have a rapid response to citizen input? (A) We have a standardized Quality Assurance Project Plan as a framework to build on; technical advisory group meets frequently to discuss priorities; seven local monitoring authorities can be called on to coordinate monitoring efforts and include in special studies.



## 2<sup>ND</sup> PANEL - MAXIMIZING PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

---

### Involving Stakeholders in the Clean Rivers Program

Curtis Campbell, General Manager for the [Red River Authority of Texas](#), discussed their efforts to involve, inform, and maintain the interest of stakeholders in their two [Clean Rivers Program \(CRP\)](#) basins (Red and Canadian). They have a number of strategies for maintaining stakeholder involvement and interest, including: mailing over 300 notices for each annual steering committee meeting; always include an agenda with topics of interest; hold meetings in various areas to reach new stakeholders; use other water forums to provide an update of CRP items of interest; provide data and information in reports and on the web; provide the right type of information for stakeholders to set priorities, then follow-through on stakeholder priorities; partner with other organizations in the basin to increase monitoring activities and reach more stakeholders through partner contacts.

**Lessons Learned:** Constantly work at it, don't expect the same folks year after year. Find ways to contact new organizations and associations to get them involved.

**Question and Answer:** (Q)How do you get new stakeholders involved? (A)Take every opportunity at other meetings or forums in the basin to present what the CRP can do and how it could be of benefit. Include other issues and topics of particular interest to prospective stakeholders at the CRP meetings.

### Using Partner Networks to Maximize CRP Resources in the Trinity River Basin

Angela Kilpatrick with the [Trinity River Authority \(TRA\)](#) presented information about how they have developed a network of local governments to monitor water quality in the Trinity River Basin. They have done this to enhance partnerships as well as to leverage resources to accomplish more with the limited funds available. The networked monitors meet the CRP and TCEQ quality assurance protocols and provide a great deal of the data free of charge. The Trinity River Authority is then tasked with providing quality assurance audit and training events, reviewing and quality assuring all data submitted from the network monitors, and sending the data to the TCEQ for inclusion in the statewide database. There are currently 8 network monitors, 144 stations, and 75 water quality parameters, with different combinations for each station. The TRA estimates that they spend \$133,000 per biennium for sampling efforts under the current scheme; this would cost \$576,000 if there were no network monitors. The network monitors benefit from this because their data is now considered comparable and quality assured, and can be used to support their stormwater and wastewater permits. The savings allow the TRA to spend some funds on outreach, river clean-ups, and special studies related to stakeholder priorities.

**Lessons Learned:** Partnering with local governments leverages funds to get more done with less. When you work together for one purpose, you develop a working relationship that can be used for other purposes. When you use other organizations to provide data, you can't always specify where and what they will monitor. There is a cost to bringing other monitoring partners under the umbrella of your Quality Assurance Project Plan; a great deal of oversight is required.

**Question and Answer:** (Q) No questions were asked.

### Plum Creek Watershed Protection Plan: CRP Partners Support Community-Based Efforts

Debbie Magin with the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority discussed how the Clean Rivers Program (CRP) is involved in an effort to address water quality issues in the [Plum Creek watershed](#) through a Watershed Protection Plan that involved stakeholders from the beginning. The Plum Creek watershed is seeing increased pressure on water quality due to rapid development in the upper reaches of the watershed where bacteria is listed as an *Impairment* on the [303\(d\) List of Impaired Waters](#). The watershed includes a variety of land uses, from rural rangeland, to fertile crop land, to oil and gas well production, to growing communities with wastewater treatment plants. The CRP has conducted water quality monitoring in the watershed to investigate whether products of oil and gas operations were reaching Plum Creek on a regular basis. The short-term study did not identify related organic compounds in the water. In addition, the CRP responded to stakeholder concerns about the development in the upper portion of the watershed and added a new monthly monitoring station in the upper portion of the watershed, and, added two biological monitoring events to determine if the fish and benthic communities were meeting expected diversity. This sampling work and stakeholder involvement helped gain interest for a Watershed Protection Plan. The Watershed Protection Plan is a great tool for this watershed because it approaches the problem with a multi-jurisdictional, grassroots, voluntary, and proactive process. The CRP will continue to support this effort by providing technical expertise and water quality monitoring in the watershed. The CRP brings a great deal of historical and technical knowledge to the table, thereby leveraging its investment in water quality.

**Lessons Learned: Partnering efforts of key programs and organizations is essential to the success of a project.**

**Funding is limited, so we need to align similar programs to fill the information gaps.**

**Question and Answer: (Q) How do you get developers to become stakeholders? (A) Focus on cost control and education first, then build on small successes.**

### Leveraging the Clean Rivers Program to Develop Watershed Solutions

Gayle Haecker with the [Brazos River Authority](#), and John Nett with the [City of Killeen](#), conveyed their experience with a local effort by stakeholders to protect Lake Stillhouse Hollow. The group approached the Clean Rivers Program (CRP) at the Brazos River Authority and attended steering committee meetings to express their concerns and need for support. The Brazos River Authority provided support through a special study to collect monthly water quality samples at sites selected by the [Lake Stillhouse Hollow Cleanwater Steering Committee](#). The information from this study supported their need to know water quality conditions around the lake, while the individuals on the Committee contributed their knowledge of the area and where potential problems exist. The City of Killeen, by getting involved in this effort, began to shift gears to public education and outreach. They took on federal grants through the [Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source \(NPS\) Program](#) to target future best management practices (BMPs). **Lessons Learned: Core group must be supported, empowered, and inspired by professionals who are engaged in the project. The work that is being done could not be accomplished without stakeholders taking the lead and organizing their efforts.**

**Question and Answer: (Q) What gets stakeholders interested? (A) Use issues to draw interest. When people see action, they are more willing to participate.**





## FUTURE FOCUS OF THE CLEAN RIVERS PROGRAM

TCEQ Clean Rivers Program staff presented the outcome of the 2006 planning process to update the objectives and strategies outlined in the program's Long Term Plan. Below are the three significant issues identified through the planning process, with questions and answers from the audience, and action items for the program.

### ➤ **Monitoring Water Quality**

The act states that the Clean Rivers Program will be both **strategic** and **comprehensive**. We evaluated the program's established framework and determined that it provides the flexibility and organization needed to support that requirement. **Routine** monitoring of sites on a monthly or quarterly basis for more than two years provides long-term data to evaluate trends and supports the TCEQ's need to assess water quality statewide. **Systematic** monitoring of sites for less than two years provides information on small, unclassified water bodies to support water quality standards. **Permit Support** monitoring to provide information specific to a water quality permit provides a benefit to the TCEQ permitting process as well as to permittees so that actual, site-specific scientific data can be used to make permitting decisions. **Special Studies** provide detailed information on a water quality issue to better characterize water quality conditions.

### **Input from Attendees on October 11, 2006:**

**Question:** How is the CRP involved in updating the water quality standards?  
**Answer:** The data collected by the program is used when the TCEQ analyzes water quality conditions. The CRP partners are represented on workgroups that provide input on the water quality standards and assessment process. The partners get input from stakeholders at periodic steering committee meetings, which anyone is welcome to attend. When the TCEQ makes a decision on water quality standards, the CRP partners inform their stakeholders. The TCEQ will soon hold a series of workshops on the next water quality standards update.

**Question:** Should the CRP move resources from routine monitoring to specialized areas of monitoring including stormwater, instream flows, or intensive studies of water quality issues?

**Answer:** The CRP's greatest success is providing routine water quality monitoring data to the TCEQ for statewide water quality assessment. The CRP provides over 60% of the data for that purpose. The CRP wants to be useful in many ways and support other initiatives for water quality information; however, the funding available to the program has not increased since the inception of the program in 1991, which limits our ability to support other initiatives for water quality information.



## FUTURE FOCUS OF THE CLEAN RIVERS PROGRAM (cont'd)

**Question:** How can CRP connect water quality problems and stakeholders?

**Answer:** Stakeholders (which include volunteer monitors) can get involved in water quality issues by bringing concerns and information to steering committee meetings, prioritizing issues for future work, developing local action committees, and working within their community to address their concerns. The CRP is here to support the work of stakeholders and assist them with technical information, while working together to improve water quality.

**Question:** What does the Clean Rivers Act say on coordinating with the State Water Plan?

**Answer:** The Clean Rivers Act was enacted prior to the State Water Plan and therefore does not reference the Plan. The CRP partners have been involved in both programs and try to seek out ways to coordinate the two efforts. There are questions about how re-use of wastewater will affect return flows, and this could impact water quality. It is important to keep both issues in mind when managing water resources.

**Question:** How do we align our monitoring program with growth and the continuing pressures on water quality, such as: new transportation corridors, increased development with septic or package plants, increased sediment loads in streams and reservoirs, increased flood flows accompanied by decreased base flows, emerging contaminants, instream flows, and more? And, how do we do this when Commissioner Soward said earlier today that we have to do the same or more with less money?

**Answer:** We will need to maintain flexibility within each river basin in the program and address water quality issues that arise from various sources of information. The CRP has been doing more sampling with the same amount of funds for the last 15 years. The pressures from increased costs will cause a shift to reduce overall monitoring output of the program.

**Action Plan:** A set of action items were developed to ensure monitoring decisions are made with a well-understood and mutual purpose in mind:

- ▶ develop a set of criteria for making monitoring decisions;
- ▶ document why we are monitoring at each site;
- ▶ track all changes on a continual basis so that we will know why and when a site or parameter was dropped or added; and
- ▶ develop a long-term monitoring strategy for each basin.



## **FUTURE FOCUS OF THE CLEAN RIVERS PROGRAM (cont'd)**

---

### ➤ **Create & Disseminate Information**

The act states that the Clean Rivers Program will assess water quality to identify and describe problems and their sources. In addition, the act states that the information should allow for government organizations to take action to improve water quality. We evaluated the program's existing framework for making information out of all the water quality data collected for the statewide database, and determined that the tools already developed to communicate that information address the needs of the act. Even though the tools have been developed, the review identified some areas needing improvement. The various reporting mechanisms need to address the unique needs of the TCEQ, stakeholders, and programmatic decision-making.

#### **Input from Attendees on October 11, 2006:**

**Question:** Has the information presented in CRP reports and meetings been useful?

**Answer:** The TCEQ's Surface Water Quality Monitoring program uses information in the reports to describe the possible causes of impairments. We may need to re-evaluate the content from year to year to ensure the same information is not repeated unnecessarily. We should try to correlate reporting with the TCEQ's biennial water quality assessment report, by reporting the information specifically important to TCEQ in preparation for the next assessment.

**Action Plan:** A set of action items were developed to ensure unique information needs are incorporated into reporting mechanisms:

- ▶ provide information to TCEQ describing sources and causes of water quality problems in preparation for the statewide assessment;
- ▶ provide information to stakeholders describing what the water quality problems are, which ones are the highest priority, and what, if anything is being done, or could be done, about it;
- ▶ develop more in depth information for the program to make decisions on where and what we should be monitoring;
- ▶ re-evaluate the content of the reports from year to year to reduce unnecessary duplication; and
- ▶ coordinate efforts with the Texas Water Plan and the Clean Rivers Program to connect water quality and water quantity issues.



## FUTURE FOCUS OF THE CLEAN RIVERS PROGRAM (cont'd)

### ➤ **Act on the Information**

The act states that the Clean Rivers Program will set priorities for taking appropriate action, recommend water quality management strategies, and develop a process for public participation. The workgroup met to evaluate how the program was accomplishing these tasks and determined that there were several appropriate mechanisms for getting it done. The program sets priorities and involves the public through the steering committee process. Each year the individual basin steering committees meet to discuss water quality issues and set priorities for where water quality monitoring activities should take place. The workgroup determined that we need to find innovative ways to accomplish the other requirement of the act, to recommend strategies, considering the limited funding available. It was determined that the best option is to partner with other organizations and get involved in their efforts to improve water quality.

#### **Input from Attendees on October 11, 2006:**

**Question:** Is there a mechanism to address degrading streams that are still meeting water quality standards?

**Answer:** The Watershed Protection Plan is designed to not only improve impaired water bodies, but also to protect water bodies with increasing threats from various land use practices. There are limited funds available through the federal Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source grants, and the priority for these funds is to improve impaired water bodies.

**Question:** [Texas Watch](#) has customers who want to be proactive before a water body becomes impaired. How can they get involved?

**Answer:** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets the guidelines for prioritizing projects and how funds will be allocated. There are other funding mechanisms than just CWA Section 319, such as Supplemental Environmental Projects (SEP), other federal grants, and local organizations.

**Action Plan:** A set of action items were developed to outline a process for CRP to recommend water quality management strategies and actions TCEQ may take to improve water quality:

- ▶ provide input and represent stakeholders in the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) process;
- ▶ seek other funding to support water quality improvement projects;
- ▶ support Watershed Protection Plans by providing monitoring support and technical assistance; and
- ▶ provide input and represent stakeholders in the water quality assessment and standards revision processes.