

## 2. Cypress Creek Stakeholder Committee

Within a watershed protection planning process, it is important to understand the needs, priorities, perspectives, and culture of the community and its stakeholders. Watershed stakeholders include anyone who lives or works in the watershed, or shares an interest in protecting its resources. Stakeholder involvement is an essential component of successful watershed protection efforts because it enhances cooperation, collaboration, and community participation. Stakeholders provide local insight about history, public concerns and values that help bridge scientific research and community-driven efforts. This watershed protection plan exists, in great part, because of the efforts of Cypress Creek's dedicated stakeholders and their work over the last several years.

### **2008-2010: Characterization of the Watershed**

Diverse stakeholder representation is fundamental to the continued success of the Cypress Creek Project and watershed protection planning. In order to represent these diverse interests, The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment worked with community members to reach out to key stakeholders who represented a broad range of perspectives. In the first phase of the project (2008-2010), 20 stakeholders were invited to participate in a stakeholder representation committee based on their background, expertise, and community involvement. These members were tasked with acting as liaisons to the community, and ensuring community engagement and participation. The first Cypress Creek Project Stakeholder Committee meeting convened on June 3, 2009 and was successful in developing and securing commitment from a Stakeholder Committee. This Committee identified topics of concern, selected chairs for various subcommittee groups, and nominated a Committee Chair. Ground rules and Subcommittee descriptions and work plans were developed (see Technical Reference Document for Ground Rules).

Subcommittee groups were created to target issues of concern within the watershed. Their topics were selected by the Stakeholder Committee at the initial meeting. Subcommittees included Water Quantity, Water Quality, Land Stewardship, Economic, Education and Outreach, and the project's Decision Support System. Subcommittee membership was comprised of Stakeholder Committee members, regional experts and concerned citizens within the watershed. Each Subcommittee designated a chair to present subcommittee activities, recommendations and suggested management measures at the Stakeholder Committee meetings. Subcommittee meetings were held monthly at various locations throughout the watershed and facilitated by The Meadows Center staff (See Technical Reference Document for Committee Representation List and subcommittee activities).

Efforts focused on identifying management strategies and areas for improvement to ensure the long-term integrity of Cypress Creek. Stakeholder Committee and Subcommittee membership was comprised of community members, local landowners, business owners,

subject matter experts in areas such as real estate, law, education, water quality, water quantity, conservation, environmental resources, education, and representatives from Wimberley and Woodcreek City Council, Hays County Commissioners' offices, Hays Trinity Groundwater Conservation District Board, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Texas Farm Bureau, The Nature Conservancy, Texas Agri-life Extension, Wimberley Valley Watershed Association, Wimberley Independent School District, GBRA, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board, Keep Wimberley Beautiful, Wimberley Water Supply Company, Wimberley Institute of Cultures, and more. Committee and Subcommittee representation included local realtors, lawyers, environmental consultants, developers, business owners, professors, various board members, retired teachers, master naturalists, rainwater collection experts, and local citizens. The results of initial Stakeholder Committee efforts included identification of potential future development strategies, approval of initial pollution potential results from the project DSS, the Cypress Creek Watershed Characterization Report, a draft Education and Outreach Plan, Public Participation Plan and management strategy suggestions from the Subcommittees for further development in 2011-2013. At the conclusion of the initial phase of the project, the Stakeholder Committee and subcommittees disbanded and revised their structure to include new community representation and committee members.

During this period, several documents with information about the hydrology, biology, known water quality and existing and potential water quality protection efforts were compiled and a Watershed Characterization Report was created. Initial modeling activities, including input data, methodology, calibration and results also were compiled into several documents. These resources were organized in a compendium (Technical Reference Document) and are referenced throughout this document. The Technical Resource Document can be found on the Cypress Creek Website, <http://cypresscreekproject.net/documents/cypress-creek-watershed-protection-plan/technical-review-documents/>.

### **2011-2014: Development of a Watershed Protection Plan**

The Meadows Center and previous stakeholder committee members identified potential candidates and alternates representative of local businesses, local land owners (rural and urban), local watershed protection organizations, local real estate developers, the City of Wimberley, the City of Woodcreek, Hays County, the regional groundwater district (HTGCD) and river authority (GBRA), as well as an expert in local water quality regulation and protection. Those individuals met on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and formed an official 12 member committee, with each member having an alternate representative to ensure adequate representation and participation. The initial Committee Chair was nominated and approved by unanimous vote to continue as Chair. See the Technical Reference Document for Committee Representation List and Revised Ground rules.

The Stakeholder Committee was tasked with reviewing specific management measures and BMPs that addressed the management strategies identified by the Subcommittees. They also



approved work plans for The Meadows Center, including technical aspects, research methodologies and assumptions related to WPP efforts. The Stakeholder Committee focused their efforts on developing and including a comprehensive ground/source water protection strategy in this watershed protection plan. Because the Cypress Creek WPP is a preventative plan and the future development scenario spans 40 years into the future, the Stakeholder Committee identified BMPs to be implemented in the first three years of this plan and approved a suite of BMPs to be included in a “toolbox” for long term and adaptive management to address water quality threats that arise as urbanization increases in the watershed. The Committee also formed a Technical Review Group, composed of Committee members and regional subject matter experts, to review and provide guidance regarding the WPP and supporting documentation. This form of the Stakeholder Committee continued until the WPP was submitted to TCEQ and EPA for review in December 2014 and throughout the addressing of comments in the fall of 2014.

### **2014-2015: Interim Committee**

The Stakeholder Committee determined that an interim committee would be necessary to continue WPP related activities for the time elapsing time between submission of the final WPP and its implementation (a period between 3 and 12 months). The Stakeholder Committee is expected to continue as an Interim Committee, utilizing its 12 member format and meeting monthly. The committee will utilize virtual meeting software such as Skype, Go To Meeting or Face Time as needed to ensure participation. If altered, the Interim Committee will maintain no less than five active members, including city and county representation. If necessary, the Interim Committee can call for the formation of subcommittees to work on WPP related activities.

Additionally, the Stakeholder Committee appointed an Interim Watershed Coordinator. The Committee, with assistance from The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment was tasked with the revision of the WPP to address technical comments from the TCEQ and EPA. The Technical Review Group will continue to meet as needed during the interim process and will assist with WPP revisions and Implementation planning. The Interim Committee was also be tasked with the following activities:

- Determining the structure, function, protocols and tasks of the Implementation Committee (and possible subcommittees),
- Preparing for activities associated with Implementation, including a work plan and request for 319 funding (TCEQ program funds),
- Continuing to engage key stakeholders, including water providers, the groundwater district, and technical advisors,
- Seeking additional sources funding for WPP related activities in the interim period,
- Developing draft documentation and materials for the public, including an executive summary and simplified version of the WPP for the community, and
- Preparing a strategy and plan for the public roll out of the WPP.

The Stakeholder Committee determined that the final WPP, Updated Watershed Characterization Report, relevant data, EPA guides, and other documents and resources will be copied to USB flash drives with the Cypress Creek Project logo and distributed to city, county and regional leaders, as well as NGOs and citizen based groups involved in watershed protection, planning and development as part of the public roll out. Materials will also be available on The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment and the Cypress Creek Project websites. Additional activities will be determined by the Interim Committee.

### **2015 and Beyond: Implementation of the Watershed Protection Plan**

After TCEQ and EPA acceptance of this submitted WPP, the Interim Stakeholder Committee will reform based on Committee determinations and will begin implementation of the Cypress Creek Project Watershed Protection Plan. Initially, the work plans and requests for funding developed in the interim period will be submitted to TCEQ and other potential funding sources. Once work plans have been approved and funding secured, The Implementation Committee and its partners will coordinate implementation activities, including application of BMPs, education and outreach activities, monitoring efforts, and additional modeling, as well as seeking continued funding for WPP activities and tracking expenditures.

The Implementation Stakeholder Committee will work with partners to undertake additional research needed to better understand, improve and protect ground/source water. These partners include The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, GBRA, HTGCD, USGS, USFWS, TPWD and WVWA. The Implementation Committee also will review data from monitoring and modeling efforts and implementation progress to determine plan adherence to milestones and success in reaching targeted pollutant load reductions and desired flow conditions.

Based on plan progress and success, the Committee will select and implement adaptive management procedures at regularly scheduled intervals, as determined by the protocols developed and approved in the Interim period. Information regarding specific implementation and adaptive management activities, as well as responsible parties, is presented in Section 6 Management Measures and in Table 21.