

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

Thursday, May 21, 2015, at 10:00 a.m.  
LCRA Eastern Maintenance Facility in La Grange, TX

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Attending Members**

Myron Hess, Vice-Chair; Doug Anders for Pat Brzozowski, Chair; Steve Box for Andrew Sansom; John Hoffman; Jennifer Walker; Ronald Gertson; Jim Dailey; Jack Maloney; John Gosdin; Karen Bondy; Jeff Fox for Teresa Lutes; Bruce Arendale by phone

**Call to Order**

BBASC Vice-Chair, Myron Hess, called the meeting to order.

**Public Comment**

No public comments were made at this time.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

BBASC members unanimously approved the December 1, 2014, meeting minutes as well as the February 7, 2015, email meeting notes.

**Updates on Funded Work Plan Projects**

**a) Study 1: Dan Opdyke, AnchorQEA and Marty Heaney, Bio-West – 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 refreshed members about the main goals of the current project which include corroborating existing inflow standards or suggesting new relationships between inflows and ecology, incorporating new data especially from the recent drought, and expanding upon the 2008 Matagorda Bay Health Evaluation (MBHE) studies. For the hydrology and salinity portion of the present study, he informed members that total inflow was calculated based on the most downstream instream environmental flow gage (Colorado River near Bay City, TX). Further, he showed members graphs depicting the annual inflow and salinity to the bays compared to recent drought years. Next Mr. Opdyke described the oyster to Dermo (oyster parasite) relationship and discussed the study team's efforts to evaluate the responses of Dermo to freshwater inflows. He informed members that the 2008 MBHE studies lumped Dermo data from multiple bays (Matagorda-Lavaca, San Antonio, and Galveston Bays) to increase the statistical robustness of the dataset. In the current study, new data from 2008 through 2014 was incorporated. The team's preliminary analyses revealed that recent data had lower than expected rates of Dermo when compared with older data from the MBHE studies. Due to this, the study team decided to further investigate bay specific relationships. They found that while patterns of Dermo infection within each bay system remain unchanged compared to the overall relationships established under the MBHE (i.e. oysters tend to increase following wet years and decline during drought years with Dermo patterns being inversely related), the new data collected suggested that freshets and regression lag terms are important as well as the frequency of freshets and long-term salinity on Dermo-oyster dynamics.

Marty Heaney presented to members the efforts of Bio-West's study team in evaluating marsh productivity in the Colorado and Lavaca River Deltas. He stated that field investigations were conducted in fall 2014 and preliminary analyses indicated that

changes in marsh vegetation fluctuate with freshwater inflows, such that lower biomass production is directly correlated with reduced flows and high salinities. In addition, he stated target species (i.e. blue crab and white shrimp) collected using throw traps were found to occur in habitats consistent with historical collections, but that an evaluation of density response trends in each habitat is ongoing. In addition, *Rangia* clam investigations yielded no specimens, alive or dead, during field surveys of the area. At present, preliminary conclusions for this portion of the study support the current environmental flow framework of varying tiers and achievement guidelines.

Lastly, Dan Opdyke discussed with members the salinity modeling and predictive inflow regressions for the Matagorda-Lavaca Bays system. He informed members the study team's decision to switch from the RMA model used in the MBHE 2008 studies to the TxBBlend model was based on updates to the model, model support from TWDB, and data quality. He indicated that results from both updated and historic TxBBlend model runs are comparable with the old RMA model. The next steps for the project team include finalizing the data analyses and submitting a draft report to TWDB due June 30, 2015 with the final report is due August 31, 2015.

**b) Study 2: Tim Osting, AquaStrategies – Methods to Promote Freshwater Inflow to East Matagorda Bay**

Tim Osting presented an overview to members on the feasibility of redirecting freshwater inflows to East Matagorda Bay. Options presented to members included potential diversion locations, conveyance options, freshwater availability, and amount of freshwater that would be beneficial as well as estimated costs of project. Mr. Osting stated that the goals of the project are to reduce extended periods of salinity greater than 30 ppt and promote the “fair” condition of salinity ranges during particular months as described in the 2008 MBHE studies. He discussed how habitat suitability is evaluated for a species as well as discussed historic salinity trends in East Matagorda Bay. Through focusing on a specific area in the southern portion of East Matagorda Bay, he demonstrated how a direct pulse of freshwater into the system would impact salinity. For example, he stated that 16,250 acre-feet of freshwater would reduce the salinity in the target area (southern portion of East Matagorda Bay) by 25% for a period of three to five months. He requested input from members concerning selecting additional target areas to evaluate, if they felt a greater benefit could be achieved elsewhere in East Matagorda Bay. Members indicated a preference for the study team to focus on the northern portion of East Matagorda Bay rather than the southern portion. The next steps for the project team include finalizing the data analyses and submitting a draft report to TWDB due June 30, 2015 with the final report is due August 31, 2015.

**Review Process for Study Reports**

Vice-Chair Myron Hess informed members that TWDB is seeking volunteers from the BBASC and BBEST groups to review the work plan funded project reports and handed out a guidance document outlining the review process. He also stated that the focus of the review would be limited to within the context of the original scope of work (SOW), comments are expected to be submitted in electronic format, and reviewers will have approximately a two week window in July to complete their review of the studies. Following discussion, members were in agreement to request volunteers from the BBASC and BBEST to review the draft reports.

**Other Business**

Vice-Chair Hess informed members that the TWDB had requested \$2.0 million in legislative funding for the continued study of environmental flows and that no specific amounts were currently earmarked for any specific basins. He also emphasized that the BBASC should consider moving forward with development of new SOWs for the next round of funding sooner rather than later. Members discussed briefly whether they are limited to studies outlined in their submitted work plan as well as whether they would need to amend their work plan if such a study was selected for funding.

**Next Meeting Date**

Members will be polled to determine the next meeting date. A September meeting date is preferred.

**Public Comment**

No public comments were made at this time.

**Adjourned**