

Meeting Notes

Upper Basin Water Quality Advisory Meeting via MS Teams

April 15, 2021 @ 9 a.m.

Scott McWilliams, UCRA Director of Operations, welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked those present to introduce themselves.

Water Quality Reports

UCRA - Scott McWilliams

LCRA staff - Lisa Benton & Dave Bass and

CRMWD staff - John Burch

Benton discussed a recent harmful algae event occurring in the Highland Lakes. In late February, when it was reported that a dog had died after playing in Lake Travis, testing confirmed the presence of toxins produced by blue-green algae. Subsequent testing in other Highland Lakes found toxins in Inks Lake and Lake Marble Falls. Testing indicates that the toxins are most prevalent in Lake Travis at this time, but it is considered likely that the toxin-producing algae is present in all Highland Lakes. Studies are on-going and until further research can be conducted, pets should not be allowed in areas where algae is prevalent.

More information is available on LCRA's website:

<https://www.lcra.org/water/quality/algae-in-the-highland-lakes/>

In general, data collected in the lower portion of the basin below O.H. Ivie in the past year has shown that waterways are overall maintaining good water quality. The Basin Highlights Report will be coming out in the next several months and will be providing more details on current impairments in the lower basin.

McWilliams asked if the toxins are present throughout the water column or just where it is actively growing. Benton said that tests have shown that the toxins are contained within the algae itself. In a few tests, only trace amounts of toxin have been detected in the water directly adjacent to the toxin-producing algae. The blue-green algae that are producing the toxins are benthic (growth stage is on the bottom of the lake in shallow areas) as opposed to planktonic (microscopic cells dispersed throughout the water column). Tests have shown that the toxin-producing species are present in all algae samples collected since February, so even if there are no toxins detected at the time of collection, the potential for toxins to be produced is there. This is why LCRA is advising that people and pets avoid contact with algae.

Burch pulled up a Regional Map showing where each agency collects data. CRMWD does not collect CRP Data. TCEQ, Midland, UCRA, TCEQ San Angelo all collect CRP data within the Upper Basin.

Ivie is currently infested with Zebra Mussels and has some Golden Algae. No recent outbreaks have resulted in fish kills.

Burch provided an overview of the most recent elevations in Spence, Thomas and Ivie as well as water quality information for the pump stations.

Lake level details may be found here: <https://www.crmwd.org/lake-levels/>

Water Quality Report may be found here: <https://www.crmwd.org/news/current-water-report/>

Due to maintenance on CRMWD's distribution system, withdrawals from OH Ivie are down and lake levels are currently holding relatively steady. River flows into the reservoir are essentially keeping up with evaporation. Though elevation in Lake JB Thomas is down, it still has the best water quality. Lake OH Ivie has also dropped in elevation from last year, though the water quality is good there as well. Additional information may be found here:

<https://www.crmwd.org/water-sources/surface-water/>

Discussion ensued regarding how salt cedar affects water quality. Burch stated that salt cedar concentrates salt in its leaves and when the leaves drop, salt is concentrated in the soil around the trees, which eventually makes it into surface

water bodies. Salt cedar leaf beetles continue to relocate from year to year and defoliate salt cedar where they are present.

Additional discussion followed regarding a question about whether there is a correlation of zebra mussels and harmful algae. Benton stated that there is not enough research to determine with certainty whether zebra mussels and the prevalence of toxin producing blue-green algae are correlated.

Burch asked if the algae issue in the Highland Lakes is affecting the taste and smell of the water. Benton said the City of Austin does monitoring for this, and to Benton's knowledge, it is not a concern right now. The current concern involves recreational use of the lakes.

Water Supply, Infrastructure Improvements & Regional Water Quality Issues- Allison Strube, City of San Angelo:
Due to an unforeseen conflict, the City of Angelo was unable to present today.

Report on the Status of the Flood Mitigation Program - Kathleen Ligon, Texas Water Development Board (TWDB)
Kathleen Ligon, Special Advisor to TWDB Executive Administrator, made a presentation about the Texas Flood Program. Ligon provided background on the TWDB Flood Activities and State Flood Assessment, discussed the outcome of the 86th Texas Legislative session and covered what is happening with new flood programming for the state. There are fifteen Regional Flood Planning Groups with initial meetings held in Fall 2020. Draft Regional Flood Plans are due to TWDB on August 1, 2022, the first regional plans will be due to TWDB in January 2023 with the First State Plan due to legislature September 2024.

The detailed presentation may be found on UCRA's CRP WQAC project webpage at:
https://www.ucratx.org/water_adv.html

Integrated Report Status & Updates--Robin Cypher, Water Quality Assessor, TCEQ
Cypher begin by saying that the 2020 Integrated Report has been approved. TCEQ is currently working on the 2022 draft report and coordinating information with other agencies tasked with providing data. The assessment should begin in May/June 2021 with data review in late summer/early fall. Public comment should be solicited in Fall 2021 and the report submitted to EPA in 2022.

UCRA Non-Point Source Project Updates, Current & Upcoming:
McWilliams provided updates on the three current NPS projects.

Robert Lee Project

The goal of the project is to determine the source of high chlorides in the Colorado River at site 18338 in Robert Lee. More than twenty apparent water wells located in Robert Lee have been identified. The next step will be to knock on doors to obtain landowner permission and conduct field monitoring of shallow groundwater. The project has been extended through February 2022 due to delays caused by the pandemic.

Brady WPP Implementation

The vortex separator was installed last summer and one monitoring event has occurred since then. COVID has caused numerous delays for this project and UCRA has requested an extension for an additional year. Ellen Groth discussed the challenges with the Education/Outreach initiative due to the pandemic. The last in person outreach event was in January 2020. A water bill insert was disbursed in Fall 2020 and an email campaign took place this spring. Materials are available on the project webpage - <https://www.ucratx.org/brady.html>. Groth is hopeful that she can resume in person events by the fall.

Concho River Bank Stabilization:

This is UCRA's most recent NPS project and is partnering with the City of San Angelo. UCRA partnered with the City on a previous bank stabilization project. The project is located on a stretch of the river between Johnson Dam and Concho Street. McWilliams is currently writing the QAPP and once it is completed and approved, diel monitoring can begin.

Jennifer Bronson, TPWD asked if any dewatering would be necessary. McWilliams replied that most of the work would take place on the bank and did not think the city would have to dewater. Bronson stated that there could be some permitting involved if the project necessitated dewatering. McWilliams said he would follow up with Carl White (COSA) about this matter.

Golden Algae Status and Other Updates from Lynn Wright, District Fisheries Biologist, Texas Parks & Wildlife (TPWD) Inland Fisheries Division

Wright said that it has been a quiet year for Golden Algae, and he believes we are still benefitting from the 2018 rains. There was a fish kill in Moss Creek, which always has moderate amounts of Golden Algae. Colorado City has the worst golden algae. EV Spence experienced low levels of toxicity with no major fish kills. There was none on the Colorado, Concho, Paint Rock or Mullins Crossing.

Benton asked about suspected Golden Algae fish kill in the Colorado at San Saba back in February. Wright stated that he had heard a rainfall event had flushed out any evidence of golden algae, and as a result TPWD was unable to confirm golden algae as the cause.

Jarret Louder, TCEQ asked what area Lynn Wright's office covers. Wright stated that his jurisdiction is east of OH Ivie to Brady in McCulloch County, but that it doesn't include Junction.

Wright & Burch discussed the unprecedented size and record number of Share Lunkers caught in Lake Ivie after the record cold in February.

Twin Buttes and Nasworthy will for the first time be included in TPWD testing for zebra mussel veligers this year. Proper boat cleaning is imperative to control the spread of zebra mussels. One member asked if two weeks is long enough to wait before you use your boat. Wright said it really depends on temperature. In the summer 3-4 days can be adequate while in the cooler months 10 days is better. Boats may also be cleaned with bleach or hot water pressure.

Coordinated Monitoring Meeting Review:

Last year due to COVID, it was determined the Coordinated Monitoring Meeting would be conducted via email. Benton said since there were not a lot of changes, the schedule can be managed via email this year as well. Anyone who is interested in the process or would like to know about specific monitoring sites may explore further at:

<https://cms.lcra.org/>

Opportunity for Comments and/or Questions:

McWilliams thanked everyone for participating, especially those presenting and asked if there were any other comments or questions. There was no further discussion or questions.

The meeting was concluded.

Upper Basin CRP WQAC Teleconference Meeting Attendees

April 15, 2021

Scott McWilliams	UCRA, San Angelo
Ellen Groth	UCRA, San Angelo
Nancy Blackwell	UCRA, Ballinger
Lisa Benton	LCRA, Austin
Dave Bass	LCRA, Austin
Robin Cypher	TCEQ, Austin
Becca DuPont	TCEQ, Austin
Jessica Johnstone	TCEQ, Austin
Jarrett Louder	TCEQ, San Angelo, Region 8
Kirk Fleener	TCEQ, Abilene, Region 3
Lynn Wright	TPWD, San Angelo
Jennifer Bronson-Warren	TPWD, Waco
John Burch	CRMWD, Big Spring
Kathleen Login	TWDB, Austin
David Villareal	Texas Department of Agriculture, Austin
Laura Lewis	Representative Charles Perry's Office
Kevin (Guest)	Affiliation Unknown