

Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Executive Committee Meeting
Blakely Classroom, Five Rivers Delta Center, Spanish Fort, AL
June 7, 2016, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

In attendance: *Rep. Randy Davis, Alabama House of Representatives; James Lyons, Alabama State Port Authority; LaDon Swann, Mississippi Alabama Sea Grant Consortium; Mayor Troy Ephriam, City of Prichard; John Valentine, Dauphin Island Sea Lab; Beth Thomas, Alabama Power; Fred Leslie, Alabama Department of Environmental Management; Larry Parsons (proxy for Susan Rees), United States Army Corps of Engineers; Bill Sisson, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce; Ruth Carmichael, Dauphin Island Sea Lab; Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County Commission; Mimi Fearn, Dog River Clearwater Revival; Leslie Gahagan, City of Foley; Phillip Hinesley, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR); Judy Haner, The Nature Conservancy; Patric Harper, US Fish and Wildlife; Darrelyn Dunmore, Strategic Wealth Specialists; Eliska Morgan (proxy for Patti Powell), ADCNR.*

MBNEP Staff Present: *Roberta Swann, Amy Newbold, Rick Frederick, Renee Collini, Christian Miller, Dixie Pomerat, and Ben Brenner*

1. Call to order (Eliska Morgan, proxy for Patti Powell)

Ms. Morgan called the meeting to order at 10:05 am and participants provided around-the-table self-introductions.

2. Approval of Minutes (Eliska Morgan)

Ms. Morgan asked if there were any comments or revisions to the minutes from March 4, 2016 Executive Committee Meeting, no comments or revisions. Bill Sisson made a motion to approve the minutes, and Merceria Ludgood seconded the motion.

3. Directors Report (Roberta Swann)

Ms. Swann asked the committee whether paper copies of the minutes should be provided, or sent only electronically. Consensus from the committee was that meeting minutes will be provided electronically ahead of the meeting but not printed and provided at the meeting.

Ms. Swann gave an update on the **Estuary Status and Trends** activities since the last Executive Committee. Ms. Swann mentioned that the Science Advisory Committee coordinator, Renee Collini, will be leaving soon to go work full time for Sea Grant, and that MBNEP will be looking for a replacement SAC coordinator. Ms. Swann then gave a status report for the effort to update the Mobile County soil survey to the same resolution as Baldwin County. MBNEP received \$50k from Mobile County to support this work.

Transitioning to the **Ecosystem Restoration and Planning** activities, Ms. Swann stated that The Nature Conservancy is under contract to develop a habitat and watershed comparison tool. MBNEP held a meeting of the Project Implementation Committee last week to identify datasets that should be incorporated into the tool.

Ms. Swann briefly touched on the status of each of the watershed planning and implementation efforts ongoing throughout both counties. From the original NFWF funding, seven watershed plans are underway or have been completed. There is approximately \$252k left that will go towards the

Tensaw-Apalachee and Wolf Bay watershed management plans. The RFP will go out once the Federal RESTORE money is in place. Ms. Swann requested that the Executive Committee think about the best approach for the Tensaw-Apalachee WMP. MBNEP is considering forming a workgroup to develop an approach for the Tensaw-Apalachee watershed. The Mon Louis Island tip restoration project is currently under construction. MBNEP received a grant from the Alabama Emergency Agency to fund dredging to 11 feet. The Bayou La Batre/West Fowl River/Dauphin Island watersheds were combined to form the MS Sound Watershed planning effort. The first community engagement is scheduled for June 16th. MBNEP combined stakeholder meetings with the USACE Dauphin Island work, at the request of USACE so we could collaborate on outreach. The Bayou La Batre watershed is now approximately 80% complete. MBNEP is starting to focus on West Fowl and Dauphin Island. Mobile County recently completed a drainage study for Toulmins Spring Branch to complement work by Auburn University. MBNEP will be combining products to work with the County on how we will implement this plan. MBNEP is working with the City and County to incorporate low impact development (LID) measures in the Three Mile Creek Watershed.

Ms. Swann touched on the status of **Technical Assistance and Capacity Building** activities, highlighting that this year's Coastal Marine Planning grant will be used to finalize the online visualization tool and to continue data development including development of a Phase 1 cultural resources study for priority areas around MS Sound. This data will provide information for oyster resources. MBNEP's Community Action Committee is focused on supporting grass roots monitoring. MBNEP is utilizing approximately \$20k to restock monitoring supplies for volunteer monitoring. At the last CAC meeting there was a presentation on Water Rangers, a visualization data portal out of Canada. MBNEP will support enhancing the Water Rangers product for the coastal Alabama to include the ability to facilitate data transfer from Water Rangers to Alabama Water Watch.

For **Education and Public Involvement**, Ms. Swann highlighted that the newsletter will be coming out by the end of June. MBNEP is also developing a series of short videos, including a new video on Low Impact Development. MBNEP continues to support the Clean Water Future (CWF) campaign, including the recent launch of a new and improved website. www.cleanwaterfuture.com.

Ms. Swann went over MBNEP's budget of approximately \$21M. Ms. Swann asked any comments or revisions to the budget. erceria Ludgood made a motion to approve the budget, and Judy Haner seconded the motion.

Ms. Swann gave an overview of **MBNEP's 2016 Annual Work Plan**. MBNEP will continue to support monitoring framework including incorporation of social/ecosystem indicators. MBNEP received an additional \$100k from EPA, to develop the ability to incorporate automatic updates of EPA national datasets into the watershed/habitat comparison tool. MBNEP will be working with the MLK Ave. Redevelopment Corporation to develop and pilot a Conservation Corps program in Three Mile Creek. MBNEP plans to submit a grant application to NFWF in partnership with MLK and the Student Conservation Association. The first year will focus on invasive species (Federal RESTORE – bucket 2 funding). MBNEP is hoping to develop a workforce to help manage invasive species and implement the drainage improvements. Ms. Swann described MBNEP's continued commitment to supporting the Clean Water Partnership Non-Point Source Pollution Specialist. The CWP Director has left to work for Soil and Water Conservation District, and CWP is currently working on a transition plan. MBNEP's annual plan includes resources for watershed road signage and videos. MBNEP continues to work on the Dauphin Island Traditional Ecological Knowledge/Climate Impacts

video, which is scheduled to be finished this summer. Ben Brenner is helping MBNEP with additional videos for the Create a Clean Water Future (CWF) website. MBNEP will continue to support the Dauphin Island Sea Lab Discovery Hall Program which will include curriculum to teach volunteer monitoring as part of teacher programs.

Ms. Swann asked if there were any comments or edits to the annual work plan. A motion was made to approve the annual work plan by Jimmy Lyons, and Darrelyn Dunmore seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Committee Reports (MBNEP Management Conference Co-Chairs)

Science Advisory Committee Report

Mr. Fred Leslie gave an overview of the Science Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting on May 25, 2016, which included an update on the status of all the watershed management plans; an update on the habitat mapping efforts; an update from the NRCS on the Mobile County Soil Survey work; an update on the Submerged Aquatic Vegetation mapping effort (should be finished in July 2016). Renee Collini (MBNEP/Sea Grant) covered the preliminary survey results for the TNC tool and talked about the currently available storm surge models. General consensus was that EESLR storm surge data is preferential. SAC also agreed modeling should be done across the two counties once rather than watershed by watershed. SAC also discussed MBNEP's approach for the upcoming State of the Bay Report, specifically highlighting different methods for synthesizing data. The SAC will form a working group.

A recommendation was made by the Executive Committee that MBNEP work with the NRCS Resource Conservation and Development Programs. Merceria Ludgood offered to send MBNEP RC&D points of contact. A suggestion was also made to add an Ag person on the Executive Committee. MBNEP will look into bringing a Ag representative into the Executive Committee. A recommendation was made to convene a working group of the Government Networks Committee to focus on irrigation and water withdrawal issues.

Project Implementation Committee Report

Ms. Judy Haner gave an update on the status of watershed management planning and implementation. The development of the Bayou La Batre watershed management plan is 80% complete. The Bon Secour and Dog River watershed plans will be completed by the end of year. For the D'Olive Watershed, Tiawassee is now substantially complete, and restoration is beginning in other stream reaches throughout the watershed. MBNEP is now ready to move towards implementation in the other watersheds that have completed watershed management plans. The effort to dredge Fowl River to 11 ft. is underway. MBNEP is currently working to gather information on how to prioritize restoration projects through the development of a watershed comparison tool. The PIC sent a survey out to each of the MBNEP committees asking members to prioritize datasets. However, currently we've only received 37 responses. Ms. Haner will be sending out another email encouraging participation. The Watershed Comparison Tool will incorporate social factors and the ecological effects of sea level rise. The tool will allow MBNEP to evaluate habitat suitability which will be essential in how we implement the recommendations in the WMPs. Currently, it cost ~\$30k to do SLR and storm surge modeling for each of the watershed management plans. MBNEP is looking at ways to be more efficient and do comprehensive modeling once across both two counties. We can then apply these cost savings to do more in these watersheds (like hydrologic modeling).

Government Networks Committee Report

Ms. Merceria Ludgood gave an overview of the last Government Networks Committee meeting where Charles Angell updated the GNC on efforts to reduce the cost of coastal wind insurance. Alabama and other coastal states are working together to mitigate wind storm damage with a small grant program. They've had two meetings. Governor Bentley announced an agreement with Alabama Insurance Underwriters Association. The GNC sent a resolution to the governor supporting the Homeowners Hurricane Insurance Initiative (HHII) group. The GNC is evaluating the legal barriers for stormwater management (home rule). We are partnering with the Sea Grant legal program to look at existing ordinances to identify what we can go to the legislature for. A recommendation was made for the GNC look into Senate Bill 76 implementation.

Community Action Committee Report

Ms. Leslie Gahagan gave an update that after the split of the Community Action Committee (CAC) from the Community Resources Committee, the CAC approved new purpose, goals and objectives. The CAC is focusing on volunteer water quality monitoring, and building capacity. At the last CAC meeting, Mobile Baykeeper presented the Water Ranger Tool. The tool was well received, because it is perceived to be more appealing to younger groups. The CAC also discussed moving forward with political and legislative training and additional Alabama Water Watch training. Discussion followed Ms. Gahagan's update, and it was clarified that the CAC's focus on water quality monitoring would include trash and marine debris. It was also clarified that ADEM does utilize third party data.

Business Resources Committee

Ms. Darrelyn Dunmore started off the update on the BRC activities by reiterating that the key to integrating businesses is education and outreach. The current focus of the BRC is to increase watershed tours and increase membership and participation from Baldwin County. BRC is looking for a specific goal for the businesses to focus on.

Mr. Rick Frederick then highlighted a recent presentation at a Partners for Environmental Progress (PEP) meeting where approximately 70 members of the business community were in attendance. Several people came up to Mr. Frederick afterwards inquiring about participation in BRC. Mr. Frederick has also been engaged in the steering committees and the public outreach meetings for the watershed planning efforts. For example, in Bon Secour Mr. Frederick gave presentations to the Foley Optimist and Gulf Shore Lions Club about Bon Secour and other watershed planning efforts scheduled in the near future, like Wolf Bay and Little Lagoon. As a result, many expressed interest in getting involved in the planning efforts. Mr. Frederick also highlighted a recent tour led by MBNEP of D'Olive Watershed for Congressman Bradley Byrne, Commissioner Chris Elliott and the Mayor of Daphne, Dane Haygood. The BRC in the last quarter has gained four new members. The next meeting will be held in 2-3 weeks, where an additional 2-3 more people are expected to join. The BRC continues to work with the business community to become Clean Water Future partners, and to start utilizing the CWF resources. Recently Mobile County sponsored CWF PSAs (videos) before all movies shown in Mobile County movie theaters. In addition, four billboards went up for CWF, and we received notification that a BRC member wants to sponsor an additional billboard. MBNEP also sponsored CWF bags and provided tours at the recent national River Rally conference held here in Mobile. Furthermore, the Clean Water Future Campaign has been presented across the state by Leslie Gahagan (City of Foley) and Ashley Campbell (City of Daphne). Several MS4s (Birmingham and Pelham) have inquired about incorporating CWF into their programs. Suggestion

was made for MBNEP to integrate Clean Water Future with the “Leave only Footprints” campaign, as well as, to incorporate the CWF logo on the Coastal Cleanup advertisements and materials.

Finance Committee Report

Ms. Roberta Swann gave a brief report on the Finance Committee as a proxy for David England, who was not in attendance. Mr. England is focused on making the finance committee more valuable to the MBNEP. Mr. England would like the Finance Committee to form a three to five-year strategic plan. Mr. England is also requesting a co-chair for this committee.

5. Old Business (Roberta Swann)

Ms. Swann led a discussion about the Executive Committee adopting By-laws. Ms. Swann would like to form a workgroup to develop and finalize the bylaws. Ms. Swann indicated that MBNEP received the final Program Evaluation letter from EPA indicating that MBNEP passed the evaluation. Ms. Swann also highlighted that the National NEP program has been officially reauthorized through 2021. Historically congress has appropriated funding through EPA. The new appropriation changes the allocation for EPA administration of NEPs from 40% of the appropriations to 5%, beginning in 2018. MBNEP will receive an additional \$750k in 2018. The additional funding will be set aside for a competitive grant program.

6. New Business (Roberta Swann)

Ms. Swann announced that MBNEP will be hosting a Community Solutions Fellow from Malaysia named Joannie Jomitol. Joannie will assist MBNEP in incorporating low impact solutions like rain barrels into low income areas of Three Mile Creek.

Ms. Swann also announced that the Executive Committee needed to approve new co-chairs for both the Community Action Committee (CAC) and Community Resources Committee (CRC). For the co-chair of the Community Action Committee, the CAC has nominated Mimi Fearn. For the Community Resource Committee, the CRC has nominated Tammy Herrington and Mark Berte. Ms. Swann requested a motion to approve these new chairs. A motion was made by Merceria Ludgood, and seconded by Jimmy Lyons. No discussion. Motion passed unanimously

7. Other/Announcements (Roberta Swann)

Ms. Swann played a short video on the progress in D’Olive Creek between I10 and Hwy 90 for the Executive Committee.

Adjourn - Eliska Morgan adjourned the meeting at 11:50 am.