

Mobile Bay NEP Community Resources Committee
Meeting Minutes



Five Rivers Delta Center, Blakeley Hall Classroom
June 16, 2017 1:00 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
Yael Girard, Weeks Bay Foundation
Judy Haner, The Nature Conservancy
Matt Love, Ocean Conservancy
Mike Magnoli, South Mobile County Community Development Corporation
Chris Oberholster, Birmingham Audubon Society

Call-in: Andrew Whitehurst, Gulf Restoration Network

Staff: Kelley Barfoot, Bethany Dickey

Takeaways

- The CRC came up with goals/objectives from the workplan to be accomplished first.
- The Nature Conservancy is creating a Coastal Habitat Restoration Plan for Alabama and the CRC helped with giving their opinions of how to prioritize restoration goals.

1. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by CRC Co-Chair Mark Berte who asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Approval of Minutes

After reviewing the minutes from the March meeting, Andrew Whitehurst made a motion to approve the minutes as written, and Chris Oberholster second the motion. Everyone voted in favor of the motion.

3. Habitat Restoration Plan

Judy Haner from The Nature Conservancy discussed a Coastal Habitat Restoration Plan for Alabama. Funding was received from NFWF. The first plan was completed in 2005 and evaluated projects to identify priority habitats and what value they provide in terms of ecosystem services. The Habitats Tool (MS-AL Habitats Database) created in 2009 displays all restoration projects that are completed, underway, or planned. The habitat conservation goals classified 10 coastal priority habitats, identified in the MBNEP Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (freshwater wetlands, beaches & dunes, intertidal marshes & flats, longleaf

pine habitats, submerged aquatic vegetation, oyster reefs, streams & rivers, riparian forests, pine savanna forests, and maritime forests). She had attendees participate in a clicker survey on prioritizing habitat restoration goals for the future using CCMP community values (access, shorelines, fish & wildlife, heritage & culture, environmental resilience, and water quality).

4. Workplan Discussion

The committee broke into two workgroups, Education and Advocacy, to discuss which goals/objectives from the workplan were of most priority and could be accomplished by year end (September 30, 2017) and also 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
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.
 - 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

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.
 - 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
 - ii. Media Articles (CWF Website, AL.com, etc.)
 - iii. Events: restaurants, breweries, farmer's markets, etc.
2. (1.3) Participate in 15 festivals to celebrate cultural/natural connections to the coast.
 - e. Incorporate heritage themes into Alabama Birdfest.

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.

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 - done
 - b. Conduct letter-writing campaign to promote protection of coastal resources as part of the State of Alabama Water Resource Management Plan.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.
- 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).
 - b. Review the WMP proposals for the legislation/regulations presented that could be incorporated and supported.

4. **Adjourn**

With no other business before the Committee, Tammy thanked everyone for their time and adjourned the meeting at 2:45 p.m.

