

Mobile Bay NEP Community Resources Committee
Meeting Minutes



International Trade Center, Killian Room
November 29, 2017 2:00 p.m.

In attendance:

Mark Berte, Alabama Coastal Foundation
Tammy Herrington, Conservation Alabama Foundation
Carol Adams-Davis, Alabama Chapter of the Sierra Club
Hank Caddell, Alabama Coastal Heritage Trust
Casi Callaway, Mobile Baykeeper
Mike Magnoli, South Mobile County Community Development Corporation
Chris Oberholster, Birmingham Audubon Society
Jessica Bibza, National Wildlife Federation
Martha Hunter, Alabama Rivers Alliance
Kara Lankford, The National Audubon Society
Mitch Reid, The Nature Conservancy
Andrew Whitehurst, Gulf Restoration Network

Call-in:

Mona Dominguez, Alabama Water Watch
Blakely Ellis, Coastal Conservation Association
Yael Girad, Weeks Bay Foundation
Chris Oberholster, Birmingham Audubon Society

Staff: Kelley Barfoot, Bethany Dickey, Tom Herder

Takeaways

1. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m. CRC Co-Chair Mark Berte asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Approval of Minutes

After reviewing the minutes from the June meeting, Ms. Kara Lankford made a motion to approve the minutes as written, and Ms. Carol Adams Davis second the motion. Everyone voted in favor of the motion.

3. Executive Committee Meeting Update

Ms. Tammy Herrington gave an update regarding the feedback she received from the November 17, 2017 Executive Committee meeting regarding the 'strawman' process that was developed to suggest for the MBNEP to become the 'Review Committee' for the AGCRC submitted projects. *See attached 'suggested strawman process'.* The feedback received from the Executive Committee included, but not limited to:

- Conflict of interest with committee members

- Review conflicts with what is currently being conducted by Volkert, Inc. (terminology would need to be revised to ensure there is no duplication of efforts)
- Reputation of the MBNEP could be jeopardized if there is a question about a project being selected or not selected
- Concern over the fact that other ‘plans’ exists and the ‘strawman process’ is suggesting only ensuring that the projects fit within the goals and objectives of the CCMP.
- Is this a process that the Executive Committee wants to take on and adopt?
- Is this a process that would benefit the AGCRC and would they take it into consideration when selecting projects for final funding?

The CRC members discussed the feedback and made suggestions on how to address the concerns of Executive Committee members. Those were to:

- Conduct a project and CCMP comparison and prepare a spreadsheet for the AGCRC that scales how each project is consistent with the CCMP. (3-yes, 2-mostly, 1-no);
- Rate the projects based on how they meet the goals/objectives of the CCMP, send the rated list to the committees and ask for them to write letters of support to the AGCRC for the projects that rate ‘most consistent’ with the CCMP; and,
- Create a workgroup that can further explore opportunities for NEP engagement, and meet with other committee chairs and members of the executive committee for additional feedback.

The group agreed that this process is important and suggested to use this to conduct community engagement for more community involvement.

A workgroup was established that would work to further the effort. Members include: Tammy Herrington, Mitch Reid, Casi Callaway, Jessica Bibza, Kara Lankford, Carol Adams Davis, and Tom Herder.

4. Workplan Discussion

The committee broke into the two workgroups, Education and Advocacy, to discuss and assign task to complete the chosen goals/objectives from the workplan for Fiscal Year 2018.

Education Goals for 2017:

EPI-1: Increase awareness of coastal resources supporting what people value about living in coastal Alabama.

1. (1.4) Create and support programs that expose more people to local waterways.
 - c. Support Coastal Clean Up – completed
2. (1.2) Host at least 15 workshops annually to educate citizens and property owners on how to protect and restore what people value most. – Water Watch completed about 10 training workshops in Mobile and Baldwin Counties. Have other CRC members send how many presentations they’ve given this year.
 - a. Create a reporting mechanism, perhaps a central database, accessible by CAC Members.

- b. Develop a list of potential groups to work with to achieve strategy.
- 3. (1.3) Participate in 15 festivals to celebrate cultural/natural connections to the coast.
 - f. Support Birdfest – *Birdfest was cancelled in 2017 due to Hurricane Nate.*

EPI-2: Improve community ability to participate in ecosystem-based management actions.

- 1. (2.3) Educate on programs and volunteer opportunities available for protecting coastal assets.
 - f. (*add*) Promote awareness of and volunteer opportunities from the Alabama Coastal Bird Stewardship Program and Alabama Coastal Bird Banding.

Education Goals for 2018:

EPI-1: Increase awareness of coastal resources supporting what people value about living in coastal Alabama.

- 1. (1.1) Give 50 presentations to community groups about the CCMP or issues impacting our coastal values. – *give presentation at Alabama Water Resources Conference*
 - g. Educate key stakeholders and raise community awareness about the connectivity between upstream areas and the estuary/downstream
 - e. Promote upstream connection to Mobile Bay throughout the greater Mobile Bay watershed.
 - i. Signage at boat ramps – *Orange Beach*
 - ii. Media Articles (CWF Website, AL.com, etc.)
 - iii. Events: restaurants, breweries, farmer’s markets, etc.
 - iv. *Seagrass Education Campaign*
- 2. (1.3) Participate in 15 festivals to celebrate cultural/natural connections to the coast.
 - e. Incorporate heritage themes into Alabama Birdfest and other festivals.

EPI-5: Advocate for environmental issues addressed in the CCMP

- 1. (5.1) Publicly support the development of Watershed Management Plans and their implementation in guiding coastal restoration and community resilience.
 - b. Develop a short video to educate communities about the value of getting involved in watershed management planning and implementation. – *MBNEP has completed a Watersheds 101 video and a Low Impact Development video. Look into putting kiosks in Fort Conde and Maritime Museum. MBNEP will be releasing an instructional video for the “Trash Mob” dance featuring students from Murphy High School.*

Advocacy Goals:

EPI-4: Build Capacity of at least 15 grassroots groups to ensure citizen involvement in creating more resilient and environmentally responsible communities.

1. (4.2) Support needed changes to federal, state and local regulations to improve management of coastal resources.
 - a. Conduct letter-writing campaign in support of reauthorization of the National Estuary Program.
 - i. Conduct letter writing campaign to support full funding for NEP and other environmental projects - completed
 - b. Conduct letter-writing campaign to promote protection of coastal resources as part of the State of Alabama Water Resource Management Plan. – Water Management will move through the Office of Water Resources. CRC could write a letter to support funding for the Water Resource Management Plan. Alabama Rivers Alliance, The Nature Conservancy and Conservation Alabama will continue to work on a process to help move this funding forward.
 - c. Promote and support referendum crafted by GNC to improve local management authority of coastal resources.
 - d. Provide public comment on new and updated regulations, ordinances, bills as they are developed. – Mobile Baykeeper will keep the group informed on Sewer Spill Right to Know, Coastal Construction Line (ACAMP updates, CZMA updates).
 - e. Initiate one letter writing campaign to encourage locally elected officials to participate in watershed planning and implementation.

EPI-5: Advocate for environmental issues addressed in the CCMP

1. (5.1) Publicly support the development of Watershed Management Plans and their implementation in guiding coastal restoration and community resilience.
 - a. Promote community input in watershed planning - Wolf Bay, Mississippi Sound Complex, Fly Creek.
 - i. NEP/Contractor will send out updates, information and opportunities for involvement to the entire Management Conference. MC members will send information out to their memberships to encourage engagement and involvement.
 - ii. NEP/Contractor will send out an update on all existing WMPs in development along with the steering committee membership in order to enable and promote involvement.
 - b. Develop a short video to educate communities about the value of getting involved in watershed management planning and implementation. – MBNEP has completed a Watersheds 101 video.
 - i. Future Project
2. (5.2) Publicly support state process to establish regulations to more strongly identify and clarify best management practices for living shorelines. Publicly support the state to support living shorelines and/or ahead of bulkheads. Publicly support the establishment of alternative shoreline management practices as the preferred practice to bulkheads.
 - i. Review the legislation being presented and determine which improvements should be incorporated from the CCMP and NEP Management Conference meetings. – There is a current Living

Shorelines Bill that is up for discussion. The group decided this bill might need support to pass. Representative Randy Davis has been the leader on presenting the bill, but likely needs to be updated. The Nature Conservancy and Conservation Alabama has been working to help update and pass the bill. The group suggested there should be a discussion with the State to determine Department of Conservation and Natural Resources stance on living shorelines and the Army Corps of Engineers general living shorelines permit.

- ii. Meet with legislators about the recommendations to encourage them to incorporate the changes.
3. (5.3) Publicly support regulatory changes to provide local governments with authority needed to protect natural resources.
 - i. Research the existing laws/regulations to determine what is missing (or what is present) that could define the authorities that exist. – *There is currently no ‘real’ zoning or planning districts in Mobile County- the group decided this might be a topic to address in the near future.*
4. (5.4) Publicly support the establishment and implementation controls and standards at state and local level to protect waterways and wetlands.
 - a. Actively monitor watershed planning and provide comment on completed plans (Mississippi Sound Complex, Wolf Bay). – *Each Advocacy subcommittee member agreed that each group should send drafts of comment letters to the other Advocacy subcommittee members of the CRC and allow as much time as possible for committee members to add thoughts and/or supply their own comments. Mobile Baykeeper agreed to assist with this process.*
 - b. Review the WMP proposals for the legislation/regulations presented that could be incorporated and supported.
4. **Announcements/Updates**

Due to time constraints, no partner announcements or updates were given.
5. **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.