



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program  
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**  
September 25, 2015  
The Original Oyster House, Spanish Fort, AL  
10 am-Noon

**In attendance:** Ruth Carmichael, Dauphin Island Sea Lab; Renee Collini, Dauphin Island Sea Lab; Randy Davis, Alabama House of Representatives; Jennifer Denson, Partners for Environmental Progress; Leslie Gahagan, City of Foley; Charles “Skip” Gruber, Baldwin County Commission; Jenny Jacobson, United States Corps of Engineers; Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County Commission; James Lyons, Alabama State Port Authority; Patti Powell, ADCNR; William Sisson, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce; LaDon Swann, MS-AL Sea Grant, John Valentine, Bob Howard, EPA Region IV; Chris Decker, EPA Region IV; Chris Thomas, EPA Region IV;

**Staff present:** Kelley Barfoot, Jeff Dute, Tiffany England, Rick Frederick, Tom Herder, Christian Miller, Amy Newbold, Roberta Swann

**1. Call to order:** Patti Powell called the meeting to order at 10:05, and initiated round-the-table self-introductions of meeting participants. Roberta Swann introduced the new MBNEP team member, Jeff Dute who will be working to increase MBNEP’s education and outreach through articles and social media.

**2. Approval of minutes:** Ms. Powell asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 5, 2015 EC meeting, which was made by Jennifer Denson and seconded by Commissioner Gruber. The motion passed unanimously.

**3. Directors Report: Roberta Swann**

• **Financial Report:**

- Ms. Swann provided a Financial Report starting with a summary of financial support from local, state and federal sources as shown in the table below. Highlighting that the City of Daphne increased their level of funding support from \$10,000 to \$30,000. Furthermore, the City of Foley added funding support in the amount of \$7500. Other funding levels either remained the same or were reduced. Ms. Swann highlighted that Mobile would pass their budget the following Monday, but overall, MBNEP expects to see a net gain in support for next year. The Finance Committee is working on an outreach plan for cities and communities to encourage and maintain funding support.
- Ms. Swann then showed a chart of EPA funding with the total budget and the available balance which includes continued support for Alabama Water Watch and work to develop new videos for education and outreach in Mobile County schools. MBNEP is also redoing the Clean Water Future website.

- Ms. Swann then gave an overview of the MBNEP external grants which total approximately \$12 million. Most of the external funding comes from the National Fish and Wildlife Federation (NFWF). Ms. Swann mentioned that the table shown did not include the recent NFWF amendment. Patti Powell then highlighted that a major reason that MBNEP was able to secure additional NFWF funds was due to the fact that MBNEP was able to demonstrate success when restoration of the first leg of Joe's Branch withstood the April 2014 200-year flood event. D'Olive Creek project (\$3 million) should begin construction in January. In Tiawassee Creek, MBNEP sub awarded the contract to the City of Daphne (\$550,000), and should begin bidding on construction about the same time. Joe's Branch, D'Olive and Tiawassee Creek construction should all begin first part of 2016. Fowl river watershed management plan is almost done, and we continue to work with the Army Corps of Engineers on the permit for Mon Louis Island. Fish River is in the Request for Qualifications process. For Three Mile Creek, MBNEP is working with Kim Pettway to engage the community in Toulmins Spring Branch on community resiliency, storm surges, and how the community can adapt to their changing environment. MBNEP in partnership with ADCNR is updating their Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) mapping. The summer imagery has been collected and is currently being analyzed. MBNEP is also mapping all of the habitats to establish baseline. MBNEP sent out a Request for Proposals (RFP) and received 7 proposals. MBNEP has pulled together a review panel of experts for the review and ranking of those proposals.
- **Estuary Status and Trends**
  - Fowl River Sediment Study – Marlon Cook gave a presentation at the Government Networks Committee on his sediment study. Marlon indicated that of the 80 plus sediment studies that the Geologic Survey of Alabama has conducted, Fowl River is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most pristine watershed in the State of Alabama behind the Yellow River. That watershed plan is nearing completion. MBNEP met with ADEM and EPA to discuss the possibility of dedicating Fowl River as an Outstanding State Resource Water. Fowl River is currently listed for Mercury, so another category might have to be created.
  - Soil Survey – MBNEP is pursuing updating Mobile County's Soil Survey. Mobile County's soil data is at a much lower resolution than that of Baldwin County.
  - SAV Mapping – Field surveys are underway. MBNEP will have a SAV trend analysis at the end of the SAV project (July 2016).
  - MBNEP and the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL) have begun discussions about creating a data repository at the DISL to aggregate house all of the data that MBNEP is collecting for public use.
  - Monitoring Framework for D'Olive – SAC developed the Monitoring Framework to measure ecosystem improvements (water quality, flow and habitats) and is implementing the framework in the D'Olive watershed. Ms. Swann then showed the first month of sonde data from Joe's Branch and D'Olive Creek. Amy Newbold went over the data in the charts, explaining that post restoration, we are not seeing the

variability and swings that we are seeing in pre-restoration D'Olive Creek. MBNEP's goal is to have the water quality after the restoration of D'Olive Creek, resemble that of Joe's Branch.

- Fowl River Watershed Plan target release date of October 20, 2015. MBNEP will have an open house at Theodore High School.
- Bayou La Batre is underway. Community engagement includes living room conversations with over 250 people, where they provided information that was translated into three different languages.
- Dog River – Is just getting started. There have been a couple of community engagement and steering committee meetings.
- Bon Secour – For the first time ever, Bon Secour was a Coastal Clean-up site as a result of the Watershed Management Planning process. Bon Secour will also have two community cleanups within the first 6 months of the plan.
- Fish River is being managed by the Baldwin Soil and Water Conservation District. The Request for Proposal went and out, and they are currently pulling together the selection committee. The selection committee includes Randy Roach, Steve Heath, and Rick Wallace.
- West Fowl River, Delchamps Bayou, Wolf Bay, and Tensaw-Apalachee are next. MBNEP will set up a workgroup to define the Tensaw-Apalachee watershed planning geographic scope.
- Ms. Swann highlighted a map of the MBNEP priority watersheds which included the NFWF funded watershed plans, and the watersheds currently implementing watershed plans, and 19 watersheds that are currently on the Draft Funding Priorities List for federal RESTORE funding.
- **Ecosystem Restoration and Protection**
  - Plan Implementation Status:
    - In the Three Mile Creek Watershed MBNEP is working with MLK Avenue Community Resiliency Leadership Academy. The MLK Avenue CRLA is working with their councilman to go to the City of Mobile and introduce a resolution endorsing and supporting the TMC Watershed Management Plan. MBNEP did this in D'Olive and now the residents of TMC are taking ownership and doing this in TMC.
    - MBNEP secured funding for the first leg of the TMC trail by ghost writing a grant for the City of Mobile. Mobile County Health Department received a grant to do a kayak launch adjacent to Tricentennial Park.
    - MBNEP cultivated a partnership with University of South Alabama to address stormwater issues on the University property. Working to bring Auburn Low Impact Development/Green Infrastructure (LID/GI) experts to USA to discuss LID/GI options for USA.

- MBNEP is working with Mobile County to do drainage studies/improvements.
  - Three Mile Trace - There is a \$1 million plus HUD grant near MLK Blvd. HUD has embraced TMC watershed plan.
  - The Nature Conservancy is working on a Stormwater park in the headwaters of Toulmins Spring Branch. TNC is currently applying for an EPA Gulf of Mexico Program grant for this project.
- Technical Assistance and Capacity Building:
    - MBNEP has been conducting boat trips in TMC, Bayou La Batre River, and Dog River
    - Rick Frederick (MBNEP) has been out in the community giving presentations and speaking with the media.
    - MBNEP continues to support the Create a Clean Water Future Campaign (more to come in BRC report).

#### 4. Committee Reports

- Business Resource Committee (Jennifer Densen):
  - MBNEP (Rick Frederick) has delivered 15 presentations promoting the Mobile Bay NEP, improved stormwater management, and estuary value:
    - 9 presentations to civic organizations (Rotary/Kiwanis) in Mobile and Baldwin counties.
    - 6 additional presentations to MAWSS, Mobile Municipal Association, Leadership Baldwin County, Coastal Alabama Partnership Board of Directors, Mobile Bay Green Drinks, and Green Coast Council. Reached over 450 individuals.
  - Conducted 5 boat tours highlighting stressed habitats of the estuary:
    - Three Mile Creek (3)
    - Bayou La Batre River
    - Dog River
    - 3 additional tours scheduled for 2015 on Three Mile Creek and Bon Secour River
  - Increased awareness of watershed management planning through media outlets:
    - 3 TV spots on Fox 10 News
    - 1 radio spot- Community Corner with Carmen Brown
    - Partnered to host a Quarterly Media Mixer
  - Development of the Create a Clean Water Future campaign:
    - Partnered w/ Lewis Communications to hold a strategy workshop
    - Lewis presentation of market analysis
    - Subcommittee formed to develop a marketing plan for the campaign
    - Discussion and planning on best way to implement the plan
- Science Advisory Committee (Ruth Carmichael):
  - The SAC reviewed and updated their by-laws in early 2015 to improve their process and requested that all voting members sign a Voting Commitment Form.
  - Assisted in the development of the language for the Habitat Request for Proposals.
  - Conducted an inventory of all state and federal monitoring sources

- Continued work on the Biological Condition Gradient and developed the habitat mosaic approach.
  - In partnership with the PIC, currently working with The Nature Conservancy on their Freshwater Assessment Tool to develop scope of what data and functionality MBNEP wants to incorporate into the tool.
  - Developed a Monitoring Workgroup to define the implementation of the Monitoring Framework in D'Olive Creek.
  - Roberta, Amy, and Renee traveled to Montgomery, AL to meet with ADEM and EPA to discuss how ADEM will utilize MBNEP data. MBNEP will continue to work with ADEM to develop a data management plan and Quality Assurance Action Plans to support the Monitoring Framework.
- Project Implementation Committee (summary provided during Director's Report)
    - PIC FY 2014-2015 Accomplishments:
      - PIC by-laws were reviewed to determine whether modifications were required. Only minor changes were recommended.
      - Towards CCMP Goal ERP-1 (Improve trends in Water Quality in priority watersheds...):
      - GSA completed a sediment loading analysis in Fowl River as a precursor to watershed management planning.
      - The PIC developed the Coastal Habitat Restoration Initiative (Phase 1) that provided GEBF funding to undertake seven comprehensive watershed management plans. CWMPs for Fowl River, Bayou La Batre, Bon Secour River, and Dog River are currently in development. Fish River, Wolf Bay, West Fowl River, and Tensaw Apalachee watersheds will be the subject of planning next.
      - WMP implementation in the following watersheds:
        - D'Olive: Restoration activities in Joe's Branch, D'Olive Creek and Tiawasee Creek are in construction and design phases
        - Eight Mile Creek: Septic tank survey was completed
        - Three Mile Creek:
          - City received funding to begin construction of the bike/walking trails from MLK Avenue to Tricentennial Park.
          - Mobile County Health Department secured funding for canoe/kayak launch, stormwater BMPs, and further trail development.
          - Dr. Kalin's analysis of Toulmins Spring Branch Watershed continues.
          - TSB Engagement on Community Resiliency led by Kimberly Pettway is underway.
          - Planning for a stormwater park in upper TSB watershed is underway and being led by TNC.
      - Towards ERP-2 (Improve ecosystem function and resilience through protection, restoration, and conservation of habitats):
      - Engineering plans and permitting are nearing completion for more than 1,000 feet of habitat-friendly shoreline protection for vulnerable northern end of MLI.
      - Priority areas of salt marsh restoration will be informed by high-resolution habitat mapping as a component of the CHRI Phase 1.

- Beneficial use of dredge material will be employed in creation of over four acres of salt marsh in northern MLI restoration
  - Barry Vittor and Associates have been contracted to perform SAV mapping of Alabama coastal waters as a component of CHRI Phase 1.
  - An RFP has been released for high-resolution habitat mapping of Alabama's two coastal counties.
  - PIC is investigating/considering expansion of Louisiana TNC's Freshwater Assessment and Coastal Resiliency Tools to include the State of Alabama as a component of development of Restoration Planning Program based upon habitat condition, vulnerability to stressors, and cost-effectiveness.
- Finance Committee (summary provided during Director's Report)
- Government Network Committee (Merceria Ludgood):
  - The Government Network Committee (GNC) decided to not have formal by-laws or signed commitment. The GNC is working on strategies to make the meetings more meaningful and relevant for elected officials. For example, show elected officials outcomes like that of the Joe's Branch project, that show results.
  - One of the issues that GNC discussed over the last year was "Home Rule" especially for basic administrative matters. Thanks to Randy Davis for introducing legislation to give local governments more authority.
  - Local, state, and federal partners attend these meetings. The networking and access to our network is advantageous.
  - Randy Davis had warm words of thanks to both Merceria and Skip for leading the GNC.
- Community Action Committee (Leslie Gahagan):
  - Presentations:
    - Grassroots Groups: 19 / In Attendance: 447
    - Non-Profit Groups: 17 / In Attendance: 892
  - Workshops:
    - Grassroots Groups: 5 / In Attendance: 58
    - Non-Profit Groups: 12 / In Attendance: 422
  - Watershed Planning Participating Groups:
    - Fowl River Area Civic Association
    - Dog River Clearwater Revival
    - The Peninsula of Mobile
  - Estimated number of active Volunteer Water Quality Monitors: 67
  - Community Clean ups: 22 with over 700 volunteers
  - Festival Participation: 13-Grassroots groups and non-profit groups
  - Incorporate Environmental themes into heritage days:
    - Heritage Day on the Water-Graham Creek
    - Blessing of the Fleet-Bayou La Batre
    - Wolf Bay Fishing Tournament-Heritage Handouts
    - Heritage Play Days-Wolf Bay Watershed
  - Target low income communities and fundraise for program: Free field trips to Graham Creek for low-income schools
  - CAC hosted a Fundraising Workshop on June 19<sup>th</sup>

- CAC hosted a Grant Writing Workshop on August 19<sup>th</sup>
- Volunteer Monitoring Program Learning Session on July 9<sup>th</sup> – hosted honor students from Washington High School's Marine Science Academy (Pensacola, FL). MBNEP is exploring how to foster more educational/curriculum-based programs in our local schools.

## **5. Old Business – NONE**

## **6. New Business**

- Patti Powell gave an update on status of the RESTORE funding. MBNEP has two projects on the draft funding priorities list:
  - Watershed Management Plans for 19 additional watersheds
    - Comment period ends on 9/28/15
  - Engineering and Design for Twelve Mile Creek including comprehensive invasive species removal.
  
- Request from Alabama Renewal Group to establish a Non-Profit Sector Committee within the MBNEP Management Conference structure
  - MBNEP received a proposal dated September 18, 2015 that requested that the MBNEP Executive Committee consider and establish a Non-Profit Sector Committee within the MBNEP management conference. The proposal recommended that the Alabama Renewal Group (ARG) serve as the nucleus for the new committee. The proposal stated that the new committee would add an additional layer to the existing leadership structure to support the MBNEP CCMP by:
    - serving as a vehicle for communications to further engage the public regarding water quality, watershed planning, project ideas, restoration decisions
    - adding expertise in implementing the MBNEP's CCMP
    - providing technical assistance
    - Helping identify potential partnerships and collaboration opportunities across Alabama and the Gulf.
  - As MBNEP takes on more watersheds and develops watershed management plans, the Community Action Committee is going to need to focus on supporting grass root organization and their volunteers. The Executive Committee recommended that MBNEP carefully consider the roles and functions of a new committee and how that committee would support the goals of the CCMP without overlapping roles and responsibilities of the existing committees. The Executive Committee also recommended that MBNEP gauge the participation level that MBNEP would expect for this new committee.

## **7. Announcements/Other**

MBNEP's Annual Meeting will be held on December 9<sup>th</sup> at the Battle House. MBNEP is currently looking for sponsors.

## **8. Adjourn**

Ruth Carmichael made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:05pm. John Valentine seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.