

Upper Cibolo Creek Watershed Partnership Public Participation Plan

March 16, 2010



Public participation opportunities related to the development of a watershed protection plan for Upper Cibolo Creek located in Kendall County, Texas. This participation plan has been developed by the City of Boerne in cooperation with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

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Introduction

Purpose

This public participation plan describes steps the City of Boerne will take to involve community members as stakeholders in the development of a watershed protection plan (WPP) for Upper Cibolo Creek (UCC) located in southern Kendall County, Texas (Figure 1). The preparation of this plan is largely funded by grant monies provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) pursuant to Section 319 of the Federal Clean Water Act. Total funding for this project is a 60/40 split between TCEQ and the City of Boerne.

Development of a non-regulatory protection plan for the Upper Cibolo Creek Watershed is necessary to maintain and improve water quality within Upper Cibolo Creek. A watershed protection plan is a community-driven management framework that uses the watershed approach to voluntarily address complex water quality problems. Anyone who lives, works or plays within the watershed is invited to join a Watershed Partnership where individual opinions and concerns regarding watershed protection and water quality will be addressed. A series of workshops and meetings are being organized to present information on activities occurring within the watershed and their associated impacts on water quality. Members of the partnership will be involved early and often in the planning process and will play a key role in all phases of the plan's development.

Background

Water quantity and quality issues are a common topic of discussion among landowners, municipalities, and state and federal agencies within central Texas. Water contained within the rivers, streams, springs and aquifers of the hill country are one of the regions most valuable yet fragile natural resources. Water quantity is vital for local tourism, agriculture, and ranching while water quality affects millions of individuals who depend upon aquifers and reservoirs as their primary source of drinking water. Upper Cibolo Creek has a history of water quality concerns and has been listed on the Texas Water Quality Inventory and 303(d) list since 1999.

- In 1999, Upper Cibolo Creek was listed for elevated levels of fecal coliform bacteria and for not meeting designated standards for depressed dissolved oxygen (DO).
- From 2000-2004, Upper Cibolo Creek was listed for depressed DO.
- From 2006-2008, Upper Cibolo Creek was again listed for elevated bacteria levels that exceed limits for contact recreation.
- In 2008, Segment 1908_01 (from the confluence with Balcones Creek to approximately 2 miles upstream of Hwy 87 in Boerne) was identified as a concern for impaired habitat and orthophosphorus.

- In 2008, Segment 1908_02 (from approximately 2 miles upstream of Hwy 87 in Boerne to the upper end of the segment) was identified for ammonia.
- The Draft 2010 303(d) list identifies Segment 1908_02 as being impaired by elevated levels of bacteria.
- Segment 1908_02 is also listed on the 2010 303(d) list as a concern for impaired habitat while Segment 1908_01 is listed as a concern for orthophosphorus, total phosphorous and depressed dissolved oxygen.

The UCC watershed covers approximately 76 square miles and contains the City of Boerne and a portion of Fair Oaks Ranch. The watershed is currently characterized as mostly rural with light ranch and recreational use. However, Kendall County is one of the fastest growing counties in Texas. Changes in land use within rural areas of the watershed to a more suburbanized environment will likely lead to an increase in nonpoint source pollution within UCC. Nonpoint Source (NPS) pollution can originate from a variety of sources. Examples of NPS pollution include fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, soil erosion, animal feces, and malfunctioning septic systems. Contaminants from these sources are diluted into storm water runoff and find their way into aquatic systems during rain events.

Changes in land use practices will likely effect erosion and sedimentation within the watershed. Protective measures can be taken to reduce on-site erosion during construction. However, the creation of impervious ground cover coupled with disturbance of existing ecosystem functions can increase potential stormwater runoff which is a contributor to stream channel erosion.

Real estate values have increased along waterways within central Texas. The desire to develop property adjacent to streams and rivers often results in degradation of riparian areas. Riparian areas play many roles within a watershed including filtration of contaminants from overland flow, reduction of flood potential, and stream-bank stabilization. Riparian areas contain a large diversity of plant and animal species and often provide the only suitable wildlife habitat within urbanized areas. In addition to terrestrial habitat, riparian areas provide submerged structure and shade. These features play a key role in regulating water temperature and provide habitat for aquatic species.

Water quality impairments are often corrected or prevented by utilizing recommended Best Management Practices (BMPs) within a watershed. Members of the watershed partnership will identify causes and sources of pollution and recommend the implementation of BMPs that are sustainable and cost effective. The opportunity for public participation will allow a diverse group of citizens with a broad range of knowledge, ideas, and experience to work together in protecting water quality within UCC.

Goals and Objectives

The primary goals of this public participation plan are to provide a format for stakeholder involvement and develop a structure for the Upper Cibolo Creek Watershed Partnership. Watershed protection plans are only successful if committed stakeholders are involved in the planning and implementation process. To ensure the protection plan is representative of ideas and opinions from a diverse cross-section within the community the following objectives are being addressed:

- Initiate a public awareness and outreach campaign
- Identify stakeholders
- Provide opportunities for public involvement and input
- Evaluate stakeholder input

Time Frame for Development

The development of a WPP for Upper Cibolo Creek (Segment 1908) will occur between August 2009 and March 2012.

WPP Lead Agency Roles and Responsibilities

The coordination and development of a WPP for Upper Cibolo Creek (Segment 1908) will be conducted by the City of Boerne Project Team. Project oversight will be provided by the TCEQ and EPA. The Cibolo Nature Center and the Kendall Soil and Water Conservation District are close collaborators and will provide project support.

Stakeholder Facilitation

The City of Boerne will recruit a diverse group of stakeholders, both ideologically and geographically throughout the watershed, that have an interest in maintaining and improving water quality within Upper Cibolo Creek.

Data Collection and Analysis

The City of Boerne will contract with the San Antonio River Authority to develop a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for water quality sampling that will define the most appropriate type of data to collect and conditions under which to collect them. The City of Boerne will submit to the TCEQ the QAPP with Data Quality Objectives (DQOs) consistent with *EPA Requirements for Quality Assurance Plans* format and the *TCEQ Nonpoint Source QAPP Shell* 120 days prior to the initiation of any data collection. All of the monitoring procedures and methods prescribed in the QAPP will be consistent with the guidelines detailed in the *TCEQ Surface Water Quality Monitoring Procedures, Volume 1 and 2*. Water quality sample analysis will be conducted by the San Antonio River Authority's laboratory located in San Antonio, Texas.

Watershed Protection Plan Writing

The Watershed Coordinator with the City of Boerne will utilize information obtained from stakeholder input to compile the WPP. Guidance for writing the WPP will follow the EPA's *Handbook for Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect Our Waters*.

Meeting Deadlines/Performance Standards

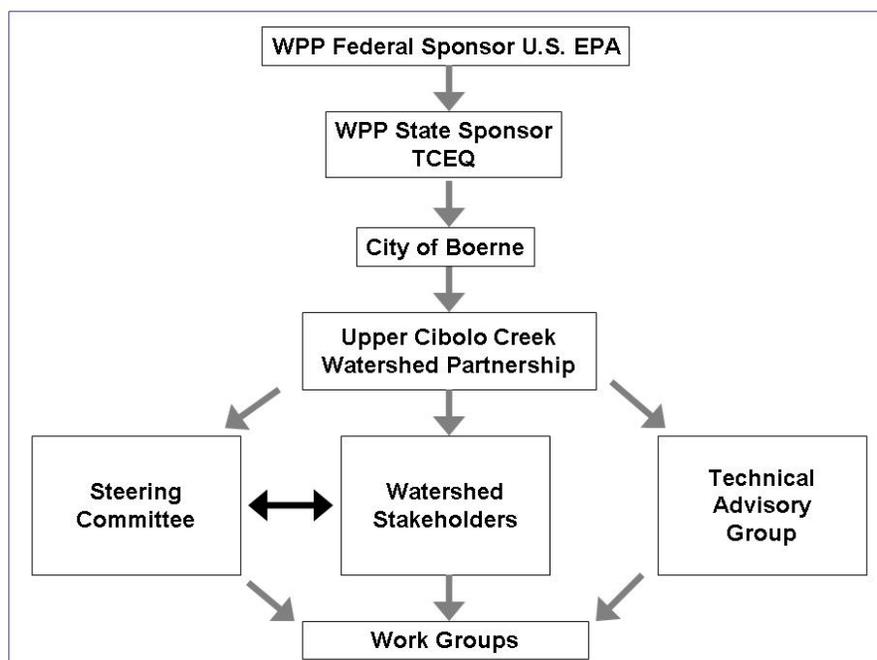
Development of a WPP for Upper Cibolo Creek will follow the schedule of deliverables within the TCEQ and City of Boerne contract scope of work. The Watershed Coordinator will provide the TCEQ with quarterly reports detailing activities regarding all aspects of the WPPs development and stakeholder participation.

Project Partners

Partners List

The City of Boerne
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
The Cibolo Nature Center
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Kendal Soil and Water Conservation District
San Antonio River Authority
Guadalupe Blanco River Authority

Partnership Organizational Chart



Partnership Communication Protocol

Individuals are not permitted to speak on behalf of the Watershed Partnership or Steering Committee as a whole unless authorized by the Partnership or Committee to do so. Members of the Partnership do not speak for the City of Boerne or the TCEQ and neither the City of Boerne nor the TCEQ will speak on behalf of the Partnership. If Partnership/Committee spokespersons are needed, they will be selected by the Steering Committee.

An open line of communication will exist between members of the Partnership and the Watershed Coordinator. In a good faith effort to keep partners informed, all press releases, public notices, and any media communications that may relate to the WPP will be distributed electronically and placed on the project webpage.

WPP Stakeholder Group

Stakeholder Group Structure

A combination of methods will be used to ensure stakeholders have an opportunity to contribute ideas, opinions, and concerns regarding the UCCWPP. All stakeholders involved in the planning process will fall under the structure of the Watershed Partnership. Within the Watershed Partnership there will be four types of committees with the following roles and responsibilities.

- *General stakeholders:* Stakeholders will participate in meetings and contribute information and ideas to be considered for the plan.
- *Steering Committee:* The Steering Committee will be developed to act as the decision making body within the partnership. A variety of individuals will serve on the Steering Committee to reflect the diversity of interest within the Upper Cibolo Creek Watershed and to incorporate the viewpoints of those who will be affected by the WPP. The overall goal of the Steering Committee is to develop and implement a WPP that will provide sustainable and cost effective results.
- *Work Groups:* Work groups will be formed to address specific topics identified/assigned by the Steering Committee based upon information gathered during General Stakeholder Meetings. Work Groups will discuss specific issues and assist in developing that portion of the WPP, including the implementation of recommendations. There is no limit to the number of members on a work group. Each work group will have a Steering Committee representative who will present each Work Groups findings and recommendations to the Steering Committee.
- *Technical Advisory Group:* A Technical Advisory Group consisting of state and federal agencies that specialize in natural resources will provide guidance to the Steering Committee and Work Groups.

Agencies/Groups Involved as Stakeholders

City of Boerne
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Cibolo Nature Center
San Antonio River Authority
Guadalupe Blanco River Authority
Kendall County
Boerne Chamber of Commerce
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Texas Department of Transportation
Texas AgriLife Extension Service
Texas Forest Service
Texas Railroad Commission
Texas Soil and Water Conservation Board
Texas Stream Team
Cow Creek Groundwater Conservation District
Kendall County Soil and Water Conservation District
Natural Resource Conservation Service
The Nature Conservancy
The Cibolo Conservancy
Texas Landowners Council
Edwards Aquifer Authority
Keep Boerne Beautiful
Texas Master Naturalist
Boerne Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas
Upper Cibolo Creek Landowners Association
Local Home Owners Associations

Citizens Involved as Stakeholders

Rural landowners within the watershed
City of Boerne residents
Fair Oaks Ranch residents
Downtown business owners
Businesses/Homeowners along Upper Cibolo Creek
Individuals who receive drinking water from Boerne City Lake
Business owners who supply lawn and garden or farm and ranch supplies

Membership Selection

Stakeholder Selection

Stakeholders are defined as those who make and implement decisions, those who are affected by decisions made or those who have the ability to assist with the implementation of decisions. Anyone who falls within these broad categories or has an interest in improving water quality within the UCC watershed can become a Stakeholder in the Watershed Partnership.

Steering Committee Selection

The Steering Committee will be composed of stakeholders from within the Upper Cibolo Creek Watershed. Solicitation and recruitment of Steering Committee members to promote an even geographical and topical representation within the watershed will be based on 3 methods: 1) consultation with the TCEQ, City of Boerne and local and regional governments, 2) meetings with various stakeholder interest groups and individuals, 3) self-nomination or requests by various stakeholder interest groups or individuals.

Steering Committee Replacements and Additions/Alternates/Absences

Replacements and Additions

The Steering Committee may add new members if (1) a member is unable to continue serving and a vacancy is created or (2) important stakeholder interests are identified that are not represented by the existing membership. A new member must be approved by a majority of existing members. In either event, the Steering Committee will, when practical, accept additional members.

Alternates

Members unable to attend a Steering Committee meeting (an absentee) may send an alternate. An absentee should provide advance notification to the facilitator of the desire to send an alternate. An alternate attending with prior notification from an absentee will serve as a substitute for that absent Steering Committee member and will have voting privileges. An alternate attending without advance notification will not be able to participate in Steering Committee votes. Absentees may also provide input via another committee member or send input via the facilitator. The facilitator will present such information to the committee.

Absences

All Steering Committee members agree to make a good faith effort to attend all Steering Committee meetings. However, the members recognize that situations may arise necessitating the absence of a member. Three absences in a row of which the facilitator was not informed of beforehand or without designation of an alternate constitute a resignation from the Steering Committee.

Goals Development

The City of Boerne will facilitate the Stakeholder Groups' work to set goals that will include (at a minimum) meeting the appropriate water quality standards for pollutants that threaten or impair the physical, chemical, or biological integrity and the designated uses of the watershed covered in the plan.

Decision Making Process

The Steering Committee is the decision making body for the Partnership. The Steering Committee will strive for consensus when making decisions and recommendations. Consensus means overwhelming agreement and is defined as everyone being able to live with the decisions made. It is important that consensus be the product of a good-faith effort to meet the interest of all stakeholders and inherently requires compromise and negotiation.

While moving forward with decisions or recommendations the facilitator will ask whether steering committee members can think of any 'improvements' to the proposed agreement. Upon further discussion and potential alteration of the original proposal the facilitator will call for any major objections.

- If the feelings of the group are generally positive and there are no major objections, then the proposal passes.
- If the feelings are positive, but someone has a major objection to the proposal, the proposal doesn't pass. The proposal may be sent to a Work Group, or withdrawn and reworked and re-presented at a later date.
- If the group feelings are generally negative, the proposal doesn't pass.
- If the groups feelings are mixed, not generally positive or negative, discussion continues, or the proposal is tabled until the next meeting, or until more information is available. In some cases the facilitator will ask for a show of hands to indicate the level of support for a particular proposal.
- If discussion seems to be going on forever without the possibility of resolution the group can:
 - 1) Decide to drop the proposal
 - 2) Approve voting of specific options within the proposal
 - 3) Send the proposal to a Work Group

Meetings

All meetings (Partnership, Steering Committee, and Work Group) are open to the public and all interested stakeholders are encouraged and welcome to participate. Participants may express their views candidly, but without personal attacks. Time is shared because all participants are of equal importance.

A series of guest speakers will be scheduled to ensure all participants are informed on topics such as local watershed characteristics and function, causes of nonpoint source pollution, water quality issues, functions of riparian habitat and BMPs that can be implemented to improve or prevent water quality impairments.

Frequency

Throughout the planning phase, regular meetings of the Partnership, Steering Committee or Work Groups will occur each month. The Steering Committee may determine the need for additional meetings. Steering Committee and Work Group meetings will be scheduled to accomplish specific milestones in the planning process.

Meetings will start and end on time. Meeting times will be set in an effort to accommodate the attendance of all Steering Committee members. The Watershed Coordinator will notify members of the Partnership, Steering Committee, and Work Groups of respective meetings.

Quorum

In order to conduct business, the Steering Committee will have a quorum. A Quorum is defined as having at least 51% of the Steering Committee (and/or alternates) present and a representative of either the City of Boerne Project Team or the TCEQ.

Materials Distribution

The Watershed Coordinator will prepare and distribute the agenda and other needed items to members of the Partnership. Distribution will occur via email and the project website, unless expressly asked to use U.S. Mail (i.e. member has no email access). To encourage equal sharing of information, materials will be made available to all. Those who wish to distribute materials to the Steering Committee or a Work Group will ask the Watershed Coordinator to do so on their behalf.

Evaluation of Stakeholder Input

All meeting minutes will be documented and posted on the project web page. The documentation of topics, ideas and opinions discussed at meetings and workshops will allow stakeholders to see how their involvement has affected the planning process over time.

Media Protocol

If Partnership or Steering Committee members have an issue regarding the watershed planning process, they will voice their concerns to the Watershed Coordinator instead of exploiting media outlets.

Selection of Lead Organization for the Implementation/Update Phase of the WPP

The City of Boerne Project Team and the Steering Committee will determine what organization will provide oversight and coordination for the voluntary implementation of the Upper Cibolo Creek Watershed Protection Plan.

Public Outreach and Education

An outreach campaign will be initiated to create public awareness for the UCCWPP. A variety of methods will be utilized to distribute information about the protection plan and ways in which individuals can become involved. The outreach program will educate citizens about local watershed features, NPS pollution, watershed function and how individual actions in urban and rural settings effect water quality.

Media Relations

Proactive Media Outreach/Response

Proactive opportunities for media outreach will be identified by the Watershed Coordinator. The use of press releases to announce Partnership meetings, events, general information and opportunities for public involvement are examples of media based proactive outreach.

Protocol for Inquires, Misinformation

In order to ensure consistent, well informed answers are provided to media outlets, all media inquires regarding the WPP should be directed to Ryan Bass, Watershed Planning Coordinator with the City of Boerne. Members of the Watershed Partnership or Steering Committee will not speak on behalf of the Partnership.

Inquires from the general public, elected officials, or state/federal agencies will be answered by the Watershed Coordinator in a timely manner (typically 1-3 business days). Most often, routine inquires will be responded to with previously approved material/information. Project partners and Steering Committee members will be notified of all inquires at Partnership meetings unless there is potential for an immediate or significant impact on the program.

Misinformation could be an issue throughout the planning phase of the WPP. There are several ways the Steering Committee and Watershed Coordinator can choose to handle misinformation depending on the source and nature of problem. Whether misinformation is being spread unintentionally or through an organized effort, these issues should be evaluated on a case by case basis. Members of the Partnership should stay informed of public opinion and news regarding the WPP. The City of Boerne Project Team will determine if misinformation should be addressed through public response or if a phone call to the source will suffice. In some situations, no response may be the best way to deal with the issue.

Media Database

The Watershed Coordinator will maintain a regularly updated database of all media coverage regarding the WPP. The database will include names of reporters and editors with major media outlets that reach residents directly affected by the WPP. These data will include local newspaper, radio, television, organizational newsletters and online sources.

Press Kit

The City of Boerne Project Team and the Steering Committee will develop a standardized press kit that communicates key elements of the WPP. The press kit will be a working document that can easily be adapted to meet the needs and answer specific questions for the media, elected officials and interested citizens. The press kit will include factsheets, maps, graphics, press releases and documents designed to answer local water quality questions or provide general project related facts. In order to inform the public about the credibility and experience of project partners involved in developing the WPP, background information will be provided on each participating organization.

News Releases

News releases will be developed on a regular basis throughout the planning phase of the WPP to communicate key periods in the plans development. Press releases will be produced by the City of Boerne Project Team and added to the press kit when published.

Newsletters

The UCCWP will develop an electronic bi-annual newsletter where information and updates regarding the WPP will be posted. The project newsletter will address local watershed issues, local natural resource facts/history and general water quality and conservation topics. Information regarding the WPP and events occurring within the watershed will also be included in local partner newsletters.

Opinion/Editorial Articles

When appropriate, the City of Boerne Project Team will develop opinion pieces to be published in local newspapers regarding aspects of the WPP at key junctures in the plans development, or when the general public seems to have questions or is misinformed.

Dedicated Spokespersons

Determining Spokesperson

The City of Boerne Project Team will assign a primary and secondary spokesperson to represent the Watershed Partnership. Spokespersons for the project will share a unified message regarding the WPPs development and issues the plan will address. Partnership spokespersons will communicate both technical and general information to interested parties.

Internet

Project Website

The City of Boerne will construct and host a project website with access through the City of Boerne homepage. The website will provide an overview of water quality concerns within the watershed and links to project partner websites. The website will also contain information regarding development of the WPP; including media coverage, maps, factsheets, photos, meeting agendas and meeting minutes.

Advertising

To promote events related to the WPP there will likely be a need to advertise. Advertising will ensure appropriate information is being disseminated to constituents and that public participation is encouraged at every opportunity.

Times when advertising may be required include:

- *Public Notices* – to properly inform the public of upcoming public meetings
- *Events* – to raise awareness for forums or other events that offer the public an opportunity to obtain accurate information about the WPP and have concerns addressed.
- *Education Issues* – to help communicate specific points that may come under particular scrutiny or be a focus of misinformation.
- *Emergency Action* – when crisis issues need to be addressed immediately via advertising.

Methods Utilized for Public Outreach and Education

- UCCWPP website and Facebook page
- Electronic mail
- Direct mail, newsletters
- Posters
- Local newspaper advertising and inserts
- Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping
- Verbal communication
- Displays and exhibits
- Public notices
- Community calendars

Glossary

EPA - Environmental Protection Agency

SARA - San Antonio River Authority

Stakeholder - those who make and implement decisions, those who are affected by decisions made or those who have the ability to assist with the implementation of decisions.

NPS (Pollution) - Nonpoint Source Pollution

TCEQ - Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

UCC - Upper Cibolo Creek

UCCWPP - Upper Cibolo Creek Watershed Protection Plan

UCCWP - Upper Cibolo Creek Watershed Partnership

WPP - Watershed Protection Plan

Figures

Figure1. Upper Cibolo Creek Watershed located in southern Kendall County, Texas.

