

SEAGRASS MANAGEMENT ISSUES PLAN

PRIORITY GOAL: To develop a sound management process that coordinates agency policies, public concern, and existing knowledge from research, to achieve effective seagrass conservation.

Priority Problem I: Seagrass beds are being lost or degraded, **and/or species composition is changing***.

***Need to understand the cause of species composition changes, since some changes naturally occur.**

Objective 1: Ensure water and sediment quality beneficial to the seagrass community

Strategy: Designate seagrass as a high or exceptional Aquatic Life Use in Texas Surface Water Quality Standards.

1. ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMING ENTITY	DATE COMPLETED
Accomplishments	“Use” designation for seagrass propagation in Chapter 307 of SWQS – Water-quality-related existing use which applies to salt water with significant stands of submerged seagrass.	TCEQ	July 2000
Not Accomplished			
New Issues			
Future Focus	Move forward with implementation. Utilization of statewide map from TPWD. Designate segments in WQS that have this use.		

Strategy: Designate water quality criteria for seagrasses in Texas Surface Water Quality Standards.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMING ENTITY	DATE COMPLETED
Accomplishments			
Not Accomplished	Work in progress	Researchers, TCEQ	
New Issues	Seagrass as an endpoint for nutrient criteria as part of ongoing GOMA efforts. i.e., their response to nutrient changes		
Future Focus	Defining and achieving the research/monitoring necessary for criteria	Researchers et al.	

	development		
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Strategy: Develop and implement water-based Best Management Practices.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMING ENTITY	DATE COMPLETED
Accomplishments	Laguna Madre research by Ken Dunton. Incorporated into LM supplemental EIS. Seagrass timing “Window” now utilized by Corps on more of a coast wide in dredging, particularly for open bay disposal. Greatly reduced frequency of dredging by Corps now for GIWW. Threshold for storm water permits reduced from 5 acres to 1 acre of land disturbance.	US. Army Corps ICT for Laguna Madre dredging US Army Corps TCEQ	
Not Accomplished	No coordination with USDA programs for farmlands regarding runoff issues, buffer strips, etc.		
New Issues			
Future Focus	Apply approach to other issues such as Water quality. Better coordination with USDA programs for farmlands regarding runoff issues, buffer strips, etc. Insure that follow up monitoring occurs to verify effectiveness of BMP’s and adaptively manage as necessary.		

Objective 2: Protect Seagrass beds through effective application of the mitigation sequence: avoidance, minimization, compensation.

Strategy: Develop consistent and effective mitigation guidelines.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMING ENTITY	DATE COMPLETED
Accomplishments	Being accomplished through permit review application process for direct impacts.	All permit review agencies	ongoing

Not Accomplished	Verbal tradition of 3:1 mitigation ratios		
New Issues			
Future Focus	Functional assessment tool to determine mitigation requirements/ratios.		

Objective 3: Restore/enhance create lost functions and values of seagrasses at a watershed/system-wide level, where feasible.

Strategy: Develop guidelines for site selection on a watershed/system-wide level, planting methods, and monitoring of seagrass restoration projects.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMING ENTITY	DATE COMPLETED
Accomplishments	Good planting methods have been developed (Fonseca et al.) Monitoring guidelines established		
Not Accomplished	No watershed planning to address seagrass		
New Issues	Consider the importance of other habitat types in meeting seagrass conservation goals.		
Future Focus	Assess success or failure of past mitigation efforts/sites.		

Objective 4: Design dredging or shoreline development projects to effectively reduce impacts upon seagrasses.

Strategy: Best management practices are needed to protect seagrasses while allowing economic development of coastal resources.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMING ENTITY	DATE COMPLETED
Accomplishments			
Not Accomplished			
New Issues			
Future Focus			

DELETE. ROLLS INTO OBJECTIVE 1, STRATEGY 3 AND OBJECTIVE 3..

Priority Problem II: Lack of Agency coordination (compromise?) or ways to resolve conflicting policies may prevent adequate management*.

Consider re-writing?

Objective 1: Develop consensus agreements or plans among users of the seagrass resource.

Strategy: Model consensus agreements or plans after examples such as the successful 1994 Beneficial Uses Group Plan for the Houston Ship channel deep-draft navigation project.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMING ENTITY	DATE COMPLETED
Accomplishments	Laguna Madre ICT Texas Seagrass Monitoring Workgroup Corpus Christi Ship Channel Improvement Project seagrass creation	US Army Corps TPWD	ongoing
Not Accomplished	No policies have changed		
New Issues	How to memorialize problem statement 1		
Future Focus	Define and formalize charge to Interagency Seagrass Monitoring Workgroup		

Objective 2: Facilitate agency policy coordination by improving communication and consistency of actions related to seagrass management.

Strategy: Develop and disseminate a brief, concise summary of applicable, existing written and unwritten agency policies, including footnotes and full summaries and text of enabling legislation, regulation, pertinent case law and administrative histories.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMING ENTITY	DATE COMPLETED
Accomplishments			
Not Accomplished	Not done		
New Issues			

Future Focus	Find and fund contractor		
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Strategy: Develop an updated data base on seagrass loss/damage, the amount of compensatory mitigation performed, and mitigation success rates in order to measure policy effectiveness.

KEY ISSUE – FOUNDATION FOR MULTIPLE OTHER OBJECTIVES

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMING ENTITY	DATE COMPLETED
Accomplishments	Some status and trends on broad scale and sometimes on a bay specific scale, but no data base created		
Not Accomplished	Generally not done		
New Issues			
Future Focus	Do		

Strategy: Review policies involving in-kind and in-system mitigation for current application by both management and research teams.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMING ENTITY	DATE COMPLETED
Accomplishments			
Not Accomplished	Not done		
New Issues			
Future Focus	Link to key Problem 1, Objective 2, Strategy 1 and Objective 3, Strategy 1		

Priority Problem III: Data synthesis and monitoring are insufficient for management decisions and need to be focused on management needs.

Objective 1: Conduct research and seagrass resource data acquisition and analysis that provide a sound technical basis for management actions.

Strategy: Establish a data clearinghouse for seagrass-related information.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMING ENTITY	DATE COMPLETED
Accomplishments	Using GOMA PHINS as data clearinghouse TNRIS for TPW (and others?) aerial photography and remote sensing databases	TPWD, TCEQ, TGLO, plus anyone else with data they're willing to share	ongoing
Not Accomplished			
New Issues			
Future Focus			

Strategy: Focus research on seagrass management needs for Texas estuarine systems, including such issues as seagrass status and trends, water quality criteria, adequate mitigation ratios, and best mitigation practices.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMING ENTITY	DATE COMPLETED
Accomplishments	Numerous but ongoing	Various	
Not Accomplished			
New Issues			
Future Focus	Continue with research as issues become		

Priority Problem IV: Public outreach is too limited to achieve the goal of public awareness.

Objective 1: Develop a sense of community stewardship and individual responsibility for the conservation of seagrass.

New Strategy: Coordinate better with individuals involved in conducting seagrass educational outreach.

Strategy: Write information clearly, accurately, and with common-sense ideas for the public sector, including schools, universities, stakeholders, and the general public.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMING ENTITY	DATE COMPLETED

Accomplishments			
Not Accomplished			
New Issues			
Future Focus			

Strategy: Listen to stakeholder ideas, exchange information, and make information relevant.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMING ENTITY	DATE COMPLETED
Accomplishments	RFBSSA: Seagrass Taskforce, TPW Website		
Not Accomplished			
New Issues			
Future Focus			

Move to discussion of future role of Seagrass Monitoring Workgroup

Strategy: Strengthen commitment of state and federal agencies to outreach programs.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMING ENTITY	DATE COMPLETED
Accomplishments	RFBSSA		
Not Accomplished			
New Issues			
Future Focus			

Recommend incorporation of strategies into Education/Outreach section of Plan.

KEY ISSUE: ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT LONG TERM MANAGEMENT/ROUTINE MONITORING STRATEGY.

KEY ISSUE: FIT SEAGRASS INTO ECOSYSTEM BASED MANAGEMENT PLANNING.