



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**

June 5, 2015

The Original Oyster House, Spanish Fort, AL
10 am-Noon

In attendance: Casi Callaway, Mobile Baykeeper; Bob Chappelle, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce; Renee Collini, Dauphin Island Sea Lab; Jennifer Denson, Partners for Environmental Progress; David England, Dauphin Island Sea Lab; Leslie Gahagan, City of Foley; Charles “Skip” Gruber, Baldwin County Commission; Patric Harper, U.S. Fish & Wildlife; Patti Powell, ADCNR; Phillip Hinesley, ADCNR; Bob Howard, EPA Region IV; Jamal Kadri, EPA, Office of Water; Fred Leslie, ADEM; Susan Rees, Army Corps of Engineers; Chris Thomas, EPA Region IV;

Staff present: Kelley Barfoot, Tiffany England, Rick Frederick, Tom Herder, Christian Miller, Amy Newbold, Roberta Swann

1. Call to order: Chris Thomas called the meeting to order at 1005, and initiated round-the-table self-introductions of meeting participants.

2. Approval of minutes: Mr. Thomas asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the March 20, 2015 EC meeting, which was made by Jennifer Denson and seconded by Commissioner Gruber. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Directors Report: Roberta Swann

Ms. Swann indicated that her report would consist of a summary of the annual work plan and a report out on the Program Evaluation.

Ms. Swann’s overview of the Work Plan for October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016 included **“key areas” within the budget** that included:

- \$10K for continued support for development of a monitoring framework.
- \$10K for year two of an Auburn University stormwater study to recommend BMPs at strategic locations (partially funded through a New York Community Trust Grant).
- \$10K to support development of a volunteer ecosystem monitoring program, including creation of volunteer water quality monitoring through schools (to supplement \$40K of reprogrammed funding for which Training and Education RFPs have been released).
- \$20K to support production of short videos on issues, programs, and projects.
- \$27,793 for interpretive signage, to support the Create a Clean Water Future campaign, and to fund mini-grants.

Ms. Swann anticipated match funding from local government to total \$70,000 as follows: \$20,000 from Mobile County Commission, \$15,000 with the City of Mobile, and \$15,000 with the Baldwin County Commission, and \$20,000 from other smaller various municipalities.

Ms. Swann provided brief summaries of **highlights of the coming year** that included:

- Habitat and SAV mapping as a precursor to development of a Coastal Habitat Restoration Plan.
- Implementation of a comprehensive monitoring program and condition gradient development for the D'Olive Watershed.
- Watershed Management Planning for Bon Secour River, Fish River, Wolf Bay (about which we'll talk with Phillip West), and West Fowl River.
- WMP Implementation, including
 - D'Olive Watershed – further restoration of degraded creeks.
 - Three Mile Creek – the first leg of trail system funded through Outdoor Legacy Grant and Sybil Smith Trust. Low Impact Development practices at the University of South Alabama (with guidance from University) will be considered at a first meeting scheduled for June 11.
 - Eight Mile Creek – with mapping in place, we anticipate holding a meeting with Merceria Ludgood and Troy Ephraim to discuss potential septic tank pump outs).
 - Fowl River – with a targeted WMP release of September 30, Marlon Cook's sediment analyses have triggered thoughts of seeking Outstanding Alabama Water status.
 - Bayou La Batre – engagement with stakeholders is being undertaken through living room conversations (with 25 people attending the first meeting).
- Preparation of a comprehensive recreation plan for the coastal area. Mobile County is interested in ecotourism opportunities. This plan will determine what we have to do to improve access and will inform locations of new access points.
- Conduct one Conservation Easement Workshop.
- Support trail development along Three Mile Creek.
- Implement next phase of Create a Clean Water Future campaign.
- Produce video targeting business sector on ways to improve stormwater management.
- Continue development of on-line marine planning tool.
- Produce White Paper on changes needed to strengthen local governance of coastal resources and increase home rule.
- Initiate a Create a Clean Water Future Service Day.
- Establish watershed consortiums for Three Mile Creek and Fowl River Watersheds (similar to the Intergovernmental Task Force in D'Olive).
- Identify a citizens group in D'Olive watershed.
- Establish a school-based volunteer ecosystem monitoring program.
- Establish a mini-grants program for watershed groups.

After Ms. Swann concluded her summary, Mr. Thomas asked for a motion to approve the 2015-2016 Work Plan. Ms. Callaway provided the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Gruber and passed unanimously.

Before moving on to Committee Reports, Mr. Thomas touted the Fox 10 News video taken and broadcast the previous day at Joe's Branch Tributary JB restoration in which Rick Frederick, Ashley Campbell, and Emery Baya spoke about the project.

4. Committee Reports

Science Advisory Committee – Fred Leslie reiterated much of what transpired at the June 2 meeting of the SAC, the minutes of which will be posted on the MBNEP website. Topics included Renee Collini's update of NFWF projects, a presentation by Richard Fulford of the Gulf Breeze EPA Lab, Commitment Agreement forms, data aggregation efforts, and Tom Strange's presentation on LDI as a proxy for stress.

He reviewed efforts to develop RFPs for SAV and high-resolution habitat mapping, which Ms. Newbold addressed. She noted only Barry Vittor and Associates bid on the SAV mapping and they provided two bids: one for one-meter resolution and one for one-foot resolution. With one-foot resolution costing approximately twice as much, Patric Harper recommended using imagery with one-meter resolution and gathering imagery twice in a single year to facilitate comparison with past efforts. The SAC recommended SAV mapping be undertaken twice in the same year with one-meter resolution.

Another issue discussed was a potential soil survey. MBNEP was approached by the Mobile County Soil and Water Conservation District who inquired about the possibilities of performing a soil survey for the two-county area. Mobile and Baldwin counties' soils were last surveyed in 1964 and 1980, respectively. While Mobile County's survey is sixteen years younger than Baldwin's, it is of much lower resolution, so updated surveys of higher resolution are desirable.

Project Implementation Committee – Co-Chair Patric Harper reported proposals for Bon Secour River planning were received, and review comments are due on June 19. In a recent PIC planning meeting, an Environmental Compliance Working Group – similar to the informal Friday afternoon meetings of resource managers a decade ago - was recommended to aid in efforts to obtain permits for projects. Ms. Powell reported that Carl Ferraro has been charged with formation of a "Regulatory Efficiencies Working Group," which might be adaptable to PIC needs. Dr. Rees added that the federal government has a Regulatory Efficiencies Working Group and she would provide contacts.

Mr. Harper announced that the next PIC meeting would be held on July 14 at the Killian Room of the International Trade Center in conjunction with an earlier Coastal Clean Water Partnership Steering Committee meeting. Tentatively, CWP will meet at 1000, the PIC will meet at 1230 or 100, and lunch will be served.

Ms. Callaway asked when the Apalachee-Tensaw Watershed was slated for planning, and Ms. Swann responded that it would likely be the last of those currently funded. Ms. Powell characterized it as the "hardest of the bunch." Ms. Swann mentioned the State's CIAP-funded assessment and acknowledged it will be the most difficult and the last.

Government Networks Committee – Co-Chair Commissioner Skip Gruber provided the update of the GNC meeting directly preceding the EC meeting. With regard to RESTORE funding, he

summarized there was no money expected real soon. He reported Jamal Kadri updated the GNC on the Program Evaluation and Ms. Swann provided a watershed management planning overview. Craig Baab of Alabama Advocacy addressed the GNC on home rule and discussed a bill passed in the last session. Commissioner Gruber characterized the bill as a little relief, but not enough. Commissioner Gruber reported the Homeowners Hurricane Initiative resolution sent to Governor Bentley resulted in a “thank you” letter from the Governor. The Commissioner mentioned the importance of government networking and touted the participation of elected officials from Washington and Clark counties.

Community Action Committee – Co-Chair Leslie Gahagan reported the CAC met a couple of weeks ago and she supplied the following highlights:

- A fund-raising workshop for community groups is scheduled on June 19 with Tammy Herrington.
- Another workshop will feature a highly-successful Washington High School (Pensacola, FL) student water monitoring program. The program is studied in AL as a way of informing efforts to engage high school students and local 4H programs in watershed planning and implementation.
- The CCWF campaign (through Kelley Barfoot) has supplied media guides for all Baldwin County school football programs (except Gulf Shores HS).
- Christian Miller spoke about the Clean Water Future campaign at a conference in Gadsden, AL, and feedback was very positive.
- Ashley Campbell and Ms. Gahagan will attend an annual Soil and Water Conservation District Conference in Greensboro, NC in late July and present the Create a Clean Water Future Campaign.
- Co-Chair Casi Callaway reported outstanding results (obtained through Kelley’s survey to gather metrics prescribed in the CCMP five-year Education and Outreach Strategy). Most annual goals were accomplished in the first six-months of the year.
- Christian Miller released the volunteer ecosystem monitoring program RFPs for training and education.
- A CCWF Action Day is being planned for spring of 2016. Hopes include having multiple municipalities declare a day of community stewardship activities in lock-step with the business community.

Ms. Swann commented on the survey, which was useful in gathering numbers from community events. She expressed that it will be more difficult to track other implementation efforts with surveys. She offered “kudos” to Kelly on the monthly newsletter to the CAC and offered that she is considering making it an “NEP thing” rather than just a “CAC thing.”

Business Resources Committee – Co-Chair Jennifer Denson said the main goals of the BRC are education and outreach. She expressed Rick Frederick is doing “an amazing job” reaching over 200 business leaders and getting them out on Three Mile Creek.

She reported Creek Fest, on May 9, was a big success, celebrating the restoration of TMC with over 300 people in attendance, and she paraphrased Rick, who said Tricentennial Park provided a vision of what TMC can be.

She reported on the four-month market analysis and research campaign with Lewis Communications to show how to promote the CWF brand and encourage better behavior. The Lewis presentation included 110 slides and a lot of information and structure. A subcommittee is analyzing what to pull out of this to develop an action plan/strategy for the next phase of the campaign.

Rick Frederick commented that we have hosted a lot of canoe trips to get people out on the water. We are planning similar strategies for other watersheds with the same purpose.

Finance Committee – Co-Chair David England reported the FC met in April to discuss the budget, revenue sources, and grants as well as ways to develop local government buy-in and getting “skin in the game.” No solution has yet been determined, but we will investigate other NEPs to see how they encourage financial support of project implementation.

5. Old Business

None

6. New Business – EPA Program Evaluation, Findings Presentation – Jamal Kadri, U. S. EPA Headquarters, Office of Water

Chris Thomas introduced Jamal Kadri and touted “all that he offers.” Mr. Kadri said kind words about his experiences in Mobile as a member of the EPA PE team. He described the team including him (since John McShane retired), Bob Howard from Region IV, and Rob Pirani, Director of the New York Harbor NEP. He explained having Directors on PE teams, since Rob would take away a lot of what he saw here back to his own program.

Mr. Kadri reviewed the purpose of National Estuary Program Evaluations:

- To ensure adequate progress is being made in CCMP implementation and that continued EPA support is warranted
- To highlight environmental results.
- To highlight strengths and challenges in program management.
- To demonstrate continued stakeholder commitment.
- To share the achievements and lessons learned between the NEPs as well as other coastal watershed programs.

Mr. Kadri showed a map with all 28 NEPs. He said EPA develops a logic model of programs, who rate themselves on issue areas. They conduct an on-site visit and then prepare a letter that summarizes their findings. The letter must be completed before the end of the fiscal year and then shared.

Recommendations in the 2010 PE included looking at the Management Conference structure to promote a broader, more collaborative stakeholder process. He said the new CCMP helped develop the Committees of the Management Conference further. They also recommended a Finance Plan update to identify diversity of funding sources, and MBNEP has demonstrated the ability to pull together different pots of money.

He said the team would choose which strengths to focus on, and he displayed the following:

- Excellent approach and presentation for the new CCMP.
- Commitment and promotion of watershed management planning and implementation.
- Strong relationship with the State of Alabama agencies resulting in excellent collaboration and leverage.
- Ability to match and aggregate a variety of funding sources to achieve on the ground projects and results.
- Habitat preservation and restoration efforts.
- Outreach and public involvement.

With regard to challenges, he displayed the following:

- Monitoring – Provide leadership for a coordinated approach to monitoring water quality and ecosystem status and trends within the NEP service area
- Enhanced Engagement of Local Governments – Engaging local governments through greater investment and implementation of WMPs.
- Coordination of Restoration for Greatest Benefit – Engaging and building the capacity of Management Conference partners in providing the science-based approach through the CCMP to restore and protect coastal resources.

He said the Coastal Branch is investigating how to better “tell the stories” of the NEPs. In response to a question about rating of NEPs, Mr. Kadri responded all programs have been through the process twice. He acknowledged the process is onerous, and he said the EPA is investigating how to make it easier for programs doing a good job. He said they are looking at Program Evaluations and pulling out examples.

Chris Thomas said EPA recognition helps the NEP do a better job, and he commented the watershed management planning being undertaken around Mobile Bay has been performed in an exemplary manner.

Several EC members, including Bob Howard and Patti Powell offered kind words of recognition, and Ms. Swann said that her “takeaway” from the PE process is how seamlessly the MBNEP staff works as a team, and she offered her thanks.

7. Announcements/Other

- Ms. Swann thanked Dr. Rees and the Corps for helping to develop the northern Mon Louis Island restoration. She called the restoration development “harrowing” with sediment and its availability the greatest challenge. She credited Dr. Rees for her encouragement and collaboration in its development. Ms. Powell echoed that from the NFWF perspective, it has been “stunning” how helpful the Corps has been.

Dr. Rees called it a “team effort,” crediting Senator Hightower and the Beneficial Use of Dredged Material program. Ms. Swann summarized the strategy, which involves obtaining material for marsh restoration/creation (to approximately 1996 footprint) from the permitted offshore Fowl River disposal site, using the already-mobilized equipment to dredge the Fowl River navigation channel (with funding from the State Deepwater Horizon Impact fund), and replacing the material borrowed for the restoration project with material dredged from the navigation channel.

- Dr. Rees announced the Corps is working for the State on a Comprehensive Coastal Plan, and input is being sought from stakeholders on visions and potential impediments captured in a large GIS database. Meetings will be held in north Baldwin County (Bay Minette) on Tuesday, June 9, from 1000-1200; in western Baldwin County (Fairhope) the same day from 1500-1700; and in south Baldwin County on Wednesday, June 10, from 1000-1200. Phillip Hinesley added meetings were also being scheduled for north Mobile County and west Mobile County.
- Dr. Rees reported the State and USGS are undertaking an AL barrier island assessment funded through a NFWF grant. Their scope will involve habitat mapping for Dauphin Island, so planned habitat mapping under the Coastal Habitat Restoration Initiative won't have to include DI mapping.
- Ms. Callaway commented on the implementation of a Greenway Initiative following release of the Three Mile Creek WMP. She commented on a Crepe Myrtle Trail ride, with access granted by the Airport Authority.
- Ms. Swann noted a TIGER Grant proposal had been submitted by the City of Mobile to "Bring Back Broad Street." She reported MBNEP approached the City to connect the complete streets design to the beginning of the bike trail and they City agreed, including the connection.

8. Adjourn

Ms. Callaway made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:45. Jennifer Denson seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.