



**Buffalo Bayou & Lower White Oak Bayou  
Federal Flood Damage Reduction and Ecosystem Restoration  
Study**

**INITIAL STAKEHOLDER GROUP (ISG) MEETING NOTES**

Tuesday, May 22, 2007

TCB, 5757 Woodway, Conference Room 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

**Introductions and Welcome**

Wayne Crull, study manager, welcomed the members of the stakeholder group as well as special guests from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Environmental Protection Agency, Texas Parks and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

**Economics Update**

HCFCDD, with TCB and CivilTech Engineering Inc., has been gathering and processing economic data for more than a year. The results are preliminary and still subject to technical review.

Damages can be measured in more than one way. The discussion focused on Average Annual Equivalent Damages (AAED), a measurement of the economic damages due to flooding. The preliminary estimate of AAED for the Buffalo Bayou and Lower White Oak Bayou study area is \$43 million. (Note this figure is preliminary and subject to change.) By comparison, the AAED for the Brays Bayou Study and White Oak Bayou Study are \$85 million and \$54 million, respectively.

The AAED provides:

- a) – the magnitude of damages serves as a checkpoint, that we should continue with the study to identify a flood damage reduction project.
- b) – a very general idea or guideline of what the maximum amount that the federal government might cost share in for a flood damage reduction project if an acceptable plan is identified.

The next steps for economics are to continue through the technical review process. Later this year, this information will help in the identification and evaluation of components and alternatives.

**Ecosystem Restoration (ER)**

Wayne Crull began a discussion of ecosystem restoration and the progress since the last meeting.

During the previous ISG meeting in April, a list of possible ER opportunities had been generated. That list was presented at this meeting as the “Initial Ideas List.”

Sumita Prasad recapped the process the study team took to determine a list of significant resources from the Initial Ideas List:

- 43 suggestions comprised the Initial Ideas List
- The first step in the process was to determine which ideas should be moved to the Local Projects List. If the idea did not fit both of the following descriptions, it was moved to the Local Project List. (The items on the Local Project List will be looked at again later in the federal study process.)
  - The idea is a restoration action, a natural resource or something that affects a natural resource?
  - The idea is related to water, wetlands, riparian, floodplain or other aquatic system

Each idea that fit both of these descriptions was then linked to a significant resource that is likely to occur along Buffalo Bayou and/or Lower White Oak Bayou and could benefit from the idea.

- Most significant resources were applicable to several ideas from the Initial Ideas List
- As a result, a total of 32 significant resources were identified. They were referred to as “candidate” resources for the ER part of the Study
- This list of candidates include four ecosystems and 28 species.
- The 32 “Candidates” were ranked by criteria of scarcity and uniqueness
- The three highest-ranked candidates were:
  - Wetlands Ecosystem
  - Migratory Birds
  - Riparian Ecosystem

A hand out was distributed listing the candidates. A binder containing the step-by-step processes of linking significant resources to the Initial Ideas List and ranking ER Candidates was made available for review.

Next in the process of ER is to determine which of the 32 Candidates are the best-suited for the Study. The study team will evaluate the candidates and make a recommendation(s) to the USACE.

#### Feedback from Attendees:

- ⇒ Support choosing candidates that have an umbrella effect (encompassing many significant resources) such as wetlands or riparian corridor
- ⇒ Significance of commercially-regulated species should be considered
- ⇒ Consider a pilot program for ER?, (example: creating a brackish marsh)
- ⇒ Before selecting the final candidates for the ER portion of the study, think about what is to be measured in the end. Example: How will the success of wetlands restoration be measured?
- ⇒ Uniqueness should consider a resource’s position within its trophic level (e.g. water snakes are not considered significant because of their roles as consumers within the food chain). Keystone species in the food web should receive additional consideration. Scarcity and uniqueness are recognized by institutional, technical, and public factors of significance.

⇒ Remember at all times, that according to USACE guidance our ER Goal is to improve degraded ecosystems and if possible, avoid focusing only on a single species as an indicator of the success for evaluating different alternatives.

**Next Steps (in the next 6 months)**

- (Carried forward from last meeting) At our next meeting, share examples in other areas of ER projects that have implemented or are underway (funded)
- Finish the work effort to select the focus for ER study efforts.
- Share this recommendation regarding the focus of the ER study effort with USACE, Galveston.
- Determine how ER will be evaluated and measured.
- Identify flood damage reduction components and ER components
- Conduct Public Scoping Meeting.

**Next Meeting**

To be determined – timeframe is Summer 2007.