

Cypress Basin Clean Rivers Program

3 23 2021 Stakeholders meeting

Minutes

Due to continued concern about Covid this meeting was again held virtually via Zoom.

Robert Speight welcomed all the participants and Randy Rushin gave a quick tutorial of the features of Zoom in case anyone was not familiar with them.

There were 32 people who registered for the Zoom meeting ahead of time but only 29 actual virtual attendees present including Jenna Wadman, TCEQ CRP Project Manager for the Cypress Basin.

The first presentation was by Tim Bister, TPWD Inland Fisheries District Leader. His staff works on all the lakes in the Cypress Basin to maintain and improve fish habitat. Tim gave a lake by lake update on the status of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) in the basin and the effects the recent snow storm and extreme cold weather had on those plants. Caddo Lake has the most problem with aquatic invasives due to the large amount of Giant Salvinia on that lake. Lake O the Pines has a smaller but well established population of Giant Salvinia now. Ellison reservoir and Town Lake in Mt. Pleasant are the latest to have Giant Salvinia.

Mandi Gordon with University of Houston, Clear Lake was next. She is working in a number of basins in East Texas on several species of concern such as the Alligator Snapping Turtle and the Western Chicken Turtle. She gave a presentation showing the historical range of both species and demonstrated a web reporting tool that stakeholders can use to report sighting of either of these turtles.

Randy Rushin with Water Monitoring Solutions went over our Basin Highlight Report in detail. The BHR is longer than normal this year due to the need to report on several special studies that were conducted in the basin the last few years. These studies were for Sulfate and Nitrates in the upper basin as well as pH in Lake O the Pines. The pH study report is preliminary as this is just the first year of a 2 year study.

The results of the Sulfate and Nitrate studies shows concentrations above screening levels near the outfall of the Pilgrims Pride (JBS) WWTP. It was noted however that these concentrations are below the amounts Pilgrims is permitted to release and that at some stations it appears that non-point sources are contributing as well.

For a more in depth look at these results the Draft Basin Highlight report can be found under the CRP tab on our website www.netmwd.com

Robert Speight gave the group an update on the Total Phosphorus Load Agreement. The Total Phosphorus Load Agreement is a contract between the Cities and Industry with WWTPs that flow in above LOP, as well as NETMWD and TCEQ. This contract states all the WWTP's must reduce their phosphorus output by 56% of their permitted amount and will submit data to NETMWD on their flow and Total Phosphorus releases each year and NETMWD will track these releases to ensure compliance with the TP reductions outlined in the TMDL. Robert presented a graph showing the last 5 years of data for each plant. The data shared by the entities shows an overall reduction in Total Phosphorus well beyond the requirements of the TPLA. Most of this is due to the \$11 Million worth of improvements that Pilgrims has made to its WWTP. Three of the entities had levels that were above their allocated limit. Walt Sears, NETMWD executive director, led a discussion on the program and how the Pilgrims efforts had gone above and beyond their requirements resulting in an overall reduction of TP in excess of 78%. Walt asked the stakeholders if there was a desire to impose penalties on this entities. There was no desire indicated.

Next, Robert gave a breakdown of the Onsite Septic Facilities program that NETMWD administers for Marion, Upshur, Morris and Cass counties.

Robert then opened the floor for questions and or comments.

Lisa Fisher with TCEQ commented that the operations at the Pilgrims facility had improved dramatically after JBS took over and complimented them on the efforts the company put into reducing their phosphorus output.