

Meeting Summary: Improving Austin Streams Implementation Plan Update

August 17, 2021, 1:00-3:00 p.m. via TEAMS

Welcome and Introductions

Louanne Jones of TCEQ welcomed participants. Suzanne Schwartz, facilitator, reviewed the agenda. Each participant introduced him/herself. Ms. Schwartz then reviewed the meeting agenda. She noted that for future meetings, supporting material will be posted on the Improving Austin Streams (IAS) update webpage for easier distribution.

Discuss General Plan for Moving Forward

Ms. Schwartz provided an overview of a flow chart as a proposed process for moving forward with the IAS update, noting that several of the steps were being started at this meeting, including discussing needs for additional data, understanding the management measures in the current I-Plan, and reviewing sources of pollution. Ms. Jones clarified that TCEQ's review of the updated plan would be conducted by herself, another senior project manager and the TMDL team leader, and possibly by the section manager. The group discussed what data was available to show where water quality was improving and what was happening/not happening in areas where water quality was not improving. The group noted there is generally no regulatory enforcement over nonpoint source pollution, which is the predominant source of pollution in these watersheds since there are not wastewater treatment plant discharges. The only nonpoint source regulation for urban stormwater is in the required Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits, which are held by City of Austin, Travis County, University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin), and Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT).

The group informally agreed to use the process suggested in the flow chart, and suggested adding a timeline.

Discuss How the Group Will Operate

Participants discussed several elements of the group's operation, based on review of the operating guidelines of the previous IAS effort and other options.

Goal of the IAS update effort.

Participants reviewed the goal statement that was approved for the initial I-Plan effort:

To develop and implement strategies to reduce fecal contamination such that the affected watersheds fully meet contact recreation water quality standards.

Participants generally agreed that this goal statement would guide their efforts to update the I-Plan., with the following modifications:

- Adding an evaluation element to the goal.
- Possibly adding a target date for meeting water quality standards. It was noted that four of the five stream segments were trending positively for water quality improvement. The group discussed that the date should not be set arbitrarily, agreeing to continue this discussion.

Ms. Schwartz will circulate a revised goal statement for participants to review and comment on before the next meeting.

Composition of Stakeholder Group/ Decision Making

The group discussed how the participants are now self-selected, sharing a common goal of reducing *E. coli*. The consensus process worked during the initial plan development. However, participants noted that when the I-Plan was developed and adopted, management measures were voluntary. Now there are regulatory strings attached because management measures (or equivalent measures) will become required components of Stormwater Management Plans (SWMPs) that entities with MS4 permits must create and submit for TCEQ approval as part of their permit updates every five years. Some entities noted that while they were willing to do more to reduce *E. coli*, they were cautious about putting additional measures into the I-Plan for this reason. Some participants felt that those who would be responsible for a management measure should have a veto in the absence of consensus. Others expressed concern about the potential for an important management measure to be vetoed by an organization, and the value of more voices and dialogue in the decision-making process.

Ms. Schwartz will take the ideas discussed and draft a set of operating rules before the next meeting. Participants will be asked to review and send back comments for Ms. Schwartz to compile for discussion at the next meeting.

Review Sources of Bacteria Pollution and Identify Any Possible New Sources

Ms. Jones noted the following as sources of pollution:

- There are no domestic WWTFs discharging into any of the affected creeks. There is only one industrial discharger, whose discharge does not contain bacteria.
- Leaks or illicit discharge from centralized wastewater collection lines.
- Sanitary sewer overflows due to blockage, pipe leaks, or collapsed lines.
- Wildlife and unmanaged animals (including pet waste).
- Defecation from homeless people and camps and from people in parks and greenbelts without restroom facilities (regardless of homeless encampments).
- Failing onsite sewage facilities (septic tanks) (Not significant; only 894 systems within Austin jurisdiction, all in Walnut Creek watershed).

Participants discussed whether it would be possible to distill more information about the largest sources, and where the greatest problems occur in the watershed in order

to focus the I-Plan update efforts. Some participants noted that source tracking is not easy and is expensive, making it difficult to discern whether fecal material in the streams are human or animal. However, there are some areas where one source is predominant, such as Taylor Slough, which by its nature would be influenced by wildlife and pet feces and compromised wastewater laterals. On the other hand, Walnut Creek is influenced by a wider range of pollutants. Nina Anderson from UT Austin noted that some UT professors are sampling Waller Creek water quality, trying to differentiate *E. coli* from humans and animals. She will see if those professors will be able to share their work.

Overview of Existing Management Measures and Work During the Last Six Years

Riparian restoration

Grow Zones have been successful, but the amount of areas in which they can be utilized (generally parks or city-owned property) are limited and Grow Zones have now been implemented in all of those areas where feasible. There were no significant challenges in implementing this category of management measures, but the low hanging fruit may have been picked already (Grow Zones in parks, watershed protection ordinances). Volunteer recruitment and training related to Grow Zones was reported to be successful.

Wastewater infrastructure

The City of Austin reported it can't require connections to its sewage system unless onsite sewage facilities are failing, or if significant improvement are being made to a property, and only in areas where a wastewater main is available for the new connection. As a result, this approach has limited success. The partnership of Austin's Water Protection Division and Austin Water has been successful in identifying significant issues in Taylor Slough. UT Austin reported they have identified and fixed several breaks.

Domestic pet waste

City of Austin said it will provide this group with a presentation at a later meeting about its education plan. UT Austin noted that it has implemented a Scoop-the-Poop effort on Waller Creek, although this was not an identified management measure.

Resident outreach

Shoal Creek Conservancy noted that a large part of the recently approved Shoal Creek Action Plan is to provide resources to Creekside landowners for pollution reduction. They also noted that they have done a significant amount of resident outreach over the last few years while developing the action plan.

Stormwater treatment

Travis County noted that the adoption of management measures related to treatment and detention ponds has been very successful. They have trained municipal utility district staff on maintenance of ponds and riparian zones. The City of Austin noted success of inspections of ponds and dry-weather screening.

Identify Additional Data and Information Needed to Update I-Plan

In a quick brainstorming session, participants identified the following information they would like:

- Strategies that were discussed but not included in the 2015 I-Plan.
- Maps of the areas that include a roadway overlay.
- Best practices of I-Plans nationwide.
- Best management practices that work especially well for E. coli.
- Map of monitoring locations in the watersheds.

Wrap-up, Review of Next Steps

Vicki Read from Center for Public Policy at UT Law will send out a Doodle poll to explore a possible meeting date during the end of September.

Action Items

New from August 17, 2021 meeting

1. Suzanne Schwartz to develop a timeline for the I-Plan Revision Process to circulate for comments and revision before the next meeting.
2. Suzanne Schwartz to circulate a revised goal statement for participants to review and send back comments before the next meeting.
3. Louanne Jones to develop one or two maps of the impaired watersheds showing monitoring stations and a road overlay.
4. Suzanne Schwartz to draft proposed meeting guidelines to circulate for comment and revision before the next meeting.
5. Nina Anderson will contact UT professors about sharing data differentiating human and animal fecal contamination in Waller Creek.
6. Suzanne Schwartz to coordinate with Vick Read to send a Doodle poll for a late September meeting.

Pending from prior meetings

1. **Andrew Clamann**, City of Austin, will report on his review of missing data for 2011 to 2015.

Attendees

Julie White	City of Austin, Water Protection Division (WPD), TPDES
Andrew Clamann	City of Austin, WPD
Mateo Scoggins	City of Austin, WPD, Stormwater
Tammy West	Austin Water
Reyna Holmes	Austin Water
Soo Koon Soon	Austin Water
Yanjun (Julia) Chu	Austin Water
Becca Oliver	UT Austin Environmental Health Service
Tejashri Kyle	UT Austin Environmental Health Services
Irezama (Nena) Anderson	UT Austin Environmental Health Services
Bob Quinlan	Travis County Transportation and Natural Resources
David Peyton	Travis County Transportation and Natural Resources
Emily Ackland	Travis County Transportation and Natural Resources
Tracey Janus	Texas Department of Transportation
Kathleen Barron	Austin Parks Foundation
Ivey Kaiser	Shoal Creek Conservancy
Nina Rinaldi	Shoal Creek Conservancy
Hank Smith	Texas Homebuilders Association
Lisa Benton	Lower Colorado River Authority
Joyce Basciano	Austin Neighborhoods Council
Chris Perkes	Waterloo Greenway Conservancy
Adrienne Longenecker	Colorado River Alliance
Luke Metzger	Environment Texas
Louanne Jones	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)
Mindy McDonough	TCEQ Region 11 Stormwater Inspector, MS4
Boyd Guthrie	TCEQ Region 11 Environmental Inspector
Shawn Stewart	TCEQ (Region 11 Water Section Manager)
Suzanne Schwartz	Facilitator