

Cypress Basin Clean Rivers Program

3 38 2017 Stakeholders meeting

Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 10 am at NETMWD Executive Offices in Hughes Springs Texas. There were 23 attendees present and Kelly Rodibaugh, TCEQ Clean Rivers Interim PM participating via Teleconference.

Robert Speight, NETMWD Team Leader for Water Quality thanked everyone for attending and asked everyone to introduce themselves and share their interest in the Basin activities.

The first presentation was the 2016 Basin Highlight Report update by Randy Rushing with WMS. Randy went over the 2014 IR, new listings, listings that had dropped off and sampling locations in the Basin. He mentioned the ongoing battles with aquatic invasive species such as Zebra Mussels and Giant Salvinia. He also talked about our upcoming Basin Summary Report for FY 2019 explaining that would be the time when we compile all available data and look at trend analysis for things such as DO, Bacteria, etc.

The next presentation was an Overview of USGS's work in Water Quality by Dr. Christopher Churchill. Dr. Churchill has done extensive research on Zebra Mussels and he shared a lot of his work on that subject. USGS is starting to look at Cyanobacteria and Taste and Odor compounds in Texas reservoirs, including Lake O the Pines (LOP). He covered what has been done to date on this subject as well.

The third presentation was on the Pilgrims Pride WWTP upgrades and its resulting effect on Water Quality. Joe Pease, Regional Director for UBS, which owns Pilgrims gave the update. Pilgrims spent almost 3 years and 10.9 million dollars to upgrade their WWTP. They cleaned out and enlarged their holding ponds during this upgrade, removing approx... 30 million gallons of sludge and relined the ponds and added a cover so it was a closed system. The results of this upgrade has been a lowering of the output of Total Phosphorus to the creek. Pilgrims has a permit limit of 44,600 lbs. of Phosphorus per year and with these improvements they are down to under 12,000 lbs. per year. They still have Sulfate and Nitrate/Nitrite issues but they are aware of these and are actively working towards lowering those numbers as well.

Next up was Lucas Gregory with TWRI. Lucas has a project monitoring Water Quality for a National Water Quality Initiative program in Camp County. Lucas and his team monitor WQ in 2 stream sites and a number of sites with different land uses. The NWQI is a program for landowners, producers, etc. to do certain practices on their land to help Water Quality. Lucas reported some bad news as well, the NWQI program has not received enough participation from local landowners enrolling in these practices to make the project worthwhile to NRCS. NRCS intends to shut the program down in our area for this reason. Lucas would like to keep his monitoring going and is looking for a funding source.

Tim Bister, District Fisheries Biologist for Texas Parks and Wildlife gave the next presentation. His staff works on all the lakes in the Cypress Basin looking at fish populations and habitats. They also monitor aquatic invasive species on these lakes. Tim gave a lake by lake update on activities and the amounts of each invasive species on the lakes and any control efforts that took place within the last year. 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 had a number of instances with Giant Salvinia being brought in on boat trailers from other lakes but thanks to USACE personnel who regularly patrol all the ramps at the lake these infestations have been spotted quickly and abated by them and TPWD personnel by physically removing the plant material, booming off the ramps and applying herbicides to the areas. Tim reported that a group of property owners on Ellison Reservoir, aka Lone Star Lake, raised \$40,000 to hire a contractor to spray Hydrilla in their lake. NETMWD and USACE have an MOU to control invasives on Lake O the Pines and have treated Water Hyacinth in the upper lake the last 2 summers. TPWD has a contractor treating Giant Salvinia on Caddo and both TPWD and the Caddo Biocontrol Alliance (CBA) are raising and releasing biological control agents, (weevils) to help control the Giant Salvinia on Caddo as well.

Robert Speight gave the group an update on the Implementation Plan of the TMDL for Dissolved Oxygen on Lake O the Pines. Robert reported that as part of this I Plan, NETMWD is continuing to administer OSSF regulations and septic permitting in Upshur, Morris, Marion and Cass counties. Robert also shared the results of the 2016 Phosphorus monitoring. The Total Phosphorus Load Agreement is a contract between the Cities and Industry with WWTPs that flow in above LOP, NETMWD and TCEQ. The contract states all the WWTP's must reduce their phosphorus output by 56% of their permitting amount and will submit data to NETMWD on their flow and Total Phosphorus releases monthly and NETMWD will track these releases to ensure compliance with the TP reductions outlined in the TMDL. Robert showed the spreadsheet used in this tracking. 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 improvements that Pilgrims has made to its WWTP.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:25 pm