



WATERSHED REPORTS for the BAYOU PRESERVATION BOARD

July 2016

OVERALL

- At their quarterly meeting in April, the watershed reps continued their evaluation and update of their goals and objectives, and how they fit with the organization's overall goals and strategic objectives. The regular July meeting was cancelled due to summer scheduling challenges. The next regular meeting will be on October 10.

WHITE OAK BAYOU

Representative: Tom Gall/Bob Lee

Date: 7/19/2016

Planning and Policy Activities

- *WOBA Participation in Rice University Civic Innovation Incubator Workshop Program:* With funding from Rice University, WOBA has hired a Rice University undergraduate student, Ben Jones, as a summer intern to work on a research project identifying economic costs and incentives of restored waterways. In addition to helping out with planning our Fish-off event this fall, Ben has been doing research on the history of White Oak Bayou as well as restoration efforts on other urban waterways in the U.S. His goal is to assign qualitative values to the potential benefits associated with removing the concrete out of White Oak Bayou. Ben's research will culminate in a presentation to our members at our Annual Meeting in November.
- *Other Concrete Removal Activities:* In July, Commissioner's court approved an agreement between the Memorial Heights Redevelopment Authority and the HCFCDD to do a preliminary study on the effects of the removal of concrete from the White Oak Bayou channel. More on the progress of that study next time.

On-the-Ground Projects

- *White Oak Bayou Greenway Trail Report:* The trail missing link south of 11th street is now complete and connecting riders to many different neighborhoods.

New White Oak Greenway Trail segment from the new hike and bike bridge west of Shephard/Durham extending all the way downstream to the existing MKT (now called the Heights Hike and Bike Trail on Google Maps) trail (near Studewood Street) started construction is well along and is scheduled to be completed late fall of 2016. The TxDOT reconstruction will keep the full trail from opening until as late as December of 2017.

Another segment of the White Oak Greenway Trail extending from Alabonson Street to the City limits is now under construction and should be complete in early 2017.

The Segment of the White Oak Greenway that connects the downstream end at University of Houston-Downtown to the existing trail on the north side of the Buffalo Bayou has also started construction, with completion about this time in 2017. This segment includes a connection from the existing WOB Greenway to the Castillo Community center near Quitman Street and the nearby METRORAIL stop at Quitman and Main streets, and a connection directly to Main Street near the UHD METRORAIL stop.

By the end of 2017, the White Oak Bayou Greenway Trail will be complete from the confluence with Buffalo Bayou upstream to the City limits, with the exception of the segment under Yale Street.

Demolition of the historic Yale Street bridge commenced in April. White Oak Bayou Association representatives attended a public meeting in 2014 to encourage Texas DOT to incorporate design elements that would help to decrease flooding and facilitate pedestrian and bicycle traffic both on the bridge and on the trails passing beneath.

- *Tree planting/memorial:* On May 7, White Oak Bayou Association planted three bald cypress trees in the Half Moon Bayou detention basin (just downstream of T.C. Jester Blvd.), in memory of long-time WOBA member and secretary, Margaret Dower.
- *Trash Bash:* White Oak Bayou Association participated in Rivers, Lakes, Bays 'n' Bayous Clean It Like You Mean It *Trash Bash* at Little Thicket Park on Saturday, April 2.

Outreach/Publicity & Meeting the Rep Goals and Objectives (*Interface / Networking / Know Your Watershed*)

- White Oak Bayou Association participated in *Bayou Greenways Day* on Saturday, March 26 in T.C. Jester Park.
- White Oak Bayou Association held an outreach event on the White Oak Bayou Greenway Trail - *Breakfast Tacos at Half Moon Bay* – on the bayou between the UPRR rail yard and T.C., Jester Blvd., just north of the new hike-and-bike bridge, on Sunday March 20, beginning at 9:00 AM.

On May 10, Harris County Flood Control District issued its Immediate Report -- # 2 on the April 17-18, 2016 (Tax Day) Storm and Flood Information. According to the report water levels along White Oak Bayou averaged between 10% (10-yr) and 2% (50-yr) flood levels along most of the bayou, but “water levels from the headwaters east of FM 1960 to Jersey Village were the highest ever recorded, surpassing those of Tropical Storm Allison. From Jersey Village eastward to downtown Houston, water levels were similar or slightly lower than Tropical Storm Frances (1998).” HCFCD estimated that, of the 7,020 homes flooded in Harris County during the event, 1,270 (18%) were in the White Oak Bayou Watershed. HCFCD’s report on the May 26-27, Memorial weekend flood, issued July 5 does not indicate flooding in the White Oak watershed.