

East Texas Aquatic Work Group Meeting Summary

May 7, 2020

View the meeting online. The password is AquaticWorkGroup1

Updates:

Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

The Comptroller's office presented its proposed framework for the East Texas Aquatic Work Group. This [document](#) covers those subjects along with a timeline for identifying data gaps and moving forward on alligator snapping turtle research. The Comptroller's office is currently working on a timeline for the freshwater mussels.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) herpetologist Dr. Paul Crump gave a [presentation](#) on the current state of science for the alligator snapping turtle and what he sees as the most pressing research needs for understanding the status of the species in Texas. TPWD is currently funding work to revisit the sites surveyed between [1998 and 2001 by D. Craig Rudolph.](#)

Discussion:

Brigette Firmin, the Endangered Species Act Consultation and Classification Team Lead, and Karen Soileau, the lead biologist on the alligator snapping turtle Species Status Assessment for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Lafayette, LA, complimented Dr. Crump on his presentation and said the data gaps he identified were the same as those identified by the Service.

Eric Munscher shared lessons learned from his ongoing work studying the urban population of alligator snapping turtles in Buffalo Bayou in Houston. There is a recent [paper on that research](#) that is publicly available.

Dr. Crump proposed that an intensive year of range-wide sampling could produce significant data about the current distribution and populations of the species, especially if it was paired with collection and analysis of blood samples. This work could help serve as a baseline for long-term monitoring.

Next Steps

By June 15, look for a document from the Comptroller's office outlining the data gaps for the alligator snapping turtle and ideas for addressing them.

The discussion to prioritize data gaps for the alligator snapping turtle via WebEx is tentatively set for **Thursday, July 9, from 10:00 to 11:30 am.**

If you would like to immediately get involved with alligator snapping turtle research and contribute observations of the species, please visit the [Herps of Texas](#) page on iNaturalist.

If you would like to get involved with the current research on the [Western chicken turtle by the Comptroller's office, visit this site](#) or contact [Lauren Borland](#).

Please reach out to [Colin McDonald](#) or [Lauren Borland](#) at the Comptroller's office if you have any feedback or questions. We are especially interested in any comments about subjects you would like covered at future meetings such as options for conservation agreements.