

MEMORANDUM
Weeks Bay Watershed Management Plan

TO: File
FROM: Mike Eubanks
DATE: July 25, 2017
SUBJECT: Stakeholders Working Group Meeting #10
DISTRIBUTION: MBNEP, BCSWCD, Thompson Team, Stakeholders Working Group

1. The meeting was conducted on July 25, 2017, at the Baldwin County Central Annex (on Palmer Street in Robertsedale) between 8:30 and 10:00 AM. Copies of the agenda, draft implementation recommendations, and draft stakeholder workshop agenda are attached. Bob Higgins initiated the meeting with opening remarks. He asked if there were any comments or changes to the last meeting minutes (April 5, 2017). There were no responses so the previous minutes were approved. He stated that this would be the last formal SWG meeting.
2. Mike Eubanks reported the overall project summary:
 - a. Weeks Bay Watershed has a tremendous amount of available data, thanks to efforts by Weeks Bay NERR, Weeks Bay Foundation, Baldwin County, ADEM, MBNEP, and others.
 - b. A brief history of the Watershed was given to emphasize the land cover changes over the past couple of centuries and now accelerated by rapid population growth in Baldwin County. These causes have resulted in the current conditions found in the Watershed. Due to rapid growth in Baldwin County, there has been much attention to address water quality issues such as ADEM's Pathogen TMDL for Fish River, increased nutrient levels in streams and shallow aquifers, increased erosion and sedimentation, etc. About 50% of the Watershed is still used for agriculture, but as the county population continues to rapidly expand more agricultural and forest lands are being converted to developed land uses with more impervious cover.
 - c. While these human impacts have caused some habitat and water quality degradation, there are technologies available to address these issues that have been identified. It will require time and funding to restore and maintain the quality of streams and other key habitats in the Watershed, but in order to do so an active Watershed Management Plan Implementation Team (WMPIT), with a dedicated coordinator, will be required.
 - d. The final plan is not an endpoint but a tool to be utilized by the implementation team to address the identified issues.
 - e. All Thompson Team efforts for the Weeks Bay Watershed Management Plan are to conclude by the end of August when the contract ends; however, the Team is committed to address comments received on the public review draft WBWMP and to prepare the Final WBWMP.

3. Bob started the discussion on WBWMP Implementation. There is a need to have an entity in charge of implementing the recommendations in the WMP, calling meetings of the WMPIT, etc.
 - a. To keep implementation of the WBWMP on track, the Thompson Team recommendation is for the Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District (BCSWCD) to establish a watershed coordinator position. Bob asked Larry Morris to discuss the history and role of the BCSWCD.
 - b. Larry Morris gave a brief background about how the Soil and Water Conservation District was established as a result of the 1930's "Dust Bowl". The concept of the organization was to provide a locally-based group to work as a liaison between area residents/farmers and the Federal Government. There are Soil and Water Districts in every state, and in Alabama there are local districts in each of the 67 counties. Each county district is a part of the state government but formed of local people, with five district supervisors appointed by the Governor. It is a unit of government capable of writing grants. Ronnie Northcutt, a member of our SWG, is the Vice-Chairman of the BCSWCD. The purpose of the BCSWCD is to create a better environment for all people of Baldwin County by sponsoring and promoting a sound program for the protection, development, and conservation of our land, water, woodland, wildlife and all related resources. Larry will be attending the BCSWCD Board meeting on July 26th to further discuss their willingness to move forward with support for establishment of a watershed coordinator position. [Subsequent to this SWG meeting, the BCSWCD approved establishment of the watershed coordinator position.]
 - c. Bob stated he will take ideas from the SWG to draft tasks elements for a "job description" for such a watershed coordinator position. For example, the person needs to oversee implementation of the plan, ultimately replace the facilitation roles of himself and Mike Eubanks, write grants, coordinate with various public and private constituencies within the Watershed. The position should complement (but not duplicate) the roles of those interested in watershed management at organizations like MBNEP, ADEM, WBNERR, Weeks Bay Foundation, the municipalities, and the county.
 - d. Mike Shelton reminded the SWG that BCSWCD provided funding for some of the initial watershed management efforts study back in the early 1990s. The first three watershed coordinators at the WBNERR were funded through a personal services contract by the BCSWCD, and resulted in a good working relationship between the two entities.
 - e. Dick Sute asked about the specific roles of the coordinator? Bob replied by stating the coordinator will fill the shoes of him and Mike Eubanks, call meetings with all the municipalities, pull data and people together, and ensure more things from the plan are getting accomplished.
 - f. Miriam Boutwell pointed out that the information brought to the planners meeting, that has been occurring since November 2016, is now being used for regulation reviews by many of the Watershed municipalities. Meetings like these will help the coordinator inform the city and county what needs to be done. The coordinator would have an overall plan for the Watershed and would work to get it implemented, especially the regulatory section.
 - g. Yael Girard believes the coordinator would see things from a larger view and help bring organizations together to make a greater impact and help facilitate implementation.

- h. Kim Burmeister stated that another role of a watershed coordinator would be to keep elected officials, municipalities, county, and state, informed of ongoing implementation of the WBWMP.
 - i. Shannon McGlynn stated that ADEM has Section 319 money that needs to be focused on water quality improvement, but that a portion of a project implementation grant can be used to help fund a watershed coordinator.
 - j. Dick Sute asked who the coordinator would answer to and who could make changes if things did not work out properly? Bob responded that the coordinator would answer directly to the BCSWCD, but ultimately to members of the WMPIT. Mike Shelton added that part of his duties at the WBNERR is to help implement this WMP regardless whether a BCSWCD watershed coordinator position becomes authorized and filled.
 - k. Bob addressed the Stakeholder Working Group about a motion to support establishment of a watershed coordinator position at the BCSWCD. Steve Heath made such a motion, seconded by Dick Sute, and it was unanimously approved by the SWG.
4. Bob transitioned to discuss the upcoming Weeks Bay Watershed Management Plan Stakeholder Workshop, scheduled for August 16th. The goal of the workshop will be to present the summary of recommendations in the Draft WMP (preliminary list attached to agenda).
- a. Workshop attendees will be divided into groups based on constituencies. Each group will then be asked to review the list of recommendations and identify which are most urgent.
 - b. Bob asked the SWG to take a few minutes to review the list of 20 recommendations, then vote for their top 3 most important. The exercise showed a broad base of support for many of the recommendation, with some “top 3” votes from about half of the participants.
 - c. Mike Shelton suggested that ranking the most important recommendations would be more meaningful with the assumption that the administrative-type recommendations are “givens”, such as establishment of a watershed coordinator, formation of the WMPIT, establishment of an inter-governmental partnership, etc. In fact those administrative-type recommendations could be lumped together. There was general consensus support for this approach. [Subsequently the list was revised for inclusion in the Public Review Draft WBWMP, and is attached for ready reference.]
 - d. Christian Miller suggested reducing the list to short term recommendations versus long term recommendations.
 - e. Dick Sute recommended rewording of the sea level rise recommendation to a more qualitative statement given the uncertainty of long-term quantitative predictions.
 - f. Scott Jackson suggested the use of “on-screen” polling clickers as a way to vote at the workshop. MBNEP has approximately 25 and WBNERR has approximately 50. This provides an instantaneous feedback mechanism to the attendees regarding the group prioritization exercise.
 - g. Scott also suggested breaking the list into a series of questions or groups of projects to vote from.
 - h. Bob asked who should be invited and all agreed to the same groups that attended previous workshop. Mike Shelton suggested inviting presidents of the several HOAs. Kim Burmeister and Miriam will provide a list of some HOAs within the Watershed.

- i. Bob also asked the SWG who would consider being a part of WMPIT and most everyone gave a positive response.
5. The meeting came to a close as Mike Eubanks urged everyone to send comments on the SWG Review Draft WBWMP by Wednesday, July 26, 2017. The 30-day public comment period will start toward end of July/beginning of August. MBNEP will have a link on their website for the Draft WBWMP, and a number of paper copies will be placed around the Watershed. Bob urged the group to also share information regarding the public review period for the Draft WBWMP on their websites and other social media outlets. [Subsequently the WBWMP was revised, uploaded to MBNEP website, initiating the public review on August 2, 2017.] All members of the SWG were urged to attend the Weeks Bay Watershed Management Plan Stakeholder Workshop on August 16, 2017, from 8:30 am – noon. It will be located in the Baldwin County Central Annex Auditorium, 22251 Palmer Street, Robertsdale, Alabama 36567. For any other questions on the workshop, please contact Bob Higgins (251-752-2274, bob@rjhiggins.com).

Prepared by
Courtney Harkness and Mike Eubanks

Attachments:

- a. Meeting Agenda
- b. List of Attendees
- c. Draft Workshop Agenda
- d. Revised WBWMP List of Recommendations [prepared subsequent to SWG meeting]



Weeks Bay Stakeholder Work Group

Baldwin County Central Annex
22251 Palmer Street, Robertsedale, AL 36567

8:30 – 10:30 am July 25, 2017

AGENDA

1. Welcome/Opening Remarks/Approval of Minutes
2. Overall project summary: What did we learn? – Mike Eubanks
3. WMP Implementation – Bob Higgins
4. Workshop August 16th, 2017
5. Next steps



Weeks Bay Watershed Management Plan, Stakeholders Working Group

Meeting, July 25, 2017, List of Attendees

1. Larry Morris, Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District
2. Christian Miller, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
3. Miriam Boutwell, City of Foley
4. Kim Burmeister, City of Fairhope
5. Wayne Dyess, City of Fairhope
6. Shannon McGlynn, Alabama Department of Environmental Management
7. Joey Koptis, Natural Resources Conservation Service
8. Mike Shelton, Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
9. Yael Girard, Weeks Bay Foundation
10. Gerry McManus, Baldwin County Sewer Service
11. Ken Underwood, Homeowner Interest, Magnolia River
12. Dick Sute, Homeowner Interest, Fish River
13. Steve Heath, Homeowner Interest, Fish River
14. Mike Eubanks, Thompson Engineering
15. Courtney Harkness, Thompson Engineering
16. Caroline Garsed, Thompson Engineering
17. John Carlton, Thompson Engineering
18. Mary Mekkers, Thompson Engineering
19. Emery Baya, Thompson Engineering
20. Bob Higgins, Higgins and Associates
21. Scott Jackson, Ecology and Environment
22. Tim Thibaut, Vittor and Associates

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Weeks Bay Watershed Management Plan Stakeholder Workshop

When: August 16, 2017, 8:30 - noon

Where: Baldwin County Central Annex Auditorium, 22251 Palmer Street, Robertsdale, Alabama 36567 (map on next page)

Objectives: (1) Compare findings/recommendations in draft WMP with concerns identified in first workshop. (2) Agree on how to organize to implement the recommendations.

Tentative Agenda

8:30 Presentation: What have we learned, what we are recommending

9:30 Break into small groups with similar goals such as farmers/ranchers/timber, environmental/science groups, developers, businesses, elected officials/planners, and homeowners. Each group works together on an assignment to discuss the results, prioritize recommendations, and develop next steps (what, when, who).

10:30 Each group posts results on walls for review by the entire group

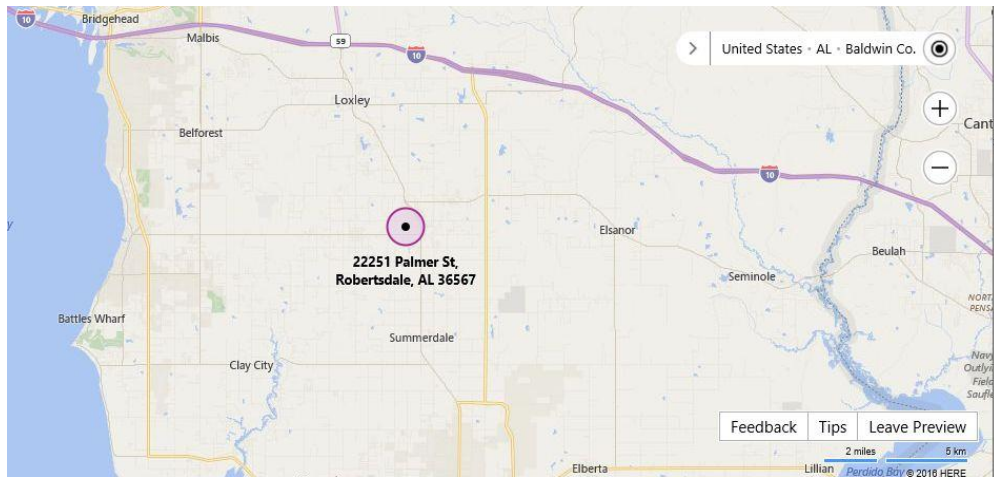
11:00 Entire group discusses key issues and action plans

If you would like to participate, email your name, email address, phone number and interest area to Bob@RJHiggins.com no later than Friday, August 11.

For more information, contact Bob Higgins at 251-752-2274 or Bob@RJHiggins.com

A Watershed Management Plan is an essential first step in preserving water quality in a relatively pristine, tidally-influenced watershed and mitigating the impacts of future development pressures. The watershed planning process uses a series of cooperative, interactive steps to characterize existing conditions, identify and prioritize problems, define management objectives, and develop and implement protection or remediation strategies as necessary. A contract to prepare the plan was entered into between the Dauphin Island Sea Lab on behalf of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) and Thompson Engineering, Inc. on January 5, 2016.





The Baldwin County Central Annex is at 22251 Palmer St in Robertsdale. Palmer crosses AL-104 one traffic light west of AL-59.

From the South: Come north on AL-59 into Robertsdale. Turn left at AL-104 (there is a four story brick building with a Regions Bank on the corner). Go west until the first traffic light at Palmer St. Turn right. The building is just ahead on your left.

From the West: Go east on AL-104 from any cross street – Greeno Rd, AL-181, and so forth. After you pass through Silverhill, Palmer St is the last traffic light before AL-59. Turn left on Palmer and the building is just ahead on your left.

From the North: Come south on AL-59 until you just pass US-90 (where all of the American flags are on the corner). Palmer St is next to St. Patrick's Church. Turn right on Palmer. The building is on your right just past the baseball fields.

Table ES.1 Weeks Bay Watershed Management Plan Summary of Recommendations

1. **Organizational:** Add a Watershed Management Plan Implementation coordinator position to the BCSWCD; Establish a WMP Implementation Team to take the long-term lead for oversight of implementation of the recommendations; Establish an inter-governmental partnership to speak with one voice when applying for funding; Establish watershed coordination meetings for Mayors/County Commissioners level, annually or semiannually (Sections 4.1, 6.1, 8.2 and 8.4).
2. Continue **monthly municipal/county planners meetings** addressing: overall population growth; local government wetland/stream protection and LID/GI requirements; improve the inspection, maintenance and reporting for post construction stormwater management facilities; more consistent construction phase erosion and sediment control and stormwater management ordinances; post construction stormwater management ordinances; address internal inconsistencies in existing ordinances and subdivision requirements that impact stormwater management; and other issues shown on Table 6.1 (Sections 4.1, 4.2, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, and 7).
3. **Promote LID/GI practices and education** throughout the Watershed, as well as consistency in application of those measures across the various jurisdictions (Sections 4.2, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 and 7).
4. Encourage County to regularly **run the flood model with updated land use forecasts** (Section 6.4).
5. Encourage County to **add a county GIS layer** on which municipalities can list high potential development projects (Section 6.4).
6. The County and all municipalities are recommended to conduct an inventory and assessment of **stormwater basin systems** (HOA owned and business owned). Methods to incentivize maintenance, as well as retrofitting of HOA stormwater basins for water quality improvements are recommended. Regional alternatives to multiple HOA systems should be considered (Sections 6.4 and 7.4).
7. Encourage use of **conservation programs** available for both public and private landowners through the NRCS and Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs (Sections 3.2.4.2, 4.3, and 6.6).
8. Encourage broader implementation of **good agricultural practices**. BCSWCD to take a lead role in convening farmers and other agricultural groups (Sections 3.2.4.2, 4.3, 6.6, and 9).
9. Support efforts to **implement sediment loading reduction** measures (BMPs, restoration, etc.), with expanded SWAT data analysis/field review for subwatersheds with the highest sediment yield (Figure 3.13) (Sections 3.4, 4.3, 4.4, 6.7, and 10).
10. **Pave roads:** Lipscomb Road, Norris Lane, Mannich Lane [S2], Mannich Lane [S4], Paul Cleverdon Road, and Sherman Road. Consider paving roads listed in Tables 3.9 – 3.12 (Sections 3.4 and 6.7).
11. Support efforts to **implement nutrient loading reduction management measures** (BMPs, restoration, etc.) with expanded SWAT data analysis for subwatersheds with the highest nutrient yield (see Figure 3.16) (Sections 3.4.5.1, 4.3, 4.4, 6.7, and 10).
12. **Address pathogen source location and remediation** measures for human and livestock sources (Sections 4.4 and 6.7).
13. **Restore degraded streams, wetlands, and riparian buffers** in the Watershed (Sections 4.5 and 6.8.1).
14. **Implement strategic acquisition** of high quality coastal and headwater habitats (Sections 4.5 and 6.8.2).
15. Develop **invasive species detection and management** program (Section 4.5 and 6.8.3).
16. Long term municipal and county planning to recognize uncertainties of **potential future sea level changes** in the Watershed over the next century (Sections 3.9.4, 4.6, and 6.9).
17. Identify specific oyster reef and contiguous marshes that are candidates for construction of **living shoreline or shoreline protection/restoration measures** (Section 6.9.1).
18. Develop Appropriate **Monitoring and Adaptive Management Mechanisms** (Section 6.10 and 10).
19. Continue Stakeholder and General **Public Outreach and Education** (Sections 6.11 and 10).