Public Participation Plan
Shoal Creek Watershed Action Plan
Updated by the Steering Committee October 9, 2018

Overview

This Public Participation Plan details the strategy for engaging the public and stakeholders in the watershed planning process for the Shoal Creek Watershed in Austin, Texas. It is a living document that will be regularly visited and updated during the stakeholder process.

The goal of the Shoal Creek Watershed planning process is **to identify creative, cooperative solutions to address Shoal Creek's challenges and create a resilient, healthy and safe creek** through the development of Shoal Creek's first Watershed Action Plan (WAP). The Shoal Creek watershed suffers from numerous and interconnected water-related challenges, including devastating flood events, poor water quality, erosion, loss of native habitat, and loss of productive spring flow.

The Shoal Creek Conservancy (SCC) will serve as the WAP project facilitator and is leading a coalition of public and private groups, including the City of Austin (COA), The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment (Meadows), and other local community organizations, to develop and implement solutions to these pressing issues through a Watershed Action Plan. This cooperative project is funded in part by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) through a United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant and the Still Water Foundation.

Stakeholder involvement is an essential component of the Shoal Creek WAP. It enhances cooperation, collaboration, and community participation. Stakeholders provide insight about public concerns and values that help bridge scientific research and community-driven efforts.

A Shoal Creek Watershed stakeholder is anyone who lives, works and shares an interest in protecting and restoring the Shoal Creek watershed. Diverse stakeholder representation is key to the success of the Shoal Creek Watershed Action Plan. The intent of this planning process is to be inclusive, open and welcoming to all.

Stakeholder Group Structure

Shoal Creek Watershed Stakeholder Committee (Stakeholder Committee) - General
- Anyone who lives, works and shares an interest in protecting and restoring the Shoal Creek watershed is invited to participate in the Stakeholder Committee.
- The Stakeholder Committee will be open to all and welcoming in nature.
- There will be no limit on the number of participants in the Stakeholder Committee.
- The Stakeholder Committee will be a non-voting entity.

Stakeholder Committee - Ground Rules
- All Stakeholder Committee members agree to be open to new concepts and respectful to other points of view.
- No audio or visual recordings of Stakeholder Committee meetings. Instead minutes of the meetings will provide a brief overview of the topics discussed and will be placed on the Shoal Creek Watershed Action Plan webpage.
- All meetings of the Stakeholder Committee will be open to the public with an opportunity for public comments at the end of each meeting.

Shoal Creek Watershed Steering Committee (Steering Committee) - General
- The Steering Committee will include representatives expected to include 8-10 key decision-making entities, whose buy-in is necessary for successful implementation.
- Steering Committee decisions and actions will be shared with the full Stakeholder Committee.
- Representation on the the Steering Committee will include:
    - COA, Watershed Protection Department representative
    - COA, Parks and Recreation Department representative
    - COA, Public Works Department representative
    - Academic Representative
    - Business Representative
    - Neighborhood Representative
    - Nonprofit Representative
    - City Council Representative

Steering Committee - By Laws
- As the project facilitator, SCC will work with partners to appoint a minimum of seven representatives to an inaugural Steering Committee.
- As the project facilitator, SCC will appoint its Executive Director to serve as member of the Steering Committee.
- Steering Committee members agree to make an effort to attend all meetings. If unable to attend, they will notify the project facilitator.
- A quorum of the Steering Committee, defined as more than fifty percent of the Steering Committee members, is required in order to take action on matters before the Steering Committee.
- The Steering Committee will seek officer nominations and will elect, by majority vote, a chair, vice-chair and secretary. Steering Committee officers will be elected to a term not to exceed 12-months. There are no term restrictions.
- The Steering Committee Chair will preside over all official decisions made by the Steering Committee. If the Steering Committee Chair is unable to preside over an official decision due to absence or recusal, the Vice-Chair shall serve as the presiding officer.
- The Steering Committee Secretary will serve as the presiding officer due to absence or recusal of both the Chair and Vice-Chair. The Steering Committee Secretary is responsible for documenting the minutes of official Steering Committee meetings. Draft minutes will be posted on the project website within 30 days and approved on or before the next scheduled meeting of the Steering Committee.
- Steering Committee officer elections will be held annually in October.

- Steering Committee members may request agenda items no later than two weeks prior to the next scheduled meeting of the Steering Committee. The project facilitator will work with the Steering Committee Chair to finalize the agenda. Best efforts will be made to post the agenda as soon as it is available.
- Any Steering Committee member may nominate a new member to serve on the Steering Committee by notifying the project facilitator and Steering Committee Chair of the nomination at least two weeks prior to the next scheduled meeting of the Steering Committee. The nomination will be considered valid and placed on the agenda of the next scheduled meeting of the Steering Committee if the new member nomination is:
    - Approved by the Steering Committee Chair
    - Seconded in writing or by email by another sitting Steering Committee member
  New Steering Committee members must be approved by a majority vote of the Steering Committee.
- From time to time it may be also necessary to conduct a vote to remove a member of the Steering Committee. A ⅔ majority vote of the Steering Committee is required to remove a sitting member of the Steering Committee. Any Steering Committee member may request a vote to remove another sitting Steering Committee member by notifying the project facilitator and Steering Committee Chair of the removal request in writing at least three weeks prior to the next scheduled meeting of the Steering Committee. **The removal request must include the signatures of two sitting Steering Committee members to be considered valid.** If the removal request is deemed to be valid, it shall be placed on the official agenda of the next scheduled meeting of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee member subject to the removal request must be officially notified in writing by the project facilitator and/or the Steering Committee Chair at least two weeks prior to the Steering Committee meeting that will consider the removal request. Both the Steering Committee member that initiated the removal request and the Steering Committee member subject to the removal request will be given up to 10 minutes to speak on the agenda item. Other Steering Committee members may also be allowed to speak on the removal request prior to any vote being taken.
- While the Steering Committee is expected to include representation from 8 to 10 key decision-making entities, there is no limit to the number of individuals that may serve on the Steering Committee at any point in time.
- Steering Committee members agree to be open to new concepts and respectful to other points of view.
- All meetings will be open to the public with an opportunity for public comments at the end of each meeting.
- Steering Committee voting may be conducted by email on time sensitive matters. A quorum of the Steering Committee members must participate for the vote to be considered valid.
- The goal is for decisions by the Steering Committee, other than membership and officer election procedures directly specified above, to be made by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, recommendations, including the amendment of Steering Committee Ground Rules will be decided by ⅔ majority vote of Steering Committee members.

Working Groups
- The working groups are small groups that delve into particular topics in detail.
- There will be no limit to the number of members in each working group; they will be open and welcoming.
- Working groups will provide summaries of meetings to the full Watershed Committee and Steering Committee.
- Working groups will make recommendations based on the information gathered and input from other stakeholders.
- Each working group will select a leader and a notetaker.
- Each group will facilitate, schedule and recruit members for their working group.
- The working groups will include:

- - **Water Working Group** - Includes flood, base flow, and water quality (combined to recognize interconnected nature)
  - **Land Stewardship Working Group** - Includes public and private property in upland and floodplain areas (consider combining with the Water Working Group at later date)
  - **Education and Outreach Working Group**
  - **Implementation Working Group** - Includes policies, funding and metrics
- The specific goals of each working group will be defined at the first working group meeting, but will include to:
  - Set long-term goals
  - Identify areas of concern
  - Identify causes/sources of the problem
  - Identify standards in place and areas for improvement
  - Identify and recommend best management practices that can be implemented

Stakeholder Meetings - Tentative Schedule and Topics

- **Tuesday, February 13, 2018 (Lunch, Downtown)**- Stakeholder Committee Meeting
  - **Topics:** Overview of Shoal Creek challenges, watershed planning basics, role of stakeholders
- **Saturday May 19, 2018 (Morning, Downtown)** - Stakeholder Committee Meeting Site Visit
  - **Topics:** First-hand tour of Shoal Creek challenges and opportunities
- **Tuesday, July 10, 2018 (Morning, Downtown)** - Steering Committee Meeting with Stakeholder Committee
  - **Topics:** Overview of project, discuss public participation plan, steering committee role and ground rules, technical update and discussion
- **Wednesday, August 29, 2018 (Lunch, Mid-Watershed)** - Stakeholder Committee Meeting with Educational Forum.
  - **Topics:** Project update led by Steering Committee, water quality educational presentation and discussion
- **Tuesday, October 9, 2018 (Lunch, Downtown/Mid-Watershed)** - Stakeholder Committee Meeting (11 to 12 noon) with possible Working Group Meetings prior. Followed by Texas Watershed Steward Workshop with Texas A&M AgriLife (12:30 to 4:30).
- **Wednesday, December 5, 2018 (Morning, Mid-Watershed)**- Steering Committee Meeting
- **Wednesday, January 30, 2019 (Evening, Downtown)**- Stakeholder Committee Meeting with Working Group Meetings prior. Include Educational Forum.
- **Tuesday, April 9, 2019 (Evening, Upper or Mid-Watershed)**- Stakeholder Committee Meeting. Possibly with Shoal Creek Tour.
- **Wednesday, April 24, 2019 (Lunch, Downtown)** - Working Group Meetings
- **Tuesday, June 11, 2019 (Morning, Downtown)**- Steering Committee Meeting
- **Wednesday, August 7, 2019 (Evening, Downtown)** - Stakeholder Committee Meeting with Educational Forum and Working Group meetings prior.
- **Tuesday, October 8, 2019 (Evening, Mid-Watershed)** - Stakeholder Committee Meeting with Working Groups
- **Wednesday, December 14, 2019 (Lunch, Downtown)** - Steering Committee Meeting

Targeted Outreach Plan

The project partners will employ the following strategies to increase public participation in the process and at meetings:

- Leveraging Partnership:
    - Email partner nonprofits and businesses to inform them of the meetings and ask them to assist with promotion through newsletter articles, facebook posts and other outlets
    - Send targeted emails to identified stakeholders asking them to attend committee meetings and participate in working groups
    - Ask stakeholder committee members to assist in identifying additional participants and spreading the word
    - Email neighborhood association presidents and/or newsletter contacts within the watershed to ask them to share information on nextdoor, through listservs and in newsletters
    - Request assistance from Council Members Pool, Alter and Tovo in promoting the meetings
    - Partner closely with the City of Austin Public Information Office to promote all meetings
- Utilizing Shoal Creek Conservancy Outlets:
    - Maintain a watershed action plan "microsite" on the Conservancy website
    - Promote the workshops on the Conservancy website homepage and events pages, blog posts
    - Post on Conservancy social media platforms including: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter
    - Include information in the Conservancy's e-newsletter each month, list includes over 1,500 email addresses with an open rate of 30%
    - Sent e-blasts to Conservancy's email lists of over 1,500 stakeholders
- Additional Strategies:
    - Consider hosting meetings in different locations within the watershed to increase geographic representation
    - Secure food donations to encourage attendance
    - Post meeting details on various Austin online calendars, including the Austin Chronicle, Eventbrite, do512, Austin Monthly, EcoNetwork, Community Impact, and Austin360
    - Distribute media advisories to all Austin media outlets prior to the meetings
    - Consider posting "yard signs" with information along Shoal Creek