

**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program  
Government Networks Committee Meeting  
Original Oyster House, Mobile AL  
February 23, 2018**

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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:

Joseph Abston, Washington County Commission; David Baker, City of Semmes; Scott Bannon, ADCNR-Marine Resources; Hank Burch, ADCNR- State Lands; Diane Burnett, SARPC; Guy Busby, Baldwin County Legislative Delegation; Bradley Byrne, US House of Representatives; John Carlton; Jeff Collier, Town of Dauphin Island; Susan Summerlin, ADEM; Charles ‘Skip’ Gruber, Baldwin County Commission; Bob Holk, Town of Magnolia Springs; Scott Hughes, ADEM; Michael McMillan, City of Spanish Fort; Eliska Morgan, Alabama Gulf Coast Restore Council; William Puckett, Alabama Soil & Water Conservation Committee; Casey Rains, City of Spanish Fort; John F. “Rickey” Rhodes, SARPC; Elizabeth Roney, Bradley Byrne’s Office; Sandy Stimpson, City of Mobile; Margie Wilcox, Alabama House of Representatives; Tom Williams, City of Satsuma

MBNEP Staff: Roberta Swann, Christian Miller, Bethany Dickey, Jackie Wilson, and Ben Brenner

**Takeaways**

- US EPA administrator Scott Pruitt is the new RESTORE Council Chair. The Alabama Restore Council will be selecting the first round of projects in March and a 45-day comment period will follow.
- Congressman Byrne doesn’t expect cuts to discretionary budget that would adversely affect coastal interests, although tough decisions must be made with regard to mandatory spending in order to prevent significant cuts to discretionary budget going forward.
- The recently completed South Alabama Stormwater Regulatory Review provides local municipal officials a tool to review stormwater regulations, highlights inconsistencies in regulations, and provides recommendations for improving stormwater regs across Mobile and Baldwin counties.
- The MBNEP is updating its Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan this year and we will be reviewing and updating the GNC goals and objectives as a part of this process.

Commissioner Skip Gruber welcomed members and each gave a quick introduction. The meeting was called to order at 7:56 a.m. Mayor Mike McMillan moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting, the motion was seconded by Mayor Jeff Collier, and the minutes were approved.

Next on the agenda, Hank Burch gave an update on Federal Restore Council funding. EPA is now the new federal chair for the Federal Restore Council. Alabama TIG will have a public meeting April 19, 2018. The NRDA Draft Restoration Plan 2 will be released soon. Eliska Morgan gave an update on the status of Alabama Restore Council & NFWF-GEBF funding. The deadline for the next round of projects to be entered into the portal was February 16, 2018. The projects will be announced in November.

The Alabama Restore Council has been reviewing projects from the RFE process (60 projects). There should be news on these projects very soon. Please go to [www.alabamacoastalrestoration.org](http://www.alabamacoastalrestoration.org) to sign up for e-mail updates. Deadlines, release of a plan, meetings, and information on funding are all on the website.

Congressman Bradley Byrne gave an update on Federal funding. The Appropriations Bill will be finalized the third week of March. He does not anticipate any cuts being made from programs that are important to communities in coastal Alabama. The issue facing the Federal budget is the amount of mandatory spending now makes up 70% of the total budget. Unless changes occur here to free up money, the discretionary budget will have to be cut to make up for the shortfalls. Congressman Byrne stated that he will be filing a bill that will make everything that is mandatory spending that's not Medicare, Social Security, Tricare, or Veterans' benefits and make it nonmandatory = \$1.2 trillion of spending, which when combined with nondiscretionary portion of the budget = \$2.5 trillion which would increase the ability to reduce the budget.

Congressman Byrne said that a lot of effort went into setting the recreational Red Snapper season to benefit coastal interests. Commissioner Blankenship helped to coordinate all the Gulf States to ensure that the affected states will control the fishery in their adjacent Federal waters. The season will likely be very similar to last season with open days every weekend (Friday-Sunday) from June 1 – September 2, with extended dates over the holiday weekends of July 4th and Labor Day. It will be up to the states to prove they can continue to manage the fishery to maintain this favorable structure.

<http://www.outdooralabama.com/node/2268>

Next, John Carlton discussed the completion of the South Alabama Stormwater Regulatory Review. He reviewed existing municipal and county requirements relating to stormwater and resources management. He then created a matrix from 11 Mobile County municipalities and 14 Baldwin County municipalities plus ADEM and EPA regulations. A few of John's observations:

- Additional efforts are needed to coordinate stormwater requirements with other codes and ordinances not directly related to stormwater management (flood zone, green space, parking, etc.).
- The proverbial "perfect ordinance" was not found (because it probably doesn't exist).
- More consistency is needed in regulations and ordinances within a given watershed.
- Simply copying someone else's ordinances is usually not the best option.

The full report is available on the MBNEP website:

[http://www.mobilebaynep.com/images/uploads/library/Regularory\\_Review.pdf](http://www.mobilebaynep.com/images/uploads/library/Regularory_Review.pdf)

The MBNEP is updating its Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan this year. Each committee will be updating their own strategies. We will be sending out a survey to get the GNC's input.

Meeting adjourned at 8:53 a.m.