

BRAZOS RIVER CONSERVATION COALITION HOOD COUNTY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 7

April 13, 2007

April Membership Meeting Report

On Tuesday, April 10th, the Chapter hosted its monthly public meeting at the Langdon Center Concert Hall. Twenty five members and guests attended and six new members came on board.

Guest speaker, James McAusland, Director of the Hood County Office of Environmental Health reported that he was appointed to the office in 2000 and was one of only three staff members at that time. The office now has two inspectors, an administrative clerk and an Office Manager in addition to Mr. McAusland. They approve and permit all new On Site Sewage Disposal Systems (septic systems) in Hood County and perform investigations into failing septic systems. He said that they also have initiated a five year inspection cycle for new systems to ensure continued performance compliance.

There are about 21,000 systems in the county, approximately 4,000 of which have been installed since Mr. McAusland took over. County code was recently changed requiring a three acre lot size for the installation new septic systems and water wells.

Mr. McAusland said that while there are many old systems still in use, some of which are failing, they do not present a significant threat to the water quality in the Lake Granbury or the Brazos River.

He indicated that considerable advancement has been made in the aerobic type systems to the extent that their use in new developments can be more eco-friendly and as efficient as central collection and large sewage treatment plants.

Responding to a question from the audience he said that private water wells should be tested for water quality yearly. His office will provide test kits to county residents and instructions for their proper use and submission to the testing lab. The kits are free and the test costs \$25.00. A member of his staff will do the entire process for \$90.00.

The office may be reached at 817-579-3288 or by e-mail at the address listed at the end of this newsletter under the heading "People And Websites Of Interest".

Following Mr. McAusland's presentation the members' attention turned to the condition of the lake after the recent rains. Several folks expressed concern about the potential hazards presented by the debris littering the lake and asked if any plan exists for its removal. It was reported that the BRA considers the situation a natural occurrence and that it will resolve itself naturally. That position was supported by at least one longtime lakeside resident who recalled two other similar incidents that had no long lasting affect on the lake. Others indicated that a more immediate effort to clear the debris is needed if water recreation activity is to be enjoyed this summer. It was also suggested that folks check with local environmental regulatory agencies, i.e., the BRA and the County Fire Marshal, before taking individual action. Some traditional methods of disposing of trash and debris may be violations of recent new environmental regulations and could result in serious fines. The chapter will try to find out what official or unofficial efforts are being planned, if any, and what we can do to help.

Scheduled Advisory Board Meeting

The BRCC-HCC Advisory Board will meet on Saturday, April 28th, at which time they will review the chapter's progress and consider future activity. Members may e-mail items for consideration by the board to Dominique Inge at dominique@swbell.net. or to Clark Lantz at clark33@earthlink.net. prior to April 16th.

Salt In The Brazos River

Josh Rosenfeld has learned that a non-profit local government corporation has been formed for the purpose of developing a project for the partial control of the natural salt pollution that originates in the Upper Brazos Basin. Josh is seeking an invitation to a briefing at the Somervell County Court House on Friday, April 27th, when the group will present a status report on the project. It appears that their plan is to siphon off the brine from the salt springs and limit or stop the flow of salt water into the Brazos and then process the salt for commercial use. The saline level of the river water may be a factor in the occurrence of Golden Algae blooms, diminishes its irrigation value and adds to the difficulty of processing drinking water.

People and Websites of Interest

BRCC-HCC Contacts:

BRCC-HCC Co-chairmen:

Josh Rosenfeld: jrosenfeld@charter.net

Billy Teels: dmzlfly@lakegranbury.com

BRCC-HCC website: www.brcchood.org

BRCC-HCC Membership Contact:

JoAnn Mathews

ja_matthews@charter.net (it starts ja_matthews)

Environmental Agencies:

BRA-Tiffany Morgan: www.brazos.org

tiffanym@brazos.org

TCEQ-Frank Espino: www.state.tx.us

fespino@tceq.state.tx.us

County Ext. Agent- Marty Vahlenkamp:

Hood-tx@tamu.edu

Hood County Environmental Health Office

James McAusland, Director:

jmcausland@co.hood.tx.us

Legislative Representatives:

U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards:

chris.kelly@mail.house.gov

U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison

E-mail through website at:

<http://hutchison.senate.gov/>

U.S. Senator John Cornyn

E-mail through Website at:

<http://cornyn.senate.gov/>

State Senator Kip Averitt:

becky.dixon@senate.state.tx.us

State Rep. Jim Keffer:

Trent.thomas@house.state.tx.us

County Commissioner Dick Roan:

joviex@charter.net

Jack D'Amario, Co-chair
Programs and Publicity Committee
jndamario@alltel.net

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