

# **Meeting Summary:**

## **Improving Austin Streams Implementation Plan Update**

December 16, 2021, 1–3 P.M., via Zoom

### **Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review and Updates**

After a brief welcome, each participant introduced him/herself. Ms. Schwartz then reviewed the meeting agenda. New participants to the IAS effort were introduced.

### **Presentation and discussion by Dr. Stuart Reichler of U.T. study of fecal indicator bacteria in Waller Creek**

Dr. Reichler from the University of Texas Urban Ecosystems Research Group provided highlights of a study the group has been conducting of fecal indicator bacteria comparing the relative quantity of human and dog fecal bacteria in the following Austin creeks: Bull Creek (heavy use for human and dog recreation and swimming); Walnut Creek (in North Austin, including an area around a dog off-leash area), Shoal Creek, Waller Creek, Blunn Creek, and Bear Creek (primarily rural). All samples are taken during base flow (at least four or more days after rain). Dr. Reichler noted that the data is preliminary and needs additional sampling and analysis before he is confident in the conclusions. Some key points from the presentation and discussion with Dr. Reichler follow.

- Fecal bacteria exceed EPA-mandated levels for both contact and non-contact recreation.
- Dog fecal contamination is rarely detected, even when sampling includes dog off-leash areas, except for Bull Creek.
- Human fecal contamination is prevalent in several of the Austin creeks; some possible sources are leaking sewers or people defecating in the streams.
- Other sources of contamination could include birds, rats, racoons, and other wildlife, but these wildlife sources would not likely lead to widespread levels of contamination.
- No trend analysis has been conducted. Waller Creek has the longest sampling period (five years), but sampling has begun on other streams more recently.
- No large increases in fecal contamination have been noted from recirculation of water from Lady Bird Lake through the Waller Creek tunnel.

Future plans for the studies include replication of sampled creeks, sampling additional creeks, and adding Bacterial Source Tracking to identify other species. The presentation is posted on the [Austin stakeholder group webpage](#).

### **Consider timeline for I-Plan update and final approval of Stakeholder Group Guidelines**

Stakeholders approved the I-Plan revision process and timeline and the Stakeholder Group Guidelines.

## **Presentation and discussion of Data Work Group Report**

Andrew Clamann reported on the Data Work Group's two charges: to gather and review existing data, and to determine if additional data is needed. The Data Work Group, which includes Yanjun Chu, Julie White, Becca Oliver, Tracy Janus and Andrew Clamann, identified data of relevance from the following sources:

- SWQMIS data (collected under quality assurance procedures)
- CRWN volunteer data (Walnut and Waller creeks)
- City of Austin reports and additional data (not included in SWQMIS)
- University of Texas reports and data

Mr. Clamann noted that the trend lines for fecal contamination were downward. The work group presentation also acknowledged a gap in data available from SWQMIS but noted that it can be filled with data from the City of Austin that is of the same quality as the SWQMIS data. Mr. Claman pointed to a study of particular interest, [Towards a Mathematically Based Assessment of Bacteriological Water Quality in Austin's Streams](#).

The Data Subcommittee provided these findings related to its charge:

- Existing data available appears adequate for evaluation; and
- No additional data is recommended

Mr. Clamann's [presentation](#) also noted preliminary plans to reduce bacteria from City of Austin, Texas Department of Transportation, and University of Texas at Austin, all of which all have representatives on the Data Workgroup.

## **Presentation by Louanne Jones of TCEQ and discussion of how MS4 Stormwater Management Programs will be integrated into the updated I-Plan**

Ms. Jones noted in her [presentation](#) that four of the organizations involved in the I-Plan update have MS4 Phase I and/or II permits for their stormwater systems: City of Austin, Travis County, University of Texas at Austin, and Texas Department of Transportation. The purpose of an MS4 permit is to reduce discharges of pollutants in stormwater to the "maximum extent practicable." Permit holders must develop and implement stormwater management programs (SWMPs) that describe the stormwater control practices they will implement to minimize the discharge of pollutants.

SWMPs specify the best management practices (BMPs) needed to meet several minimum control measures (MCMs) that, when implemented in concert, are expected to result in significant reductions of pollutants discharged into receiving water bodies.

Organizations' SWMPs must include either the management measures from a previously approved I-Plan or alternative, equivalent BMPs that address the same source. Organizations must incorporate any new management measures in their updated I-Plan into their SWMPs during the next MS4 permit cycle (or sooner if desired).

The information from the SWMPs may be included in the updated I-Plan in one of two ways.

Organizations may choose to list and describe all the BMPs that are intended to reduce bacteria loads from their most recent SWMPs approved by TCEQ.

Organizations may, instead, incorporate their SWMP measures by reference. If using this approach, organizations should provide a general description of the types of bacteria BMPs in their SWMPs, list all their MS4 permits and authorizations, and make their SWMPs readily available to the public on a website and include a link to that site in the I-Plan. Organizations are asked to try to establish a website link that does not change with SWMP updates.

In response to a question, Ms. Jones noted it was not necessary for the I-Plan and the SWMP to be exactly the same. However, stakeholders should bear in mind that any voluntary stormwater measures will become control actions. In response to another question, Rebecca Villalba of TCEQ noted that organizations should not be concerned about any temporary inability to reach their goals that may have resulted from COVID-limited activities, as long as at the end of the five-year permit term the action is completed. Ms. Jones noted that the Austin area MS4 SWMPs due dates and the I-Plan update are closely timed—only about a year apart.

### **Identify next steps for moving forward, next meeting agenda, and meeting dates**

Ms. Schwartz pointed out some of the next steps in the I-Plan revision process, including organizations' review of what current management measures to retain, modify, delete, or move to control actions. She also noted the steps of considering measures to add to the I-Plan from organizations' current practices and identifying other new measures to add to the I-Plan. Stakeholders will accomplish the following steps before the next meeting, which will be in late February:

- Organizations responsible for management measures in the current I-Plan will complete a table showing whether they propose to retain, modify, or delete the measures, or move them to control actions.
- Stakeholders formed the two subcommittees listed following to allow similar types of organizations to share information and discuss possible management measures or control actions.
  - Permit holders (contact person is Julie White)
  - Organizations without permits (contact person is Alex Ortiz)

Persons wishing to join these subcommittees should contact the appropriate point person.

### **Wrap-up: meeting review and action items**

Action items are noted following the list of attendees.

## Attendees

The quorum requirements were met at this meeting. *(For purposes of determining a quorum, Coordination Committee representative or their alternates are indicated with an asterisk.)*

Julie White*	City of Austin, Water Protection Division (WPD), TPDES
Andrew Clamann	City of Austin, WPD
Rebekkah Pepper*	Austin Water
Yanjun (Julia) Chu	Austin Water
D'Anne Williams*	City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department
Julia Hill	City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department
Becca Oliver	UT Austin Environmental Health Service
Tejashri Kyle*	UT Austin Environmental Health Services
Stuart Reichler	UT Austin (guest presentation)
David Peyton*	Travis County Transportation and Natural Resources
Tracey Janus*	Texas Department of Transportation
Sierra DaSilva*	Shoal Creek Conservancy
Lisa Benton*	Lower Colorado River Authority
Aaron Richter	Lower Colorado River Authority
Joyce Basciano*	Austin Neighborhoods Council
Susana Almanza*	People Organized in Defense of Earth and Her Resources
Chris Perkes*	Waterloo Greenway Conservancy
Luke Metzger*	Environment Texas
Alex Ortiz*	Lone Star Chapter, Sierra Club
Louanne Jones	Project Manager, TMDL TCEQ
Nicole Hall	Team Leader, TCEQ TMDL Program, Office of Water
Lori Hamilton	Deputy Director, TCEQ Water Quality Planning Division, Office of Water
Kerry Nieman	Manager, TCEQ Planning and Implementation Section, Office of Water
Micayla Coleman	Permit Writer, TCEQ Stormwater Permits
Rebecca Villalba	Team Leader, TCEQ Stormwater Permits
Suzanne Schwartz	Facilitator

**Action Items**

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Who</b>
Determine if the following organizations are willing to serve on the Coordination Committee: a. Keep Austin Beautiful (WHO) b. Business interest/Chamber of Commerce?	ASAP	a. Suzanne Schwartz b. Hank Smith?
Update water quality charts with data available to fill gaps	Feb. meeting	Data Work Group
Perform a high-level review of SWMPs for data that may be useful to the update and report to the Data Committee.	12/15/21	All organizations with MS4 permits or authorizations
Review current I-Plan to determine which measures to include in update (with or without modification).	1/14/22	All organizations with I-Plan measures
Identify new measures to add to I-Plan from current practices.	2/1/22	All organizations
Identify other new measures to add to I-Plan.	3/15/22	All organizations