

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Mobile-Tensaw-Apalachee Watershed?

A river's watershed includes all of the land that drains, when it rains, as stormwater runoff into the channels and streams that make their way to the river. Human activities in a watershed are closely linked to the health of its receiving waters. The MTA Watershed straddles the border between Mobile and Baldwin counties and drains from headwaters flowing from the northern boundary of the two counties before discharging into the northern tip of Mobile Bay. This watershed complex covers an area of 366.6 square miles which includes six U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) subwatersheds: 1) Farris Creek/Barrow Creek, 2) Big Chippewa Lake, 3) Mitten Lake, 4) The Basin, 5) Grand Bay, and 6) Tensaw River/Apalachee River.

What is a watershed management plan (WMP)?

A WMP is an essential first step in maintaining or improving water quality in a watershed and mitigating the impacts of future development. It describes existing environmental conditions and challenges, while offering a vision and strategy for protecting the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the watershed and its waters for wildlife and human uses.

Why is this being done?

The MTA Watershed is a special resource serving many important functions for its surrounding communities. It is livelihood for some, a recreational amenity for others, and of regional economic driver for many. It is necessary to better understand the condition and value of the watershed to identify opportunities to ensure its long-term health. Concerns include loss of wetlands and shoreline related to stormwater runoff, sea level rise, and recreational boat wakes and continuing erosion and sedimentation related to runoff and development activities.

What types of issues will the watershed management plan address?

Taking more than a year to develop, a watershed management plan identifies problems that threaten water quality. Each plan recommends prioritized solutions to those problems and even suggests potential funding sources to pay for those recommendations. Additionally, a plan examines the sources and causes of pollution in the watershed. Through community engagement efforts, MBNEP identified six values of shared importance to our coastal quality of life: Access; Beaches and Shorelines; Fish and Wildlife; Heritage and Culture; Resilience; and Water Quality. This Plan will focus particularly on the environmental management to ensure these values are sustained and protected.

What is the role of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP)?

The mission of the MBNEP is to promote the wise stewardship of the quality and living resource base of the Alabama's estuarine waters. With a purpose to build consensus and ensure collaboration, MBNEP will provide oversight and coordination support for WMP development.

Who oversees the process? Who is on the steering committee?

The process is community-driven and led by a steering committee. This group is a cross-section of the community and includes representatives from businesses, civic groups, environmental organizations, government agencies, residents, and others. It also includes representation from different geographic locations within the watershed.

What will the steering committee do?

The steering committee will guide the planning process from start to finish, including preparing recommendations based on community input and technical analysis.

What is the role of the consultant team?

The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program has awarded the WMP contract to a consultant, Wood PLC. The consultant team has extensive experience throughout the region and the United States developing WMPs and similar plans. The consultant team will facilitate the process, conduct technical research for the WMP, and draft materials for review by MBNEP, the steering committee, and the public, that will form the basis of the WMP.

How long will it take?

The planning process is expected to complete by August 2021. Implementation of the WMP will be ongoing.

How can I get involved?

We need your input! Several community meetings will be held to gather information from those who live in the watershed or have an interest in the Mobile-Tensaw-Apalachee Watershed. Observations, concerns, and suggestions that are shared at these meetings will help inform the WMP. In advance of these meetings, interested parties can share their thoughts and suggestions by responding to a survey at mobilebaynep.com/delta. For more information, you may also contact Herndon Graddick via email at hgraddick@mobilebaynep.com or phone at 251-422-3947.