



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program  
Science Advisory Committee Meeting  
March 3, 2015  
Killian Room, International Trade Center  
250 N. Water Street Mobile AL, 36602  
10:00 am – 12:00 pm**

**Agenda**

**Welcome & Review and approval of minutes from previous meeting**

Dr. Ruth Carmichael, DISL/USA

**SAC Update – Purpose and Composition**

Dr. Ruth Carmichael, DISL/USA

**Voting Member Commitment Forms**

Dr. Ruth Carmichael/Renee Collini, MBNEP

**Updates for ongoing projects: Habitat Mapping, Biological Condition Gradient, Subwatershed Monitoring Framework**

Renee Collini, MBNEP

**Watershed Management Planning**

Roberta Swann, MBNEP

**Work plan for the year**

Renee Collini, MBNEP

**Adjourn**



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*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 the MBNEP activities will be conducted in a scientifically relevant and rigorous manner.*

In attendance:

Voting Members Present: Tim Thibaut, Fred Leslie, Ruth Carmichael, Steve Ashby, Marlon Cook, Tom Strange, Steve Heath, Alex Beebe, Carol Dorsey, Kevin Calci, Bill Walton, Bret Webb, Dennis DeVries, Just Cebrian, Randy Shaneyfelt, Stephen Jones, Mike Dardeau.

Phone-in Voting Members: Brian Dzwonkwoski, Julian Lartigue, John Lehrter, Becky Allee.

Proxy Voting Members: Dottie Byron for Ken Heck.

Non-voting Members: Ashely McDonald

MBNEP Staff: Roberta Swann, Renee Collini, Tom Herder

**Takeaways**

- Review of the SAC changes included introduction of a new Chair, Co-Chair, staff liaison, discussion of invited voting members, SAC focus areas, and the rationale behind the restructure
  - Action Item: Recommendations to expand focus areas or voting member list should be submitted to Renee Collini
- Bylaw edits were developed and approved for submission to the Executive Committee (See attached) to better capture the role of the SAC within the MBNEP and new procedures including discussion of new Member Commitment Form
- Current and upcoming watershed management plans and the role the SAC should play in that was discussed
  - Action Item: Randy Shaneyfelt will serve as the SAC representative on the steering committees for the new watershed management plans and report back on anything of interest to the SAC
- Action items to fulfill requirements for Year 1 and 2 of the CCMP were developed
  - Action Item: Tom Strange will determine the needs to calibrate the already existing LDI for estuarine conditions and report back next quarter
  - Action Item: Renee Collini will send the monitoring inventory around for updates and report on gaps next quarter.

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Dr. Ruth Carmichael called the meeting to order at 10:00 CST

Minutes from October 21<sup>st</sup> were read. Motion made by Dr. Bret Webb to approve the minutes as they were, motion seconded by Mr. Mike Dardeau. There were no objections to the motion.

Ruth introduced herself as the new Chair and Mr. Fred Leslie as the new Co-Chair. Ruth then introduced the new composition of the Science Advisory Committee (SAC). The goal when selecting members to invite to

be voting members of the SAC was to develop a core group of dedicated people with expertise in specific focus areas. The listed focus areas were: Freshwater, saltwater, water quality, fisheries/trophic interactions, vegetation/marshes & SAV, socioeconomic, sediments/hydrodynamics, land use, and modeling. Ruth then asked if there was anyone or any topic area that was missing. Dr. Bill Walton recommended that economics need to be addressed more clearly and observed that there was not a representative for that commerce, safety, or economics; that the group was primarily made up of ecologists. Bret suggested that we bring in Dr. Steven Scyphers as he is moving back to the area. Ruth informed the group that the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL) was specifically seeking to hire someone specializing in economics and that person could also be considered. The resolving action item from this was to have any recommended focus areas or persons be emailed to Ms. Renee Collini who will communicate this to the Chairs and Ms. Roberta Swann.

The Mobile Bay NEP (MBNEP) bylaws that pertained to the SAC were reviewed. Some language had already been added to the bylaws to encourage discussion and get the ball moving. There was discussion about the goals and objectives of the SAC and clarifying what the purpose of the SAC was. Several points were discussed and clarified and captured in the revised bylaws:

1. The SAC is not the body making the decisions, simply advising the MBNEP who is making the decisions
2. Consensus is not necessary to provide advice to the MBNEP, that there is often value in differing opinions.
3. The SAC will make recommendations to the MBNEP regarding addition or removal of voting members, but the MBNEP will be responsible for inviting individuals to join or leave as a voting member
4. The Chair and Co-Chair will be the representatives for the SAC at the Executive Committee meetings
5. To be considered a voting member of the SAC, you must have a signed copy of the Voting Member Agreement Form on file with the MBNEP

A motion was then made to submit the bylaws as they had been edited (with minor revisions for grammar) to the Executive Committee for change. The motion was made by Dennis and seconded by Mr. Marlon Cook. There were no objections to the motion.

It was also recommended through a series of discussion that the staff and Chairs could work to more clearly define on their end who voting members are and are not through actions such as having name placards for the voting members and listing the difference between voting members and non-voting members or guests in the minutes when reviewing attendance.

Voting Member Agreement Forms were discussed during the bylaws editing. The Agreement form will be reviewed at the next Executive Committee Meeting after which it will be distributed for signing.

Future meetings will be scheduled for the first week in June and the second week in September with the MBNEP Annual Meeting in December being the meeting for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. Renee will send out a Doodle Poll six weeks in advance and the day of the meeting will be circulated no less than four weeks in advance of the meeting.

Renee presented an overview of 3 ongoing SAC projects

- *Habitat Mapping* – SAV and detailed habitat mapping will occur. The SAV RFP is pretty standard, the MBNEP has done it before, the RFP for the detailed habitat mapping will require some help from the SAC. Emails will go out once that point has been reached.
- *Subwatershed Monitoring Framework* – Fred wanted to know how long the monitoring is recommended after restoration projects. Renee responded that the aim is intense monitoring for 3 years based on funding cycles with an attempt to pull back into a more sustainable long-term monitoring.  
Dr. Just Cebrian asked Roberta if these recommendations will be shared with contractors who win RFQs for future watershed planning or restoration. Roberta replied that while monitoring is not part

of the watershed management planning currently, this could be a mechanism by which to incorporate it.

Bret also recommended that community monitoring programs such as those in Wolf Bay, Dog River, and Little Lagoon be incorporated into the framework and recommendations for the specific watersheds.

- *Biological Condition Gradient* – No specific recommendations for the Biological Condition Gradient (BCG) beyond what is already happening.

Roberta discussed the watershed management planning from NFWF funding. Specifically there are 7 watersheds that have been funded in the latest round of funding: Bayou la Batre, West Fowl River, Dog River, Tensaw River, Fish River, Bon Secour, and Wolf Bay. The SAC decided that because Mr. Randy Shaneyfelt is on the steering committees for Bayou la Batre, and will mostly likely be on the other steering committees, the SAC does not need to take any further action, but will look to Randy for reports regarding anything of interest to the SAC or to request help if all seven committees becomes overwhelming.

There was one action from year 1 that has not yet been addressed and this was calibrating a Landscape Disturbance Index (LDI) to estuarine conditions. There was discussion about if it was necessary to develop an LDI and what the benefits were. Mr. Tom Strange commented that the benefit over a landuse index was that you incorporate a decay function as you move away from the stressor to the habitat. He has also already developed an LDI for Mobile and Baldwin County; it just needs to be calibrated for estuarine conditions. The SAC requested that Tom get with Roberta to get specifics on available data and report back next quarter with what it would take to perform the calibration.

The two action items from year 2 were focused around a centralized data repository for coastal AL. There was much discussion regarding who should be responsible for this and what it might look like. Mike suggested that we focus on generating requests for a focused data set and Ruth pointed out that DISL already has the mechanism in place for meeting federal and funding agency metadata standards. Then it was decided that perhaps instead of all data being housed in one place that we develop a portal or dashboard with metadata and data access pathways. To ensure that the points of contacts (POC) for each contributing organization are responsive an MOU will be developed. Roberta discussed a spread sheet developed in 2005 that summarized all current monitoring and metadata. Renee will be sending this around for review and update to then be reported on at the next meeting.

Ruth summarized action items (see above) and adjourned at 12:03 CST.

Changes recommended by the Science Advisory Committee to MBNEP Bylaws Article V Section 5 on March 3, 2015.

SECTION 5: SCIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE The Conference shall establish a Science Advisory Committee that will be made up of area experts. The Committee will ensure that the MBNEP activities will be conducted in a scientifically relevant and rigorous manner, providing advice, guidance, and recommendations to support the purpose, goals and objectives of the MBNEP. It will ~~be established to~~ provide technical advice or conduct scientific review of MBNEP projects/reports/issues/activities. This committee will identify the state of available knowledge and provide a scientific review on particular issues, on planned CCMP actions and on draft technical reports. The committee will provide guidance for quality assurance and technical data gathering and assessment. Gaps in knowledge, needed research, and other information regarding issues and projects will be provided to other committees as requested. The committee will recommend items for annual work plans as appropriate to address scientific/technical needs of the Program.

The Science Advisory Committee Chair and Co-Chair will elect two (2) representatives to will serve on the Conference Executive Committee ~~and will elect its own committee's Chair and Co-Chair~~. Voting, when required, will be by simple majority rule. Voting members are defined by the Committee Member Agreement and to vote a member must have a signed copy registered with the MBNEP.– Voting members will serve a term consistent with the current, five-year CCMP to be evaluated annually by the Chair and Co-Chair. Voting members will be invited and replaced by the MBNEP; the SAC may make recommendations for the MBNEP to consider.