



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Government Networks Committee Meeting**

October 23, 2013

**Original Oyster House
Spanish Fort, AL**

Program

Welcome

Patti Powell, State Lands Director, ADCNR

Introduction and Background

Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County Commission

Charles "Skip" Gruber, Baldwin County Commission

Restoring Coastal Alabama: The State Perspective

Eliska Morgan, Executive Director, Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council

Environmental Restoration: The National Fish and Wildlife Perspective

Michael Sharp, Director, Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund

A Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan for Alabama

Roberta Swann, Director, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program

Communicating Local Needs and Understanding State Priorities: Government Networks Committee

Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County Commission

Charles "Skip" Gruber, Baldwin County Commission

THE ASK

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The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Government Networks Committee was established to bring State agencies and regional government administrators together with local officials of Mobile and Baldwin counties to more effectively communicate local needs/understand State agency functions and priorities. The goal of this committee is to articulate innovative ways to improve communications and management of our coastal environment.

In attendance:

James Adams, *Mayor Town of Mount Vernon*; Vince Calametti, *AL Department of Transportation*; Jerry Carl, *Mobile County Commission*; Jeff Collier, *Mayor Town of Dauphin Island*; Marlon Cook, *Geological Survey of Alabama*; Tucker Dorsey, *Baldwin County Commission*; Brett Dungan, *Mayor City of Bayou La Batre*; Charles “Skip” Gruber, *Baldwin County Commission*; Dane Haygood, *Mayor City of Daphne*; Phillip Hinesley, *Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources*; Dr. Veronica Hudson, *Councilwoman City of Saraland*; Scott Hughes, *Alabama Department of Environmental Management*; Steve Jenkins, *Alabama Department of Environmental Management*; Tim Kant, *Mayor City of Fairhope*; Merceria Ludgood, *Mobile County Commission*; Joe McKissick, *Monroe County Commission*; Michael McMillan, *Mayor City of Spanish Fort*; Eliska Morgan, *Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources/Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council*; Charles Murphy, *Mayor City of Robertsdale*; Wanda Parris, *City Clerk of Gulf Shores*; Patti Powell, *State Lands Director Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources*; Sam Rawls, *City of Chickasaw*; Rhondel Rhone, *Clarke County Commission*; David Sessions, *AL House of Representatives*; Michael Sharp, *National Fish and Wildlife Federation*; Carl Simpson, *Washington County Commission*; Phillip West, *City of Orange Beach*; Tom Williams, *City of Satsuma*; Nicole Woerner, *City of Orange Beach*

MBNEP Staff: Kelley Barfoot, Tiffany England, Debi Foster, Christian Miller, Roberta Swann

Commissioners Merceria Ludgood and Skip Gruber welcomed participants. Speakers included Ms. Patti Powell, ADCNR-State Lands Director, Mr. Michael Sharp, NFWF-Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund Director, Ms. Eliska Morgan, Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council Executive Director, and Ms. Roberta Swann, MBNEP Director. Commissioner Gruber provided opening remarks. Gruber spoke on the importance of collaboration and working together.

Mr. Michael Sharp gave an overview of the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund. Mr. Sharp provided types of projects needed to move forward, an overview of new gulf funding for coastal restoration, key provisions of plea agreements, preliminary project selection criteria, opportunities for restoring and conserving coastal habitats and enhancing populations of living resources, governance plan structure, and current payout schedule.

Ms. Eliska Morgan provided an overview of the Alabama Recovery Council’s efforts and described the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund Components, “buckets”. She described the Direct Component Criteria that includes 35% equally divided among the five Gulf Coast States for ecosystem restoration, economic/workforce development, job creation, infrastructure, and tourism/seafood promotion. The Council-selected Restoration Component includes 30% plus interest managed by the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council for ecosystem restoration under the Comprehensive Plan. The Spill Impact Component includes 30% divided among the five Gulf Coast States according to a formula to implement State Expenditure Plans, which require approval by the Council. The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Science Program includes 2.5% plus interest provided to NOAA for a monitoring, observations, science and technology program. The Centers of Excellence Research Grants Program includes 2.5% plus interest allocated to the Gulf Coast States for Centers for Excellence.

Ms. Morgan gave an overview of the current ten (10) member Council including Council Member Roles and Responsibilities. The Council includes the Governor of Alabama, Director of Alabama State Port Authority, Chairman of the Baldwin County Commission, President of the Mobile County Commission, Mayor of the City of Bayou La Batre, Mayor of the Town of Dauphin Island, Mayor of the City of Fairhope, Mayor of the City of Gulf Shores, Mayor of the City of Mobile, and Mayor of the City of Orange Beach. She stated each member of the Council is entitled to one (1) vote, all decisions are made by majority vote, and the RESTORE ACT states administrative duties for the Council may only be performed by public officials and employees that are subject to the ethics laws of the State of Alabama. One of the first official actions by the Alabama Council was to create a Strategy Map (*strategy map can be viewed in presentation*). Ms. Morgan stated in May 2013, the Council designated the Alabama Department of Conservation to serve as the Administrator for RESTORE ACT funds. The Draft Treasury Regulations were released on September 5, 2013 and is open for public comment for 60 days. The Council's Project Information Sheet was released on October 8, 2013 and will be open for public comment for 30 days. All documents can be viewed at www.restorealabama.org. Ms. Patti Powell then gave an overview of the NRDA/ Federal Council.

Ms. Roberta Swann presented to the group an overview of the MBNEP's Management Conference. She described the mission of the MBNEP, its establishment and roles and responsibilities. She talked on the importance of protecting and preserving our coastal habitats and the stressors that impact our critical habitats such as urbanization. She showed a comparison of urbanization from 1974 to 2008 of Bayou Sara, Lower Bay Minette Creek, Fly Creek, Dauphin Island, Little Lagoon and Dog River (*comparisons can be viewed in presentation*). She asked the group to think of our coastal habitats from a business perspective of asset management. She asked them to consider what we have and where it is, who controls it, who possesses it, what its true value is and what can be done to decrease losses related to it (*coastal habitats*). She stated the answers to these questions would be the charge of the MBNEP's Management Conference. The charge will be to coordinate efforts to assess trends, identify causes, develop relationships, develop an Action plan (CCMP), coordinate implementation, and monitor effectiveness. Ms. Swann described the path to a Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan that includes citizen input, identification of ecosystem stresses and prioritizing areas for restoration efforts.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.