

**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Project Implementation Committee Meeting
Wednesday, July 14, 2015
Killian Room, International Trade Center**

Minutes

Attendees:

L. G. Adams (ADCNR/Weeks Bay NERR)	Sherry Allison (Allen Engineering)
Kina Andrews (City of Mobile)	Michael Barnett (Tetra Tech)
Emery Baya (Thompson Engineering)	Dan Bond (City of Gulf Shores)
Leah Bray (Southeast Watershed Forum)	Roger Burke (Tetra Tech)
Dianne Burnett (SARPC)	Ashley Campbell (City of Daphne)
Jamie Childers (Tetra Tech)	Natalie Ellington (EPA Region IV)
Paige Felts (Volkert)	Carl Ferraro (ADCNR-SLD)
Leslie Gahagan (City of Foley)	Janice Godwin (Gulf Coast RC&D)
Craig Hall (Mobile County SWCD)	Judy Haner (The Nature Conservancy)
Patric Harper (US Fish & Wildlife Service)	Bob Harris (Alabama State Port Authority)
Reid Harvey (ACF)	Doug Heatwole (Ecology & Environment)
Phillip Hinesley (ADCNR, SLD)	Bob Howard (EPA Region IV)
Matthew Hinton (City of Spanish Fort)	Patti Hurley (ADEM)
Allison Jenkins (AL CWP)	Jim Jeter (AL Forestry Commission)
Teddy King (AL Dept. of Public Health)	Joey Koptis (Baldwin County NRCS)
James Landry (ADEM)	Kara Lankford (Ocean Conservancy)
John Mareska (AL MRD)	Shannon McGlynn (ADEM)
Kristine McKay (EPA Region IV)	Casey McCorquodale (Payne Env)
Randy Nicholas (Mobile County SWCD)	Mark Ornelas (ADEM)
Justin Rigdon (ADEM)	Kari Servold (Dewberry)
Randy Shaneyfelt (ADEM)	Mike Shelton (WBNERR/ADCNR-SLD)
Peggy Stowers (SE Watershed Forum)	Sabra Sutton (CH2M Hill)
Chris Warn (Dewberry)	Brad Williams (Baldwin County NRCS)
MBNEP Staff: Roberta Swann, Rick Frederick, Christian Miller, Tom Herder	

Takeaways

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1230 by Patric Harper. Self-introductions were made around the room.

2. Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Harper asked for any deletions, additions, changes to the minutes from April 21, 2015. Hearing none, he called for a motion to approve the minutes. Teddy King made the motion, which Carl Ferraro seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Chair's Report

Ms. Haner shared “Takeaways” from minutes of the most recent meetings of Management Conference Committees, including the Community Actions Committee (CAC), Business Resources Committee (BRC), Science Advisory Committee (SAC), and Government Networks Committee (GNC). (These can be found at [http://www.mobilebaynep.com/what_we_do/meeting_minutes_and_presentations/.](http://www.mobilebaynep.com/what_we_do/meeting_minutes_and_presentations/))

4. Old Business

A. Progress Reports/Updates on Watershed Management Planning

1) Bayou La Batre – Chris Warn (Dewberry)

Mr. Warn first credited the Mobile County Soil and Water Conservation District and the MBNEP as partners, then listed members of the Dewberry Project Team (reflecting the six things people value from the CCMP), including himself (Environmental Health and Resiliency); Dr. Mike Magnoli, Policy and Management Consulting Group (Culture and Heritage); Dr. Just Cebrian, Dauphin Island Sea Lab (Habitats); Doug Robison, ESA (Water Quality); Dr. Bret Webb, South Coast Engineers (Shorelines); and Ed Morgereth, Biohabitats (Access). He said that the Plan would follow the nine key elements of the EPA and the six identified values of the CCMP.

So far, stakeholder outreach and engagement and watershed characterization efforts are under way. A Steering Committee has been assembled and meeting, small group meetings have been conducted, even in living rooms of interested stakeholders; PowerPoint presentations have been adapted to Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Laotian to reach those audiences, and the project was presented at a City Council meeting.

Towards Watershed Characterization, a kickoff meeting and watershed tour were conducted on May 5 and 6. Base maps have been developed, existing data is being gathered, and data gaps have been identified. A science team watershed tour to identify monitoring locations was conducted on July 6, and a monitoring plan is being developed with participation in water quality and wetlands monitoring of Alma Bryant High School students.

Dewberry is seeking historical anecdotes related to the apparently channelized Carl’s Creek to inform the watershed characterization.

Under Environmental Health and Resiliency, major challenges involve geography, with the town center in a floodplain and extremely vulnerable to storm surge and localized flooding. Community concerns include debris in waterways, flooding, and hurricanes. A sea level rise vulnerability assessment will be undertaken, along with SLAMM and SLOSH modeling.

Challenges related to Culture and Heritage include extreme community diversity; integrating tourism; different user groups that include agriculture, fishing, and aquaculture; and limited economic diversity. Community concerns include the health of the bayou and Porterville Bay, seafood industry sustainability, community awareness, and future impacts from development.

Invasive species, lack of transition zone between uplands and the deep channel, and differences between upper and lower watershed ecosystem types provide challenges related to Habitats.

Wetland protection, sustainable fisheries and nurseries, and adequate refuge for wildlife concern the BLB community.

While a TMDL exists for pathogens, the major challenge to the Water Quality portion of the team is the lack of available data, with existing reports dated. The community is concerned with keeping water swimmable and fishable, trash in the waterways, and the impacts of pollution on aquaculture and fisheries. The team intends to develop a monitoring program, gain a better understanding of watershed hydrology and water quality, and to investigate pathogens.

Shorelines are challenged by a dredged channel, steep banks with little riparian transition, the fact that much of the Bayou is privately owned, and the dilapidated City docks. The community is concerned over maintenance of navigability for industry, debris in the upper Bayou and flooding, and ensuring a safe harbor.

Challenges to the Access team include unavailability of GIS data, private ownership of most of the Bayou, underutilized City docks in poor condition, the breadth of users (from kayakers to commercial fishermen), and differing pressures for highest and best use of public land. The community hopes to retain public access to the Bayou, recreation safety in the Bayou, and provision of more recreational opportunities. Identifying parcel ownership will be the first step towards addressing those concerns.

As the watershed characterization continues, a watershed canoe tour is scheduled for July 23, vulnerability assessments based upon SLAMM and SLOSH modeling will be undertaken, the monitoring plan will be complete and begin implementation in late July or August, and the WMP outline will be finalized with MBNEP input.

A discussion followed the presentation with Phillip Hinesley mentioning available GIS data, Carl Ferraro noting that GOMA may have already done SLAMM modeling, and some talk of shorelines and islands.

2) Bon Secour River – Leslie Gahagan (City of Foley)

Ms. Gahagan reported that Volkert was selected to undertake development of a WMP and work is underway to get them under contract by next week. Some clever branding has already been developed, with “BSR” and “Mullet – It’s what’s for dinner” bumper stickers.

3) Dog River – Christian Miller (MBNEP/CACWP/MASGC)

Christian Miller stood in for Lee Walters of Goodwyn Mills & Cawood, who is on vacation, to provide a “quick update.” An initial Steering Committee meeting was held on June 4, and key stakeholders were identified. The SC worked towards branding/developing an identity. More Clean Water Future will be incorporated.

The GMC-led project team is working through a literature review, compiling existing data, and identifying data gaps. The next Dog River WMP Steering Committee meeting will be held on July 23, and Marlon Cook will present the completed Dog River sedimentation analysis.

4) Fowl River – Christian Miller (MBNEP/CACWP/MASGC)

Mr. Miller continued with an update of Fowl River WMP development, also led by GMC. The deadline has been extended into December, 2015. Data collection has been extended to include

more summer sampling, but data collection is largely complete and shifting into analysis. Water quality analysis includes plots and regressions for many parameters, and “hot spots” have been identified for restoration and acquisition. Marlon Cook has completed and submitted his Fowl River Sediment Loading Analysis, and he calls it “one of the most pristine watersheds that he’s seen in Alabama. Potential exists for designation of Fowl River as an Outstanding Alabama Water. Such a designation would ramp up regulatory protection in the face of developmental pressures.

Coastal/Shoreline analysis is nearly complete, and the GSA sediment analysis will be incorporated into the WMP. Bret Webb will present coastal recommendations at the next Steering Committee meeting, to be held on July 21st/ One large-scale public meeting remains, and it is targeted for August.

B. Progress Reports/Updates on Watershed Management Plan Implementation

1) D’Olive Watershed – Ashley Campbell, City of Daphne

Ashley touted the teamwork associated with implementation in the D’Olive Watershed that resulted in a Gulf Guardian Award (for the construction of the Joe’s Branch Step Pool Conveyance funded under an ADEM 219 Grant).

In Joe’s Branch, where the step pool conveyance was completed years ago, Phase II Restoration of tributary JB is complete but planting and fine tuning are in progress. Other sites in the Joe’s Branch Subwatershed are at 50% design. The April, 2014 rain event resulted in costs that have essentially doubled. NFWF understands the impacts of this event, and will be approached in August to determine if funding will be increased. If funded, projects are set to begin construction in October.

Restoration of Joe’s Branch is at the 60-70% design phase. Currently, Thompson is waiting on ALDOT to design culverts under I-10. Construction is targeted for early 2016.

The Tiawasee restoration managed by the City of Daphne and co-funded through NFWF and CIAP is at the 60% design stage. She noted that this project is being undertaken in an area where the degradation is not well understood. John Curry is hydrologically modeling the project, which should be shovel-ready in October or November. The City is seeking 319 funding to meet budgetary demands. 319 funding has been secured for Trione Park improvements, and the City is looking for increased school involvement.

Two projects, one on the west side and one on the east side of County Road 13 should be ready for construction in Fall, 2016.

Daphne is involved in several smaller scale projects to reduce sedimentation: three FEMA projects, three NRCS projects, and a TAP Grant funded restoration/improvement of Alligator Alley that includes bioretention, pervious pavers, and grade control with step pools.

Design of the largest of the NFWF-funded restoration projects, the D’Olive Creek Restoration near Mile Marker 37 on I-10, is nearing completion.

Ms. Campbell was asked what caused the anomalous problems at the Tiawasee Creek site. She responded that the answer to that question is usually development, but there's not a lot of development upstream of the impacted area. She noted that soils are highly erodible, and that a single tree falling could lead to complete stream bank failure.

Casi Callaway was enthusiastic about Ms. Campbell's promotion of the Create a Clean Water Future campaign (the logo is conspicuously displayed on her project map, and she was wearing a tie-dyed CCWF shirt). She expressed hopes that Leslie Gahagan and Ms. Campbell will spread the word next week in North Carolina and that the logo would become a national presence.

LG Adams asked about restoration of the bluffs by the City of Spanish Fort. Matt Hinton responded that the City is currently seeking additional funding for more work and that he would provide an update when possible.

Ms. Campbell Forever Wild

2) Fowl River – Tom Herder (MBNEP)

Tom Herder showed aerial photos of the northern end of Mon Louis Island on the southern side of the mouth of Fowl River. He noted that this area has experienced recession that greatly exceeds that of more southern reaches of MLI and that with the distance between the Mobile Bay shoreline and an embayment on the lee side of the island that serves commercial fishing interests at only a little more than 100 feet, this wetlands peninsula is extremely vulnerable to a breach during a tropical weather event. He pointed out that the existing four acres of wetlands boast exceptional diversity and function, and project goals to stabilize the vulnerable northern tip include construction of a creation of an additional four acres of wetlands at the area's 1996 footprint.

He noted that the major obstacle to project implementation has been securing adequate amounts of fill material of sufficient quality for marsh creation. The original intention was to dredge material from the Fowl River navigation channel for hydraulic placement behind the rock breakwater for marsh creation. The material in the navigation channel was found to be too silty. The alternative developed was to obtain material from a nearshore area identified by Thompson as suitable, but the Corps did not consider this feasible in the current regulatory environment. Local upland disposal sites were investigated for suitable material. The material at the closest Fowl River disposal site was unsuitable, but material at the Port Authority Disposal Area near Degussa was of sufficient quality and quantity, but at \$35 to \$40 per yard, was prohibitively expensive to project implementation.

Corps Operations personnel developed an alternative strategy. Following cursory analysis, material at the offshore (but nearshore), and already-permitted USACOE Fowl River disposal site appeared to be suitable for marsh creation, and Vibracore samples by Thompson confirmed this. With \$800K available through a Sen. Bill Hightower-facilitated State Deepwater Horizon Incident Grant, a strategy was developed to borrow suitable material from the offshore disposal site, and, with dredging equipment already mobilized, to subsequently dredge the shallow Fowl River navigation channel using Corps protocols and pumping dredged material back to replace what was borrowed from the disposal site.

A Joint Individual Permit Application was made submitted to the Corps and ADEM in early June, with a comment period extending until July 20. The Corps is awaiting a wave reflection and sediment transport analysis from Thompson/Royal, and pending permit approval the project team hopes to go to bid for construction in early fall.

3) Three Mile Creek

a. Toulmin Springs Branch – Tom Herder (MBNEP for Dr. Latif Kalin, Auburn)

With Dr. Kalin in Turkey, Tom Herder presented major points revealed during development of a hydrologic/hydraulic model for the TSB Watershed.

- There is not tidal impact in most areas of the watershed.
- Big rains did not generate big flows, so the model was calibrated for depth only.
- Trash and debris underlie local problems, clogging drainage waves and causing backups at bridges.
- With only a single sampling, extremely high pathogen counts (practically unsafe for contact) were found at all sites, suggesting issues with sanitary sewer overflows.
- With consistently high phosphate concentrations in at least one site, but low measurements recently, sources of nutrients in TSB watershed appear sporadic.

b. Community Resilience Engagement – Roberta Swann (MBNEP)

The community engagement strategy for the TSB watershed addresses susceptibility of low-income, environmental justice communities to sea level rise with goals to increase residents' understanding of climate change risks and to increase community participation in how they adapt to impacts to promote community resiliency.

Ms. Swann explained the background of the MBNEP-supported Martin Luther King Avenue Redevelopment Corporation Leadership Academy. Community residents were recruited and engaged to assume leadership roles in subsequent planning efforts, including asset mapping and resiliency planning. Academy participants are on deck to help with Phase II of the engagement strategy.

She reported that Kim Pettaway, a USA sociology professor and community member, has been hired to lead community engagement. She has determined that flooding is in the minds of residents, even if climate change and SLR are not. Currently, she is performing windshield surveys and knocking on doors. Three community meetings are planned – July 23, 28, and 30 – followed by a Community Ideas Festival that will allow residents to identify assets most in need of protection and offer ideas to ensure protection and improve community resiliency. The effort is being funded through a New York Community Trust Grant (Mobile, San Juan, Puerto Rico, and New York City have each received funding).

c. Stormwater Park – Judy Haner (The Nature Conservancy)

The Nature Conservancy is working with Ecology and Environment to plan and construct a “stormwater park” in the extreme headwaters of TSB, near Alabama Village between St. Stephens Road and Main Street, just east of I-65. The park will feature wetlands creation to

intercept runoff, store stormwater, and reduce flashiness and improve water quality and aesthetics in this environmental justice community. Match challenges were addressed by approaching the City of Prichard Public Works Department who will perform construction services in-kind.

6. New Business

A. Environmental Compliance Working Group – Patric Harper (U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service)

With increased funding and project implementation from NFWF and RESTORE, Mr. Harper suggested that the establishment of an Environmental Compliance Working Group would be broadly useful towards securing permits as quickly and cooperatively as possible. Carl Ferraro said that he was charged with developing such a working group three years ago to conduct deliberative conversations about what complies or not.

Ms. Swann noted that a model for this idea was the Technical Interagency Committee (or TIC), which served a decade ago to get projects into environmental compliance, since “shovel-ready” involves securing necessary permits. She offered that we don’t need to recreate the wheel but that such a group is definitely needed. She suggested discussing permitting requirements of each participating agency at the next PIC meeting. Ashley Campbell and Bob Howard each offered to participate on the working group.

B. Watershed Planning (What’s on deck?) – Roberta Swann (MBNEP)

Ms. Swann provided a quick report on the progress of NFWF-funded watershed management planning. Volkert is now under contract to develop the WMP for Bon Secour River. Working with the Baldwin County SWCD and with lots of engagement with the Weeks Bay NERR, a Fish River WMP RFQ is scheduled for distribution in September. West Fowl River will follow, and then Wolf Bay, before the Apalachee-Tensaw is pursued.

C. Other/Announcements

- Phillip Hinesley reported that the City of Mobile will hold an open house on the Comprehensive Plan at the Cruise Terminal on Tuesday, July 21.
- Sabra Sutton announced the Alabama Waters Resources Conference will be held September 9-11, 2015 at the Perdido Beach Resort.
- Ashley reported that Eve Brantley and Auburn University are attempting to understand why problems are occurring related to stream bank erosion in areas not built out. She is looking for funding for travel and project implementation.
- The City of Spanish Fort is Moving forward with a Master Plan for the Causeway after the MBNEP Community Action Committee meeting on Friday, July 24 from 11:30 a.m. until 1 p.m.
- Rick Frederick provided details of a Bayou La Batre canoe trip on the morning of Thursday, July 23 and invited attendees to participate.

6. Adjourn A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to adjourn at 3 p.m.

With no other new business, Ms. Haner asked for a motion to adjourn. Sam St. John made the motion, which was seconded by Carl Ferraro and unanimously approved at 3:50.