

**Colorado and Lavaca Rivers and Matagorda and Lavaca Bays
Basin and Bay Area Stakeholder Committee (BBASC)**

Monday, December 1, 2014, at 10:00 a.m.
LCRA Eastern Maintenance Facility in La Grange, TX

MINUTES

Members Participating: Pat Brzozowski, Chair; Myron Hess, Vice-Chair; Steve Box for Andrew Sansom; John Hoffman; Jennifer Walker; Ronald Gertson; Jim Dailey; Jack Maloney; Caroline Runge; Bruce Arendale; John Gosdin; Karen Bondy; Jeff Fox for Teresa Lutes; Carroll Hall by phone

Call to Order and Introductions

BBASC chair, Pat Brzozowski, called the meeting to order and members introduced themselves.

Public Comment

No public comments were made at this time.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

BBASC members unanimously approved the January 7th, 2014, conference call minutes as well as the May 8th and August 11th, 2014, email minutes.

Consideration of Joe King's Resignation and Appointment of a Replacement

Chair Brzozowski informed members that Joe King had formally resigned from the BBASC. Members unanimously accepted Mr. King's resignation and nominations were accepted from the floor. John Hoffman, Joe King's current alternate, was nominated and Mr. Hoffman briefly described his qualifications to represent Electrical Generation interests. A motion was made and seconded to appoint John Hoffman as a full member which was approved by consensus.

Election of Officers

BBASC members present unanimously re-appointed Patrick Brzozowski and Myron Hess to serve as Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively.

Updates on Funded Workplan Projects

a) Study 1: Dan Opdyke, AnchorQEA – Matagorda and Lavaca Bays Project

Dan Opdyke presented a summary of the work performed to date aimed at evaluating freshwater inflow standards and ecological responses in Matagorda and Lavaca Bays. He informed members that the study will review existing standards and studies specifically the Matagorda Bay Health Evaluation (MBHE, 2004-2008) as well as analyze historical datasets in conjunction with current field investigations. The main goals of this project are to evaluate the responses of Dermo (oyster parasite), shellfish and forage fish, *Rangia*, and marsh productivity to freshwater inflows. In addition, Dr. Opdyke indicated the study team will perform hydrodynamic modeling using TxBlend to evaluate inflows versus salinity and compare these results to previous models as described in the MBHE using the RMA2/4 model. Members inquired to the method of

calculation and explanation of the Dermo Infection Intensity index. BBEST member, Bryan Cook, along with Dr. Opdyke explained that the index is calculated based on the percent of infected oysters and weighted prevalence; and is on a 0 to 5 scale, where 0 is no infection present and 5 is an infection in which the oyster tissue is almost entirely obscured by the parasite. Members also discussed whether Dermo infection intensity affects oyster harvestability, how local rainfall events might contribute to salinity fluctuations in the bays, and timeline of project completion. Dr. Opdyke indicated that a final report is scheduled to be completed by August 2015. Additionally, Carla Guthrie, TWDB, informed members that a preliminary draft would be available if BBASC or BBEST members would like to provide comment.

b) Study 2: Barney Austin, AquaStrategies – Evaluation of building siphons or pipelines under the Intercoastal Waterway (ICW) to ensure local inflows to East Matagorda Bay

Barney Austin presented an overview to members on the feasibility of redirecting freshwater inflows via a pipeline or siphon to East Matagorda Bay. Four options were presented to members inclusive of potential diversion locations, conveyance options, and freshwater availability as well as project and infrastructure costs.

Mr. Austin stated that preliminary analyses assumed a conveyance of 50 cfs of water to the bay; however, he indicated that this is an estimated amount and an evaluation of the environmental impacts and environmental benefits concerning the amount of water redirected will be needed to determine the potential impacts to East as well as West Matagorda Bay. Members inquired as to the ownership of Lake Austin and timeline of project completion, as well as discussed the possibility of pumping brackish groundwater into the bay versus using instream flows from the Colorado. Most members were in agreement that while brackish groundwater could potentially provide considerable freshwater to the bay system, nutrient inputs from river-derived instream flows are essential to fuel estuarine productivity and is a primary goal of evaluating the feasibility of re-directing inflows into East Matagorda Bay. Additionally, Mr. Austin indicated no information on Lake Austin was available at present, but an active mitigation project is ongoing in the contributing watershed. He also informed members that a final report is scheduled to be completed by August 2015, and Carla Guthrie, TWDB, indicated a draft would be available for comment.

Additional Items

No additional items were addressed.

Next Meeting Date

Members will be polled to determine the next meeting date. Potential meeting dates suggested are May 14, 21, and 28, 2014.

Public Comment

No public comments were made at this time.

Adjourned

**Colorado and Lavaca Rivers and Matagorda and Lavaca Bays
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Tuesday, February 7, 2015
Email Meeting

MEETING NOTES

Email Announcement:

Greetings,

There has been a development in the implementation of Study 1 that requires our attention to address a problem encountered by the study team. The BBASC work group that reviewed the original study proposals has evaluated two options proposed by the study team. The work group unanimously recommended that the study team pursue Option 2, as described below. Dave Buzan has also indicated his support for that option.

Unless there is strong objection from the BBASC, we will forward that recommendation along to the study team. This is just a recommendation and not a formal BBASC decision so there is no official vote required. However, if you object to the recommendation, please reply to all to express that objection by 5:00 pm on February 18th and we will assess how to go forward.

Nature of the Problem

The study proposal contemplated collecting live Rangia clams from Matagorda Bay and Lavaca Bay to be analyzed, based on growth ring characteristics, by Dr. Black at UTMSI. Dan Opdyke reports that the study team has been unsuccessful in collecting any live Rangia. The initial budget for collecting clams has now been exhausted, with the collection of only the shell of a single dead clam. Shells of dead clams aren't very useful for this analysis because it usually isn't possible to tell when the clam died. In order to relate growth rings to bay conditions, it is necessary to know in what year the clam died so that growth rings from previous years can be related to conditions in the bay during those years. The failure to find live clams will require an adjustment to the study plan. Dan would like to have some guidance from the BBASC on how to proceed.

Options Presented:

Option 1: Under this option, the study team would use the funds previously allocated for Dr. Black's analysis of Rangia (about \$15,000) to undertake a more systematic search for Rangia using side-scan sonar and focusing on limited areas very near freshwater sources. Given the budget situation, even if live Rangia were collected through that search, funding would not be available to pay for Dr. Black's analysis. However, the shells from live clams could be archived, with the year of collection noted, to be analyzed at some future date if additional funds were to become available.

Option 2: For this option, the study team would devote that same funding to additional analysis of oyster data, particularly dermo data. As you may recall, dermo is an oyster parasite that greatly affects oyster productivity. As we understand from Dan, the more recent oyster/dermo data that the study team now has available appear to indicate some

fairly different trends than the data—from 2007 and before—that were used in the original LCRA/SAWS studies relied upon by the BBEST. That difference in trends was not anticipated by the study team and they indicate that it merits further analysis, but the current budget does not include funding for that analysis. Under this option, the \$15,000 would be allocated for that purpose. The new dermo data to be analyzed include specific data collected by the study team in Matagorda and Lavaca bays, as well as data collected by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department since the LCRA/SAWS studies in those bays and also in Galveston and San Antonio bays. Dan indicated that the team likely would do some separate analysis using just the Matagorda and Lavaca data and then using the data from all of the bays.

Rangia was not one of the species used in the original LCRA-SAWS studies. It is not a species that is used commercially in Texas bays, but it has an important ecological role. Oyster/dermo data were an important component of the LCRA-SAWS study recommendations used by the BBEST.

Other than this issue, the studies seem to be progressing well.

Thanks,
Patrick and Myron

Vote Summary: All members that participated in the email meeting unanimously supported the recommendations.