

# CLARIFIER

A PUBLICATION OF GULF COAST AUTHORITY



SPRING 2021

## SNOWID 21

GCA EMPLOYEE HEROES COME THROUGH, AGAIN

Bayport Upgrade

Pandemic - One Year Later

Fazio Hale Takes GCA Forward



Trash Bash 2021

GCA Earns Industry Awards

Strategic Planning Kicks Off

## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

### What an amazing group of people!

As you can read elsewhere in this issue, employees were true heroes – working tirelessly and selflessly to fulfill our mission of protecting the waters of Texas through the twin challenges on an extended deep freeze and a pandemic. I, personally, would like to extend my admiration and my thanks for their dedication.

I also would like to extend a warm welcome to Liz Fazio Hale who took over the Chief Executive Officer /General Manager role late last year. She has already proven herself a capable leader through these difficult times. She herself credits the caliber of her team, but I know her steady hand has played an important role in guiding GCA through the turbulent currents.

In early 2021 Liz began spearheading a new strategic planning initiative, working with the Board and her leadership team. The final product is yet to come – and something we will share in the fall issue – but it is exciting to look ahead to what we want to achieve in the next half century and to establish a five-year roadmap to get us there.

As part of our forward thinking, we are pursuing initiatives in the current Texas legislative session to provide us with more tools for growth. Among these initiatives is the ability to provide financing for cross-border projects with the goal of becoming a national leader in providing low-cost financing to industry for environmental infrastructure.

A lot of good things are happening at GCA, but our success begins and ends with our talented team. Hats off to our “everyday heroes” – and to our customers and our communities as we work together to advance our mission.



**Franklin D.R. Jones, Jr.**



## CEO'S LETTER

### **I echo Chairman Jones' thanks to our wonderful team.**

I continue to be amazed – and thankful for – their skills, their dedication and their belief in GCA and its mission. We have been able to meet and overcome challenges like the pandemic and the deep freeze as we have professionals who know what to do, excellent crisis planning in place, and employees who step up to the plate. Thank you. Thank you.

As the new CEO/GM, I'm also excited about our strategic planning process, reflecting on our storied history and looking towards the future. My goal is to use "purpose" to help guide us through. This includes looking at our internal processes as stepping stones that will take us where we want to go. What tools do we have? Are they in the right place? How can we improve them to prepare us for the future?

For example, at one of our facilities we are currently conducting a thorough review of our debt management process to tailor future cash flows to support our infrastructure projects. Rather than undertaking projects in our five-year capital plan based on available funding, we are looking to proactively plan for funding to support our capital project goals.

At other facilities, we will continue to work collaboratively with our participants to identify needed capital improvements and plan for the financial support to achieve those projects. Much of this is accomplished through education and communication. Our legislative initiative aimed at providing us with more financial tools is part of the solution, as well.

This approach also will support our five-year strategic planning process. Using five-year planning increments towards a 50-year goal complements the state's water planning process, which I consider one of the best in nation. As Texas looks to increase water supply to support economic and population growth, we at GCA need to create the wastewater treatment capacity to support those increased volumes.

To complement our strategic planning, we are also undertaking a branding process and strategic communications plan to project a more consistent message about GCA and our mission.

My first six months as CEO/GM certainly have not been boring. But the experiences have only deepened my admiration for the caliber of our team. With their support and that of our Board, our customers and our communities, GCA has an exciting future ahead.



**Elizabeth Fazio Hale**



### **A Special Note of Thanks!**

I would like to recognize Phyllis Frank, Washburn Tunnel Facility Manager, as a Senior Editor and Contributor to this Spring 2021 *Clarifier* publication.

# SNOVID 21: GCA Employee Heroes Come Through, Again

Thanks to our employees, not a pandemic, not an unprecedented freeze, not floods nor an active 2020 hurricane season can deter the GCA team's commitment to protecting the waters of Texas. The recent winter storms Uri and Viola showcased the unwavering commitment and dedication of GCA employees, once again.

"I call them everyday heroes," said CEO/GM Liz Fazio Hale.

"I recognize every day the great and talented team that we have working at the Authority, but when you have events like the deep freeze in February, it just takes the recognition to another level," added Scott Harris, Chief Operating Officer. "The dedication, effort and skills that GCA's employees demonstrated in the preparation, duration, and aftermath of the storm were truly second to none."

Despite power outages, frozen roads and equipment, burst pipes, and employees facing similar challenges at home, the teams put in heroic efforts to keep operations moving. And where power outages posed particular challenges, GCA worked with its customers to manage flows to ensure no untreated waters entered local waterways.

## Getting ready

Preparations for the freeze began Wednesday, Feb. 10, securing equipment and reviewing contingency

procedures in the Authority's emergency response plans. As the weather forecast worsened, operations leadership informed employees that anyone whose job permitted it would be required to work from home the following Monday and Tuesday.

GCA's Odessa South facility was the first to face the winter storm when the polar intrusion blew into Odessa on Feb. 11, bringing sub-freezing temperatures, icy roads, and structures coated in ice and snow. Power outages starting Saturday added to the challenge. The dedicated operators and maintenance personnel worked in extreme cold temperatures and mounting snow to keep the plant operating and the truck receiving station open for those bringing in waste to the facility.

"For eight days, the temperature never got above 21 degrees (Fahrenheit) with a 15 mile-an-hour wind dropping the 'feels like' temp further. Add in 8 ½ inches of snow and two nights of -3 degrees," remembered Charles "Choc" Harris, Facility Manager. "Despite all this, we remained 100

percent operable and didn't lose a minute of service thanks to our great employees and their dedication to GCA. Our operations and maintenance teams gave 110 percent."

The GCA leadership team took cues from Odessa's early experience as they continued to closely follow the weather as the storm moved south. On Sunday evening, several Houston-area GCA facilities went to "ride-out" crews – employees who would remain at the facility through the entirety of the storm. Others adjusted schedules so that those employees who lived closest to their respective facilities would work alternate shifts.

"In a significant event like the freeze, it can become very easy to be overwhelmed by how much there is to do and the decisions that have to be made," said Harris, "but when you have a team of employees that commit to their roles and perform at a very high level of accountability, suddenly the event doesn't seem as overwhelming. It is very clear that GCA's team of employees impressed during the freeze event."





**40-Acre Team:** The team in Texas City included members from the operations and maintenance departments. First responders: Clifford Pabon, Chief Operator; Joann Vasquez, Chief Operator; David Espinosa, Operator II; Troy Bellmyer, Maintenance Supervisor; Jonathan Andrews, Maintenance Tech; and Joey Martinez, Landfill Operator. Recovery Crew: Kevin Perkins and Joseph Pickens.



## Braving the chill

Crews also struggled with the cold.

“Here in Texas City our typical day is breezy with shimmering blue water, but the week of February 15th, it was a winter wonderland,” said 40-Acre Facility Manager Diane Maloy. “Operators and maintenance workers wore several layers, because even with the heater on, the building never reached higher than 30 degrees. Through it all, the team managed to operate the plant without any reportable incidents.”

Maloy said it was only after the snow melted that the extensive damage to the water line supplying the safety showers and facility buildings was discovered. Finding parts to repair the damage took patience, she added.

The Bayport facility was hit particularly hard by extended utility outages, both electricity and natural gas.

“The Bayport team demonstrated fortitude and resilience,” Kim Ontiveros, Facility Manager, said. “The team worked in harsh conditions to minimize disruption to our customers as well as any impact to the surrounding communities, all while staying safe and epitomizing teamwork. I am proud of their heroic efforts and appreciative of their dedication to GCA, to protecting the waters of Texas and to each other.”

Washburn Tunnel also had challenges but continued its essential treatment, sample collection, and process monitoring throughout the storm while the team successfully dealt with frozen lines and immediate repairs, much of it outside in freezing temperatures.

“During winter storm Uri, all the operations and maintenance teams worked hard to meet the challenges to maintain and restore service safely,” said Phyllis Frank, Washburn Tunnel Facility Manager. “At my plant and across the Authority, our teams exhibited adaptability and tenacity in meeting the challenge. We had limited staffing at all facilities. These team members were responsible for essential operations and maintenance activities during the entire storm event. They consistently demonstrated commitment to our purpose of treating wastewater and to helping each other.”

At Blackhawk, which serves as the municipal system for Friendswood and South Houston, each operator assisted in freeze preparation, shutdown and startup of equipment, and immediate piping and valve repairs once power service stabilized.



“Each Blackhawk operator showed great dedication to their line of work, spending long hours at the facility alternating between 24- and 48-hour shifts,” said Facility Manager Shannon Miftari. “The first priority was preparing the facility to weather the storm, then keeping it running with back-up generation under really challenging conditions before switching to repair mode once the worst was past and we were back on full power. That was a lot of work and a lot of hours – while balancing that with their families’ own storm impacts. I was so impressed.”

At the Central Lab, three employees braved the icy roads to reach the facility and shut down the delicate – and expensive – testing equipment in danger from the power outages. Once electricity was restored, the lab personnel were back at work.

“These brave first responders really saved the day,” said lab manager Doris Haydon.



*Lab personnel (from left) Lingmei Ma, Assistant Organics Lab Coordinator; Marie Branum, Back Up Conventional Lab Coordinator; and Cindy Story, Assistant Lab Manager.*



**Bayport Team:** Storm heroes included Jason Chenoweth, Greg Seay Jr., Cal Start, John Bourman, Jim Turner, Keith Campbell, Craig Martin, Matt Volek, Tim Corrigan, Marco Araujo, John Wilkerson, Roy Golleher, Eddie Carrillo, and Chris Callaway.

**Washburn Tunnel Team:** Abel Salazar, Willie Miller, Mike Tijerina, Curtis Young, Calvin Guidry, Errol Currie with John Mletzko, and Carlos Robledo kept the facility operating.



## Employees come through

"I cannot speak of enough praise for all the employees that supported GCA's facilities during that time," Harris said, "but there is one that stands out in my mind."

A maintenance employee was part of a ride-out crew standing prepared to respond to and troubleshoot events as they occurred onsite. Mid-storm, he asked a nephew to check on his empty house, discovering broken pipes and water damage. Despite GCA's offer to call in a replacement, he simply told his nephew to turn off the water and he would deal with it later.

"He said he wanted to fulfill his commitment to the team," Harris marveled. "My hats off to our employees with his commitment and attitude. It is employees like him who became leaders during the event that calmed nerves and made the event much less overwhelming. Without our dedicated

employees and their families that support the work they do for the Authority, this organization would not be as great as it is. 'Thanks' does not say enough for all the issues and challenges that were worked through for this storm event."

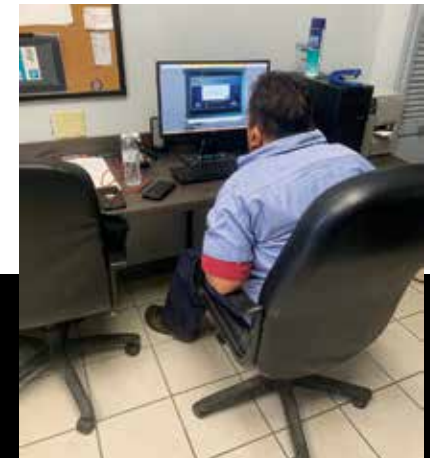
"It truly was all hands on deck," Fazio Hale said. "The team was great. We prepare for the weather to disrupt our operations – but typically we are thinking hurricanes, not an extended deep freeze. And as so many of us across Texas experienced, our employees personally were experiencing their own electrical outages and water shortages/boil water notices at home. Through the depths of the cold and in spite of the challenges, it is our essential workers who are our everyday heroes."

"At GCA, heroes are everywhere," said Keith Hardcastle, Human Resources Director and Public Information Officer. "Whenever the situation arises –

hurricane, flood, pandemic or whatever may present itself – our people rise up. The recent freeze, power issues, and process requirements did not deter GCA employees from their duty to the industrial and neighborhood communities. We hardly missed a step, reacted with tenacity, and recovered, not just ourselves but for those whom we support.

"We know it was catastrophic for some," Hardcastle added, "and our heartfelt compassion goes out to them. GCA is fortunate to have dedicated, high sense-of-urgency and always-prepared individuals. Everyday heroes at GCA are everywhere."

"All in all, we have survived this 'Snowid 21,' another unprecedented event – and on top of the pandemic," Fazio Hale said. "We are proud that our systems and people have held strong throughout this time and we were able to quickly move into recovery and restoration."



**Blackhawk Team:** The dedicated crew – Albert Smith, Joshua Saucedo, Jeff Wood, and Mark Garcia – worked through the storm.

## Lessons learned

“Never let a good crisis go to waste. That is what they say, and it still holds true today,” Fazio Hale said.

The interconnectedness between energy and water was never more evident than during the winter storms. In one case, energy, the state was dealing with a supply shortage; in the other instance, water, residents were faced with issues stemming from a failure to recognize water and wastewater services as critical infrastructure. As many soon realized in dealing with days of boil water notices, water and wastewater services are essential services. These workers are essential workers.

“As the Texas legislature looks to address prevention of such catastrophic events in the future, we all agree that at the statewide level both better, more transparent communication and advanced

emergency preparedness will go a long way,” Fazio Hale said. “But in the long run, we will have to do a better job of educating others on the vital role that water and wastewater workers play in the everyday lives of citizens.”

Fazio Hale said another factor is important for policymakers to appreciate regarding wastewater treatment. “When you are down, you have to get back up,” she said.

Initially, some GCA facilities worked with customers to limit flows. However, once utility service was restored to the GCA dischargers, the challenge was to keep adequate flows coming in from customers dealing with their own operational issues of restarting their facilities. Wastewater treatment plants use living organisms to treat wastewater and these organisms need food to maintain a healthy population. The

impact of utility outages such as electricity, natural gas, and nitrogen on the industries which GCA serves, resulted in a slow return of loadings to the wastewater treatment facilities.

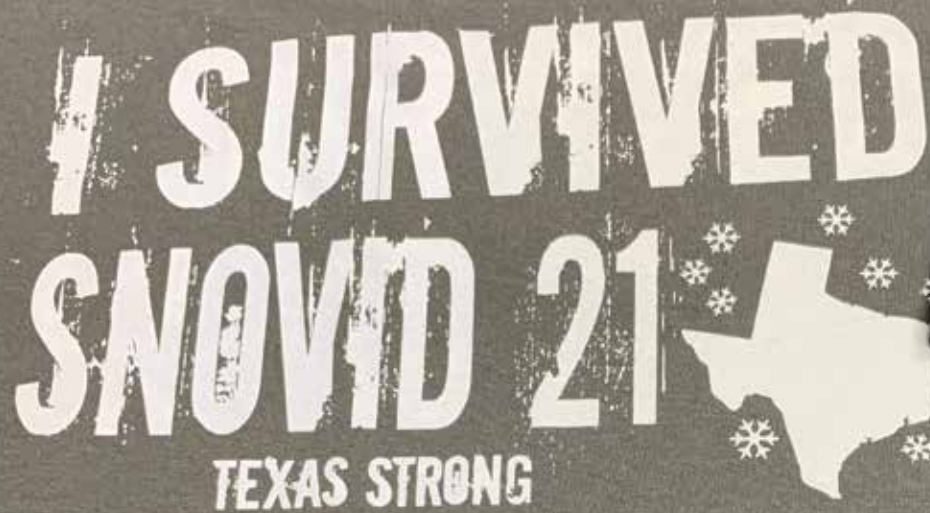
“The length of time that it has taken to restore loadings at many of our industrial facilities has proven to be an exercise in patience and skill among GCA operators,” Harris said.

“All storms provide an opportunity for learning,” Fazio Hale emphasized. “GCA is following the ongoing discussions regarding utility reliability, particularly of power and natural gas. We are also participating in community/industry meetings in order to learn not only from our own experiences but from the experiences of others. Our communication and coordination efforts will be strengthened from this recent experience.”



**Odessa Team:** The storm hit in Odessa first. Led by Facility Manager Charles “Choc” Harris, team members Delton Gross, Nathan Kirby, Sam Minjarez, Wyatt Slaugh, Manuel Valdez, and Carol Venegas ensured the facility didn’t miss a beat.

**I SURVIVED  
SNOWID 21**  
**TEXAS STRONG**



## GLOBAL PANDEMIC – ONE YEAR LATER

“Well into a year-plus of pandemic, we are proud to report that we have had no workplace employee-to-employee transfer of the COVID-19 virus,” said CEO/General Manager Liz Fazio Hale. “This truly is a testament to our team and their commitment to their jobs, their families, and each other.”

As GCA provides an essential service in the treatment of wastewater, 70 percent of its workforce had to be present in-person to perform their vital roles. Continuing to follow detailed protocols in GCA’s Pandemic Plan and supporting documents has been key to GCA’s success in protecting its employees. As things continue to evolve (*i.e.*, the increasing availability of a vaccine to all GCA employees), so will GCA policies continue to change to address the advancements.

“The ladder back down to normality will be very different from our swift ascent up it as the pandemic first unfolded,” Fazio Hale said. “We will continue to follow our GCA Pandemic Plan and adopt post-pandemic measures with guidance from the CDC and local authorities. We are also keeping an eye on virus reproduction and positivity rates as well as vaccination rates regionally and among our workforce to determine when and how to adjust procedures. Keeping each other and our families safe remains our number one priority.”



All GCA employees received a t-shirt to commemorate the experience.

# BUILDING THE FUTURE:

**In mid-November 2020, Elizabeth “Liz” Fazio Hale took the reins as CEO/GM of Gulf Coast Authority after spending a year-and-a-half as Assistant General Manager.**

“With her broad background in legal and financial aspects of water and wastewater management, Elizabeth is uniquely qualified to lead GCA into its next 50 years,” said Franklin D.R. Jones, chairman of the GCA Board of Directors. “We’re confident that her expertise, combined with her boundless energy, keen intellect, and strategic insights, will far advance our mission to protect the waters of the state of Texas.”

Fazio Hale has served in numerous leadership roles on water and wastewater planning and management in the state of Texas. As the youngest CEO/GM appointed to the position and only GCA’s sixth general manager, Fazio Hale understands the high level of expectations for leading an organization deeply rooted in a tradition and a commitment to protecting the environment while supporting communities and industry.

“GCA has long been a leader in recognizing the value of combining environmental sustainability with economic development,” said Fazio Hale. “In today’s world, the importance of innovation in water management has only grown more vital. In order to advance our mission in these changing times, we must be intentional in our understanding of the new challenges that lie ahead including the impacts to our employees and an uncertain regulatory future.”

Fazio Hale has a combined 20 years of legal, finance, legislative and executive leadership, previously contributing to the advancement of funding the Texas State Water Plan – a goal more than 15 years in the making.

Fazio Hale serves as the secretary for the Gulf Coast Industrial Development Authority, treasurer for the Texas Conservation Fund, a member of the board of directors for the Texas Water Foundation, a member of the board of directors for the Texas Water Conservation Association, a member of the board of directors for the TWCA – Risk Management Fund, a member of the Galveston Bay Council, and a member of the board of the Economic Alliance – Houston Port Region.

Six months into her new role and leading into GCA’s annual leadership meeting, Fazio Hale shares what she has learned and where she hopes to take GCA moving forward.



# Liz Fazio Hale Takes GCA Forward

## **What led to your position at your company?**

I bring a background in politics, law and finance to my passion for improving the environmental and economic aspects of water and wastewater management.

My first taste of policymaking was with the Texas House of Representatives Committee on Calendars in 2001 while pursuing dual degrees in communications and government at UT Austin. I went on to earn a law degree and a legal master's in taxation, both from the University of Denver.

In 2009, I became Director of the Natural Resources Committee under Representative Allan Ritter – R, Nederland in the Texas House. There, I started my love affair with water-related issues – which I view as one of society's most important challenges. Thanks to the professional relationships I developed in the water and wastewater sectors, I was invited to join the GCA team as Assistant General Manager in preparation of becoming the CEO and GM. I took the helm late last year, and it has been the most amazing and rewarding experience.

## **What is the most important part of your job?**

GCA has a unique role to play in protecting the state's most precious natural resource – water – and we bring a long history with great professionalism to the task. I see my primary job as leveraging the skills and commitment of our team, giving them the tools that they need, and empowering them as we “grow with purpose” to better serve our mission. With a proven track record of innovation, we look ahead to the future and ask: How can we best serve the environment, the economy, our customers, and our communities? With the thoughtful visioning of our Board, I view myself as a guide to “thinking big” as we continue to rise to the challenge of protecting the waters of Texas.

## **What are your goals?**

GCA recently celebrated its 50-year anniversary with a look back on its many accomplishments. I want to build upon that legacy for the next 50 years. The Board has initiated a strategic planning and visioning process that starts with planning in five-year increments, aligning with the state's water planning process in terms of a 50-year horizon on a cyclical five-year basis. This process begins at the staff level where we are working to address visioning for our people, infrastructure and mission/core values. We are also working on a GCA branding document and strategic communications plan for our employees, customers, communities, and other stakeholders.

## **What have your first six months as CEO/GM been like?**

Just amazing. I am learning something new every day. The GCA family is so dedicated and so talented – they make my job easy. Between working through twin crises – the pandemic and the deep freeze – I have been watching, listening, and learning. There is so much potential for our future growth. But we'll want to root next steps in our rich tradition of serving the state and protecting our waters. I'll be chairing my first annual GCA leadership team meeting with the title of “Setting Expectations Under New Leadership.” Already I'm seeing some key themes emerging: civility – respectful discussion of differences, “purpose” as our guide to any changes, and the value of creating a trusted partnership – internally and with our customers and our communities. It may be new times with new leadership, but GCA is delivering the same reliability we have long been known for, thanks to our outstanding workforce.

## **What has been the most pivotal moment of your career?**

Working on the Texas State Water Implementation Fund for Texas legislation that created a financing mechanism for a statewide commitment to finance \$30 billion over the next 50 years. From its creation in 2013 to today, the program has provided almost \$9 billion in funding to water supply projects across the state. More recently, the financing program became the base model for the creation of funds to finance Texas' new flood planning and implementation process. Not only was this a signature effort for Texas, but it spurred the passion I now bring to GCA's mission.

## **What is something about you people might not know?**

My husband, Caleb, and I care for my sister with disabilities who is five years my senior. When I was younger, I felt a heavy burden as her advocate. Today, I realize it is an honor to have her as a part of our lives – she is a source of joy and a continual inspiration. We also have a daughter, McKenzi (12), and son, Holt (4).

# LIZ'S CO-WORKERS CELEBRATE HER LEADERSHIP



## **Phyllis Frank, Facility Manager, Washburn Tunnel Wastewater Treatment Facility**

Liz is challenging us as leaders to know our purpose and this focus will strengthen the whole organization. I am excited to be a part of GCA as we move forward with her at the helm.

## **Keith Hardcastle, Director of Human Resources & Public Information Officer**

Elizabeth Fazio Hale has been like a breath of fresh air. She brings new perspectives derived from her experiences in various arenas, and she has offered me the opportunity to learn and grow through her expansive knowledge and big-picture strategic thinking. Liz's transition to CEO/GM was smooth and transparent to customers, industry leaders, and, most of all, GCA employees, especially our leadership staff. I look forward to a long and thriving working relationship. 'Protecting the Waters of Texas' is certainly a challenging task, but with Liz and both Board and employee support, that mission will inspire GCA's vision for growth through excellence for many years to come. Glad you are with us, Liz!

## **Charles "Choc" Harris, Facility Manager, Odessa South Wastewater Treatment Facility**

It is so great having Liz on board. She brings new vision and new direction that is leading GCA forward and expanding our horizons.

## **Scott Harris, Chief Operating Officer**

Liz has been busy in her first several months as CEO/GM. You can tell that she definitely did her homework and took good notes during her transition into the position. I am excited to continue to work with her on a clear vision and direction for the next 50 years for the Authority. Liz always takes the time to understand the issues and provide support where it is need. She clearly has a strategic plan for change at the Authority. Every new leader is always challenged with making the changes they see needed on a schedule that the team can buy into. Liz has demonstrated her understanding of this and balanced it very well. Over the last year Liz has been great at building a trusted partnership with her leadership team, enhancing GCA's future success.

## **Doris Haydon, Manager, Central Laboratory**

As the new CEO/GM Liz brings a new and fresh point of view. She invests lots to time in listening to the analysts and is working very hard to move the Authority forward with strategic planning.

## **Diane Maloy, Facility Manager, 40-Acre Industrial Wastewater Treatment Facility**

Liz plans to continue to move GCA forward to include growth as well as greater visibility to the communities we serve.

## **Shannon Miftari, Facility Manager, Blackhawk Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility**

Liz, as our new CEO/GM, brings an accomplished background and skills we gladly welcome. She will undoubtedly bring growth and success to GCA, which is certainly exciting to be a part of.

## **Kim Ontiveros, Facility Manager, Bayport Industrial Wastewater Treatment Facility**

Liz has demonstrated a passion for getting to know the people who are the backbone of this organization and supporting them through challenging times like the most recent February freeze event. I am looking forward to supporting her leadership.

## **Gordon Pederson, Chief Technical Officer**

Liz Fazio Hale brings a new view to GCA, that of a legislative insider. Never before have we had a GM with the width and breadth that Liz has had as a staffer on legislative committees overseeing Special Purpose Districts. GCA has always depended on consultants and pure luck to get modifications to our act. With Liz's background, we should be better positioned to gain approval for changes that will benefit GCA and our mission.



# NAVIGATING OUR FUTURE: Strategic Planning Kicks Off

Gulf Coast Authority kicked off a formal strategic planning process in February led by CEO/GM Liz Fazio Hale and facilitated by outside consultant Dr. Richard Lewis.

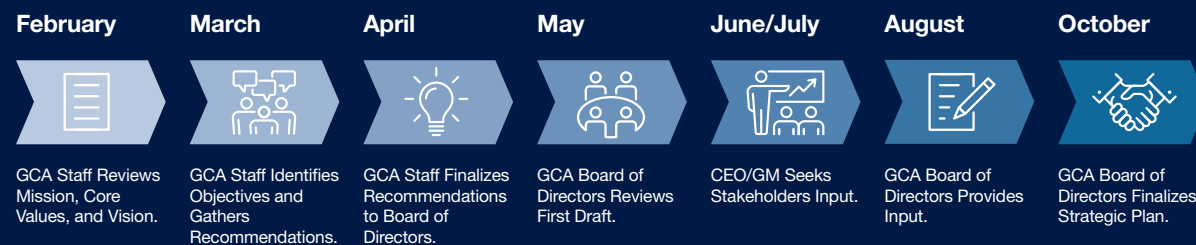
The first stage brought together 16 employees: members of the senior leadership, facility management, and economic development teams. The group held three Zoom sessions in February, March, and April during which participants provided input into big picture goals and initiatives for the next five years. The planning team also served as ambassadors to collect and share input from all employees into the process. In addition, surveys and questionnaires augmented the effort to solicit ideas and insights from employees across the Authority.

“This has been such an exciting and rewarding process already,” said Fazio Hale. “Employees across GCA have contributed so much creativity and aspirational thinking to the planning work. I believe the Board will be truly inspired by what we will present.”

At the end of May, the first full iteration of GCA’s Strategic Plan 2022-2027 will be presented to the GCA Board. Using this foundational input, the Board then will undertake its own deliberative process, seeking additional feedback from a variety of stakeholders, including customers, participants, and environmental and economic partners, among others. The expectation is that the Board will finalize the plan by mid-October.

“Once we have a final plan this fall, we’ll move into the more tactical phase where we will set detailed steps and timelines to bringing these big-picture goals to life,” Fazio Hale said. “This is when we expect the real work to begin.”

## STRATEGIC PLANNING 2021-2026



## Staff Strategic Planning Committee Members

- **Liz Fazio Hale**  
Chief Executive Officer/General Manager/  
Economic Development
- **Scott Harris**  
Chief Operations Officer/Economic Development
- **Gordon Pederson**  
Chief Technical Officer/Economic Development
- **Kim Ontiveros**  
Bayport Facility Manager
- **Shannon Miftari**  
Blackhawk Facility Manager
- **Doris Hayden**  
Central Lab Facility Manager
- **Diane Maloy**  
40-Acre/Campbell Bayou Facility Manager
- **Charles Harris**  
Odessa South Facility Manager
- **Phyllis Frank**  
Washburn Tunnel/Vince Bayou Facility Manager/  
Economic Development
- **Keith Hardcastle**  
Human Resources Director & Public Information  
Officer/Economic Development
- **Leonard Levine**  
Technical Services Director/Economic Development
- **Jonathan Sandhu**  
Assistant Director-Technical Services/Economic  
Development
- **Carrie Latimer**  
Finance Analyst/Economic Development
- **Lisa Brasher**  
Executive Administrator/Strategic Planning  
Administrator

# IMPORTANT MILESTONES ACHIEVED IN BAYPORT UPGRADE

For the past three years, the Gulf Coast Authority team and its contractors have been working to support the Bayport Industrial Wastewater Treatment Facility's preventative maintenance needs on existing equipment and prepare for growth in the Bayport Industrial Complex. The \$35 million improvement project will allow Bayport, GCA's largest facility, to enhance services to its industrial customers as well as two municipalities.

The project team reports construction on the organic capacity update is nearly complete, with start-up anticipated in the summer of 2021. The new pre-stressed concrete T-2005 First Step Aeration Tank and geodesic aluminum dome are now complete, along with all plant process tie-ins. The project team,

including general contractor Garney, GCA Technical Services and GCA Bayport staff have begun preliminary testing, punch-lists and commissioning of sub-systems.

Meanwhile, work continues on the \$25.8 million Biosan Pipeline Upgrade project, with most of the 5,300 feet of new 42-inch FRP (fiberglass reinforced plastic) piping in place. The underground hand mine and pipe jacking of the new 48-inch casing below Bay Area Boulevard was completed in March 2021, without impacting vehicle traffic on the thoroughfare. General contractor Boyer safely installed about 320 feet of carbon steel casing approximately 20 feet below Bay Area Boulevard in just seven days – about five days ahead of schedule. GCA Technical Services

and Parsons provided staffing to support the 24-hour tunneling shifts. In April, the 42-inch stainless steel pipe was installed within the casing.

“The hand mining process was an impressive feat,” said Jonte’ Greer, Assistant Director-General Engineering. “With a well-developed plan, the crews were able to safely ‘thread the needle’ between multiple known utility and other pipelines at a relatively quick pace – and without affecting traffic on this busy road.”

An upcoming step is to bore beneath a Union Pacific Railroad spur once permits and approvals are in hand. The project has an expected completion date of November 2021.



*The Bayport improvement project is making significant progress. Pictured is the new T-2005 First Step Aeration Tank, along with the associated piping and recirculation system equipment.*

# TRASH BASH 2021 GOES VIRTUAL

Unfortunately, trash didn't stop collecting in Houston waterways, despite the pandemic. Seeing a need to continue cleaning up the bay and surrounding areas, The Texas Conservation Fund and the Trash Bash Steering Committee, including site coordinators from Gulf Coast Authority, Phyllis Frank and Diane Maloy, decided to take the event virtual.

With the theme "Backyard to Bay," small groups were encouraged to pick a location in their neighborhood to "Clean It Like You Mean It!"<sup>®</sup> on March 27-29. Participants used a QR code to register and receive a digital badge. Leading into the event, video content was posted on the Trash Bash website to educate people on watersheds and non-point sources of pollution, and LyondellBassell sponsored a safety briefing video to promote safety awareness.

Promotion of Trash Bash 2021 included posters, mailed postcards, a website, and social media, among other avenues.

More than 1,500 people, including 820 youth, registered. Following the event, participants were encouraged to self-report impacts. Based on information received:

- **765 total volunteers, including 361 youth, of which 179 were Scouts**
- **11,057 pounds, or 5.5 tons, of trash picked up**
- **300 pounds of recyclables sorted**
- **41 tires were removed or reported to local authorities**

"Turnout was amazing, given the pandemic and unique structure this year," said Phyllis Frank, Facility Manager for Washburn Tunnel and site coordinator. "These efforts have a noticeable and important impact on the health of our Galveston Bay watershed."

Clean-up sites ranged from backyards and empty lots to public parks, bayou banks and beaches. One group, the Greater Northside Management District, tackled trash in homeless encampments near Little White Oak Bayou.

Planning for the 2022 event will kick off soon.



**RIVER, LAKES  
BAYS 'N BAYOUS TRASH BASH.**



**THE LARGEST SINGLE-DAY  
WATERWAY CLEANUP IN TEXAS**

**Held every Spring since 1994**

# GGA RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS INDUSTRY AWARDS



Water Environment  
Association of Texas

## Washburn Tunnel, Levine Earn WEAT Awards

Gulf Coast Authority took home two awards – one to an individual employee and one to a GCA facility – from the Water Environment Association of Texas for 2021.

“This is an exciting achievement as it highlights the dedication of our Authority and the expertise of our employees,” said Elizabeth Fazio Hale, GCA’s CEO/General Manager. “These awards are a tribute to GCA’s and our team’s commitment to our mission to protect the waters of Texas.”



Washburn Tunnel Wastewater Treatment Facility took home the Industrial Wastewater Treatment Plant of the Year Award for operational excellence, recognizing its consistent outstanding performance of daily activities beyond the normal call of duty. Located in Pasadena, the facility provides cost-effective measures to improve the quality of discharges into Galveston Bay.

Leonard Levine, GCA Technical Services Director and a 40-year employee, is the 2021 recipient of the Winfield S. Mahlie Award. The award honors those who have made significant contributions to “the art and science of wastewater treatment and water pollution control.”

“Congratulations to our outstanding team as GCA celebrates the leadership and commitment evidenced by these awards,” Fazio Hale added.



## NACWA Honors GCA for operational excellence

Four Gulf Coast Authority wastewater treatment facilities were recognized by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies with 2020 Peak Performance Awards:

- Blackhawk Municipal Wastewater Treatment Facility – Gold

- 40-Acre, Odessa South Industrial Wastewater Treatment Facility – Gold
- Odessa South Industrial Wastewater Treatment Facility – Gold
- Washburn Tunnel Industrial Wastewater Treatment Facility – Silver

This is the fifteenth consecutive year for GCA facilities to be honored by NACWA (with awards being received as far back as 1990 from AMSA, NACWA’s predecessor organization) for excellence in operational performance and permit compliance.

“Our facilities provide essential services for our communities, industry and the environment,” said Liz Fazio Hale, CEO/General Manager. “In a year with pandemic challenges, GCA is proud to be nationally recognized for its reliability and commitment to protecting the waters of the state of Texas.”

Peak Performance Awards are provided to outstanding clean water utilities that have demonstrated operational excellence with no more than five permit violations in a calendar year for silver awardees, and zero for gold award winners.

For nearly 50 years, NACWA has been the nation’s recognized leader in advancing sustainable and responsible policy initiatives that help shape a strong and sustainable clean water future. NACWA seeks to fulfill this mission through its national recognition/awards program, its clean water advocacy and communications, and its peer-to-peer utility network to share best practices from coast-to-coast.





## SANDHU NAMED TO WEAT BOARD

Jonathan Sandhu, Assistant Director – Technical Services, was appointed a member-at-large to the Water Environment Association of Texas (WEAT) Executive Board during its March meeting. WEAT is a large regional association dedicated to bringing together water professionals, practitioners, operations specialists, and public officials. Jonathan is also a co-chair of the Industrial Committee. His appointment will help provide a diverse perspective on issues in the wastewater industry.

## GCA HELPS WELCOME NEW CONGRESSMAN

Charles Harris, Facility Manager of Odessa South Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant, attended an invitation-only event March 24 hosted by the Sewell family to honor new U.S. Congressman August Pfluger of the 11th Congressional District of Texas. Congressman Pfluger discussed issues of importance to the Permian Basin and his priorities in Congress. Attending were elected officials from Ector and Midland counties, the cities of Odessa and Midland, and area state representatives. Also present were major business leaders and members of the Odessa Development Council and the Odessa Chamber of Commerce.



## GCA SEEKS TO MODERNIZE ITS FINANCING AUTHORITY

This spring in Austin, the GCA team is working on legislation to expand financing capabilities to support projects inside and outside of Texas, as well projects for energy and water efficiency. Pictured is GCA CEO/GM Liz Fazio Hale with GCA consultants Kinnan Golemon (left) and Colin Parrish (far right) joining Senator Larry Taylor, R-District 11, who authored the senate version of the bill. Fazio Hale is shown testifying in support of SB1222/HB2390 relating to GCA's financing authority in front of the in Senate Committee on Local Government.

# SCRIPT AWARDS

## GCA EMPLOYEES RECOGNIZED FOR EPITOMIZING GCA CORE VALUES

SCRIPT Awards are given each quarter to Gulf Coast Authority employees who exhibit behavior that models our core values of Stewardship, Communication, Reliability, Integrity, Planning, and Teamwork.

The Washburn Tunnel Facility mechanics team of Junior Bernal, Mike Morris, Calvin Guidry, and Jaime Valdez were recognized for exhibiting the highest standards of teamwork. Washburn Tunnel recently replaced its polymer feed system and began using polymer delivered in tote bags instead of supply in stainless-steel totes. However, the facility still had two of the old totes containing polymer. As a team, they identified, developed, and built a solution to get polymer out of the stainless-steel totes and into the new polymer system. Phyllis Frank, Washburn Tunnel Facility Manager, presented the awards and the facility held a parade so that everyone could congratulate them while maintaining appropriate social distance.

*From left: Jaime Valdez, Mike Morris, Junior Bernal and Calvin Guidry. Junior Bernal passed away in December 2020 and he is deeply missed by the GCA team.*





**Joey Martinez, Landfill Operator at Campbell Bayou Facility, received a SCRIPT award for his stewardship and reliability.**

He went above-and-beyond his normal duties when the Texas City facility was short staffed to maintain the plant's reliability and ensure compliance. Facility Manager Diane Maloy presented the award.



## HELICOPTER MAKES EMERGENCY LANDING NEAR GCA SITE

The crew at Gulf Coast Authority's Campbell Bayou Facility got a little extra excitement in their day March 10 when a CH-47 Special Ops helicopter out of Fort Campbell, Ky., made an emergency landing on the closed landfill cap of the Malone superfund site behind the facility. GCA employees Troy Bellmyer and Joey Martinez escorted a mechanic to the helicopter, and after repairs, the U.S. Army "bird" took back to the skies.

## 3 LONG-TIME EMPLOYEES RETIRE

### Bill Tharp, Maintenance Supervisor, retired after 43 years of service.

Bill was Maintenance Supervisor at the Washburn Tunnel facility and then worked the last nine years of his career as Maintenance Supervisor at the Bayport facility. Known for his kind heart and his service to others, person after person shared stories at his virtual retirement party about how he helped his coworkers with flat tires, home repairs, and other challenges of daily life. We wish Bill the best in his retirement.



### Rick Gallik, Chief Operator, retired with 37 years of service to GCA last December.

Fellow employees shared career highlights during the virtual retirement celebration, including his Board-recognized service during Hurricane Alicia, shortly after starting work at GCA, and the odd behavior in the clarifiers in 2002 that was ultimately attributed to an earthquake in Alaska. Other stories centered around his track record as a practical joker. All the best to Rick in his well-deserved retirement.

### Louis Hunter, Instrument Technician, retired with 15 years of service.

Louis, who was sped on his way with a retirement celebration hosted by the Bayport maintenance team, plans to devote more time to his avocation as a hunting guide, taking exotic hunting trips to Africa and Mexico, as well as competitive skeet shooting.



## IN MEMORIAM: JUNIOR BERNAL

Junior Bernal, Lead Mechanic at the Washburn Tunnel Facility, passed away Dec. 15, 2020. Well loved and well respected, Junior contributed and shared his gifts in many ways. He mowed Crown Hill Cemetery back in the day. He cooked and served food at numerous events. His BBQ brisket and a jar of his BBQ sauce were highly prized treats. Junior forged many friendships among his co-workers in his 27-year career and will be greatly missed.



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Chairman of the Board,  
Harris County



Rita E. Standridge  
Vice Chair,  
Chambers County



W. Chris Peden  
Secretary,  
Galveston County



Kevin Scott  
Treasurer,  
Galveston County



J.M. "Mark" Schultz  
Member,  
Chambers County



Billy Enochs  
Member,  
Galveston County



Lamont E. Meaux  
Member,  
Chambers County

## LEADERSHIP TEAM



Elizabeth Fazio Hale  
Chief Executive Officer/  
General Manager



Scott Harris  
Chief Operating Officer



Gordon Pederson  
Chief Technical Officer

*Governor Greg Abbott reappointed Lamont Meaux and Kevin Scott to the Gulf Coast Authority for terms set to expire on Aug. 31, 2022. Representing Chambers and Galveston counties, respectively, both Lamont and Kevin have been valuable members of the board.*

## CORE VALUES

<b>S</b>	<b>STEWARDSHIP</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION</b>
<b>R</b>	<b>RELIABILITY</b>
<b>I</b>	<b>INTEGRITY</b>
<b>P</b>	<b>PLANNING</b>
<b>T</b>	<b>TEAMWORK</b>



Protecting the waters of the State of Texas through environmentally sound, economically feasible and technologically advanced wastewater and water management practices.

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