



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Science Advisory Committee Meeting**

10:00 am – 12:00 pm September 12, 2018

**Killian Room, International Trade Center
250 N. Water Street Mobile, AL 36602**

Agenda

Welcome - review and approval of minutes from previous meeting

Dr. John Lehrter, Dauphin Island Sea Lab

Updates and Presentations

CCMP Estuary Status and Trends 2019-2024

Mobile Bay National Estuary Program

Other Business

Adjourn



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Science Advisory Committee Meeting
Killian Room, International Trade Center, Mobile AL
September 12, 2018**



The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Science Advisory Committee was established to bring area experts together to provide advice, guidance, and recommendations to ensure that MBNEP activities will be conducted in a

scientifically relevant and rigorous manner.

In attendance:

SAC Voting Members Present: Alex Beebe, Don Blancher, Marlon Cook, Brian Dzwonkowski, Steve Heath, Stephen Jones, John Lehrter, Fred Leslie, John Mareska, Randy Shaneyfelt, Tim Thibaut

Phone-in Voting Members: none

Proxy Voting Members: Dottie Byron for Ken Heck, Mikaela Heming for Renee Collini

Other Attendees: Melissa Partyka, Jacob Blandford, Jay Estes, Ted Micher, Patric Harper

MBENP Staff: Jason Kudulis, Roberta Swann, Tom Herder, Christian Miller, Paul Lammers, and Bethany Dickey

Takeaways

- Many thanks to Dr. Ruth Carmichael and Mr. Fred Leslie for their leadership. Welcome incoming co-chairs Dr. Amy Hunter and Dr. John Lehrter.
- Attendees voted YES to proceed with a recommendation to the Executive Committee to abolish the voting member agreement and make the rules of the SAC consistent with the other committees. The EX Committee approved the recommendation at their September meeting.
- Attendees discussed how to increase SAC outputs, how SAC expertise can assist other committees in meeting their goals and objectives, and what subject matter experts are we missing that could deepen our ranks.

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Dr. John Lehrter called the meeting to order at 10:04 CDT. Dr. Don Blancher made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 16th meeting. Mr. Tim Thibaut seconded the motion. Dr. Lehrter thanked outgoing co-chairs Dr. Ruth Carmichael and Mr. Fred Leslie for their leadership over the last five years before turning the meeting over to Mr. Jason Kudulis to guide Estuary Status and Trends (EST) discussion for the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) 2018-2023 update.

The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) held a CCMP Summit on August 30, 2018 to collect broad input for the CCMP update. Nearly 200 scientists, stakeholders, resource managers, decision makers, etc. attended. As MBNEP staff reviewed and synthesized content collected at the Summit and subsequent post-meeting survey, specific to the Science Advisory Committee (SAC), they noted how this committee's membership and contribution to the MBNEP Management Conference have increased since the 2013-2018 CCMP was produced. Now that the SAC's ranks have grown, Mrs. Roberta Swann talked about setting the vision for the next five years and deepening our ranks to include other fields of science. Mrs. Swann asked SAC attendees to consider the following related to expansion of the SAC's role:

- What subject matter experts is the committee missing that could expand the SAC's role as the nucleus of the Management Conference?
- How do we bring sociologists, economists, socioanthropologists, human ecologist, etc. to the table?
- We really have not talked in the SAC before about heritage and culture, or access. How do we measure those trends and who do we need to recruit to make that happen?
- How can we better use SAC expertise to assist the other committees in meeting their goals and objectives?

- Should the CCMP include an EST goal for the deepening and widening of the ship channel?

While discussing SAC membership attention turned to the SAC Statement of Committee Member Responsibilities (voting member status). The SAC is the only committee with this structure. The thought was if we are going to recruit more members to diversify expertise on the committee the current voting member format could deter new members. Several attendees provided context why the voting member designation was established. Concerns over conflicts of interest and accountability were the impetus. Attendees voted **YES** to proceed with a recommendation to the Executive Committee to abolish the voting member agreement and make the rules of the SAC consistent with the other committees.

Dr. Lehrter echoed Mrs. Swann's point about committee growth and as a new SAC co-chair shared some of his vision and personal experience seeing the evolution of the SAC over the last decade. Dr. Lehrter asked if the SAC could be more proactive focusing on issues of concern or accomplishing CCMP suggested activities? How can the SAC leverage their expertise to projects or research to advance our understanding of estuary status and trends? Furthermore, to assist adding diversity to the committee and increase SAC outputs, moving forward meetings could be focused sessions (ecosystem and the social science topics we want to incorporate) where members drill-down on a specific topic using all the expertise in the room. Would subcommittees for each CCMP values be useful? Mrs. Swann used the SAC led Fowl River Marsh Study as an example. For this project we had funding secured before we put together the team and developed a Scope of Work. If the CCMP EST strategy properly defined, moving forward subcommittees, working groups, or the entire committee could assist CCMP implementation by developing identified projects from the ground up on the front-end, vetting the work through the SAC and then pursuing funding.

At this point in the meeting the group began to discuss line-by-line draft CCMP update EST goals and objectives.

EST-1 Establish data management strategy for Alabama's estuaries and coasts.

1.1 – Establish a data management strategy for Alabama's estuaries and coasts. Facilities now offer greater cloud access and capabilities. Consensus was we do not want to reinvent the wheel. A logical next step is to figure out what all restoration and assessment efforts are doing with their data. DIVER serves as the public NOAA repository for NRDA (may be expanding). DOI has a database. ADEM uses WQX (EPA), formerly STORET. GoMRI is another option for data related to the effect of oil spills (also have GRIIDC). NOAA is developing CMAP. Google has an open data search engine now too. Are any of these parallel or connected to NCEI or one another? Also need to conclude exactly what data are we trying to aggregate. MBNEP data or all Alabama (ADEM, ADCNR, etc.) data into a larger regional/national repository?

The review briefly turned to QAPPs. MBNEP staff noted that any projects collecting data on behalf of MBNEP are now contractually required to provide a QAPP. We are currently using [EPA QA/5](#) requirements as our template. Roberta posed the question: should we review the EPA QA/5 or other QAPP templates and reflect that review and selection process in the CCMP update as an EST activity? YES.

1.1 c – develop policies for using data. A user agreement or policy is needed to create a strategy when MBNEP works with scientist to collect data for a study or restoration project. The challenge is striking a balance between data use/access for resource management purposes and academic purposes. MBNEP is not currently supporting data collection and monitoring for academic/publishing purposes but needs scientists from that world to collect it and understand their need to publish and protect datasets. What agreement or policy needs to be in place, so everyone is happy? Dr. Lehrter mentioned that depending on how funds are

distributed (grant vs. contract) there may be some leeway for how researchers can use the money, consider “exploratory research” versus “specific research.” For clarity the group asked to reword 1.1c to “develop data sharing/data user agreement. To be mindful of both academia and resource management data considerations (timeline to share, peer review process, project advancement, etc.) Roberta asked for a subcommittee to further evaluate the needs of all parties - Missy Partyka, Dottie Byron, Steve Jones, Bret Webb, Renee Collini, and John Lehrter. Will meet and report back to the SAC – looking for an all-inclusive solution.

1.2 – Maintain or improve existing level of coastal monitoring and data analysis. MBNEP envisions continued implementation of the Subwatershed Restoration Monitoring Framework. Developed by the SAC in 2015, the committee should revisit and refine to ensure consistency with other monitoring guidelines throughout the Gulf (i.e. Federal RESTORE, NRDA, etc.). Additionally, MBNEP should have a coastal Alabama monitoring plan that addresses the where how and what we should be monitoring. Not always funding for post restoration monitoring to determine the success or failure of projects. The EST strategy should document a need for committed funding for monitoring as part of restoration activities. Everyone wants data but often do not want to pay for it. How could others advocate for increased state funding for monitoring that advances EST goals and objectives? Perhaps the SAC could produce a “monitoring letter of support” that other Management Conference partners use to educate and advocate.

Where does the deepening and widening of the ship channel fall into the EST strategy, 1.2 or 1.3? Is there a monitoring component to that project we should capture in the CCMP? Permit will undoubtedly require some, but should this group play a role in advising/suggesting monitoring recommendations? November 2019 will be record of decision. All major infrastructure and restoration projects should be required to have monitoring. Perhaps an avenue to also assist acquiring system-wide conditions. Propose promote consistent system-wide monitoring for “activities with a potential for ecosystem modifications.”

EST-2 Establish a process for measuring, analyzing, and communicating change in marine, estuarine, and freshwater ecosystem condition.

2.1- Synthesize monitoring data to develop a watershed condition index to track and communicate trends in watershed restoration and management. Carryover from 2013-2018 CCMP. Now calibrating a watershed condition index for D’Olive using data collected from implementation of the MBNEP subwatershed monitoring framework. Completed work in Fowl River, Wolf Bay and Fish River should enable MBNEP to target these watersheds for a condition index during this CCMP update cycle.

Could we use past and ongoing work to produce a coastal condition report, like the State of the Bay but more quantitative and use specific indicators for a Bay condition. Perhaps not feasible on a Bay scale currently. Dr. Lehrter referenced an indicator workshop from years ago but we have not been able to aggregate and implement sufficient monitoring of those recommendations. Additionally, EPA coastal condition reports are five-year snapshots that are pretty comprehensive. Could we assist with development of that report or leverage it with local resources to develop one? Estuarine and freshwater are represented in EST-2 activities, how can we add muscle to “marine” in EST-2?

EST-3 Model and predict connections between ecosystem and provision of valued ecosystem services

3.1- Manage system for multiple services. Feedback was minimal with most comments suggesting edits to better capture an activity’s intent. Quantity and quality of condition, water quality, etc. should relate to

ecosystem services people value, create a “so what” to communicate connections. Ran out of time, will further deliberate at the next meeting.

At 11:59 Dr. John Lehrter made the motion to adjourn and Mr. Tim Thibaut seconded it.