



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Executive Committee Meeting**

March 28, 2014
Original Oyster House on the Causeway
10-12pm

AGENDA

Meeting Objectives

- *Provide Overview of Program Activities for Current Period*
- *Approve Five Year Strategies/CCMP release for final 30 day comment period*
- *Present Respect the Connect: Year 2 Work Plan Conceptual Budget*
- *Update on NFWF related Activities*

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Minutes November 22, 2013
3. Director's Report
4. Committee Reports- Five Year Strategy Presentations
 - a) Science Advisory- Mike Dardeau, TBD
 - b) Project Implementation- Patric Harper, Judy Haner
 - c) Business Resources Committee- Jennifer Denson, Darrelyn Bender
 - d) Community Action Committee- Leslie Gahagan, Casi Callaway
 - e) Finance Committee- Eliska Morgan
5. Old Business
 - a) NFWF Activities Update
6. New Business
 - a) Respect the Connect: Year 2 Conceptual Plan
 - b) Bays and Bayous 2014: The Building Blocks of Coastal Resilience, Mobile AL
7. Announcements/Other
8. Adjourn

**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
March 28, 2014 10:00 AM
Original Oyster House, Spanish Fort, AL**

In attendance: Casi Callaway (Mobile Baykeeper), Dr. Mike Dardeau (DISL), Jennifer Denson (Partners for Environmental Progress), Charles ‘Skip’ Gruber (Baldwin County Commission), Judy Haner (the Nature Conservancy), Patric Harper (USFWS), Philip Hinesley (ADCNR), Leslie Gahagan (Wolf Bay Watershed Watch), James Lyons (Alabama State Port Authority,) Eliska Morgan (RESTORE Council), Dr. LaDon Swann (Mississippi Alabama Sea Grant Consortium), Dr. John Valentine (DISL), Scott Brown (ADEM), Chris Miller (South Alabama Regional Planning Commission), Patty Powell (ADCNR) **Staff Present:** Tiffany England, Tom Herder, Christian Miller, Rick Fredrick, Kelly Barfoot

Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

Patty Powell called the meeting to order at 10:10 AM. Patty informed the group that Roberta would not be able to attend today’s meeting due to the death of her mother and asked for thoughts and prayers for her family. Patty then asked those present to introduce themselves and then introduced Rick as the new Community Relations Manager. Rick explained that his background was in sales and marketing and that he was looking forward to engaging the business community in environmental stewardship.

The minutes for the Nov 22, 2013 meeting were reviewed. Casi motioned to approve the minutes with Jennifer seconding, and minutes were unanimously approved.

Director’s Report

Patty said that the Director’s Report would be postponed for today, and that Roberta would follow up with an email. In old news, Eliska will address NFWF awards. Roberta asked Patty to note the problems with beneficial uses of dredge material.

Committee Reports – Five-Year Strategies

The first committee report, **Science Advisory Committee**, was given by Mike Dardeau and focused on three main objectives.

1. Improve understanding of how estuarine ecosystems respond to anthropogenic stress by maintaining/improving coastal monitoring.
2. Establish a process for measuring change in estuarine conditions through development of a BCG for the Mobile Bay estuary, and manage the system for beneficial use.
3. Improve understanding of relationship between biological condition and provision of estuarine services.

Mike indicated that getting consistent long-term monitoring results has been a challenge due to a lack of funding for such programs and the necessity to change direction to chase funding sources.

SAC Strategy Discussion

John Valentine asked how one defines change and is there an anthropogenic component, to which Mike replied that the best opportunity is to look towards ecosystem services that are valued and manage

towards those, rather than trying to attain a “natural system”. Mike stated that the BCG will be tweaked so that it is appropriate for Mobile Bay. LaDon asked whether we are any closer than two years ago and stated the need to survey the desires of the end users. Tom said the community attitude assessments were used to determine what values were important to the end users and guided the CCMP process. Casi stated that since all committees have started working together that there has been a lot more focus on the end user. Casi also said that a lot of the language used by the SAC is highly technical and indicated that there was a need to word these strategies in a way that would make it easier for members of the CAC and the general public to understand. Mike stated that he would be willing to attend a future CAC meeting to talk through it.

Patty asked for a motion to approve the SAC 5-year strategie. Ms. Haner motioned to approve. The motion was seconded by Dr. Valentine. The motion carried with only Dr. Swann opposed.

The **Project Implementation Committee (PIC)** strategy was given by Patric Harper and Judy Haner. Ms. Haner stated the main goal was to be able to “eat the fish and swim in the water.” The PIC strategies focused on three major goals:

1. Improve trends in water quality in 10 impaired (303(d) or TMDL’d) watersheds that discharge into fishery areas. The stated objective was to restore conditions, including hydrology, from headwaters to intertidal zone in at least five watersheds. Ms. Haner said that NFWF funding may allow for funding of watershed plan development in multiple intertidal HUC 12s.
2. Improve ecosystem function and resilience through protection, restoration, and conservation of habitats, including beaches, bays, backwaters, and rivers. Objectives include installing living shorelines where appropriate, plant X acres of dune vegetation along Gulf fronting beaches, investigate/implement increased hydrological exchange through Hwy 98 causeway, and restore X acres of intertidal marshes and flats.
3. Restore/expand human connections. Objectives include the creation of 10 new access points (the majority of which would be in Mobile County), protect/conservate priority habitats for public benefit and access, and create driving/walking/biking/paddling trails to encourage eco-heritage tourism around and on the estuary.

PIC Strategy discussion

Ms. Haner said the PIC is working through defining metrics, and the “X” is just a placeholder. The plan is to make sure we are connecting communities back to the resources through access and increased public uses as appropriate. Ms. Callaway asked why the goal was to only complete five WMPs, to which Ms. Haner replied it was a conservative estimate and the goal was specifically written to create “at least” five WMPs. Without further discussion Casi motioned to approve the PIC strategies. Mr. Lyons seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.

The **Business Resources Committee (BRC)** strategy was given by Jennifer Denson

Ms. Denson said that the final Outcome from the PIC is also the first of three Goals from the BRC and that until the BP spill, most people didn’t realize how intertwined the economy and the environment are. The BRC strategy focused on the following three goals:

1. Improve business community understanding of how coastal natural resources and estuaries contribute to economic, cultural, and community wellbeing. Objectives include: the development/implementation of the Create a Clean Water Future messaging and marketing campaign to be an identifiable brand to foster private sector stewardship, Deliver presentations to private sector establishments/associations on CCWF and the value of the estuary, conduct tours for the private sector that highlight the three identified stressed habitats and their connection to what people value about living on the coast, and expansion of service opportunities to engage the private sector in restoration/clean-up work.
2. Increase business support for protecting the estuary/coast. Objectives include identify/connect business partners to opportunities that celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the estuary and promote improved stormwater management.
3. Conserve and improve working waterfronts and preserve fishing communities. Objectives include the creation of oyster farm enterprise zones, development of safe harbors in Bayou La Batre and Bon Secour, piloting a model working waterfront initiative, to include a microfinance program), advocate for the assessment, improvement, and designation of “green port” status for the AL State port, and use of marine spatial planning to more efficiently balance conservation, restoration, and multi-uses of fishery resources.

BRC strategy discussion

Ms. Powell noted that the Treasury Department had included business in outreach goals, and that there is a connection to the GNC related to the regulatory landscape. Ms. Callaway said one of her questions is who belongs where (i.e. on which committee), some members of CAC may be a better fit for the BRC. Ms. Denson said there would be overlap, but not necessarily changing who sits on which committee. Commissioner Gruber said there is a need to increase stormwater-related training. We must develop unique approaches instead of a cookie-cutter process, and develop WMPs with specific guidance. Ms. Powell said we need more input from the Working Waterfronts commission. With no further comments, Commissioner Gruber motioned to accept the BRC strategy. The motion was seconded by Mr. Harper and carried unanimously.

The **Community Action Committee** strategy was presented by Casi Callaway and Leslie Gahagan. The CAC has the following Goals and objectives:

1. Increase awareness of coastal resources that support what people value about living in coastal Alabama. Objectives focus on creating/supporting/holding workshops, presentations, festivals, programs that expose more people to local waterways.
2. Improve community ability to participate in ecosystem based management actions. Objectives encourage CAC members to engage in PIC process of WMP development and implementation and educating NGOs and the public about available volunteer opportunities as they arise.
3. Encourage citizens and community members to support and be more engaged in restoration and conservation of critical habitats. Objectives are to participate in restoration activities with the PIC, Increase turnout at public hearings to encourage municipalities to use landowner conservation tools, and promote living shorelines, greenways/blueways/land acquisition, and conservation activities.
4. Increase citizen action to mitigate impacts of humans on the environment. Objectives focus on supporting and promoting the Create a Clean Water Future campaign, reduction of litter in coastal

waterways by 20%, promoting the enforcement of environmental laws and regulations, and conducting a minimum of 25 community clean ups.

5. Build capacity of grassroots groups. Objectives including trainings on fundraising, volunteer recruitment, and non-profit governance.
6. Support needed changes to federal, state, and local regulations to improve management of coastal resources and promote enforcement of existing regulations. Objectives include promoting passage of local referenda crafted by GNC, support of environmental regulations (Clean Water Act, Coastal Zone Management, etc.), and provide public comment on new and updated regulations, ordinances, bills, as they are developed.

CAC Strategy discussion

Dr. Swann asked where are the outreach groups (Master Gardeners, ACES, 4H, etc.), and where do they fit in? Leslie responded they are working to be inclusive and build the group and would welcome any contacts. Casi said they are working to become a clearing house for volunteer activities. Jennifer cautioned to be sure that the CAC is working to reduce redundancy. Phillip Hinesley said that Lee Yokel already maintains a similar database. Leslie indicated that they have a strategy for dealing with redundancies. LaDon said that 4H is the world's largest youth organization and they are being left out. Casi said that their goal is to change that. Patty said an action item would be to think about ways of being more inclusive. Patric Harper suggested amending the third goal to change the wording of "critical" to "priority" habitats, since "critical habitats" is a specific legal term which could create problems. Patty also warned against using the word "priority" and Dr. Dardeau reiterated the importance of being thoughtful about word usage. With no further comments, Ms. Denson made a motion to approve the CAC strategy. Mr. Lyons seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Powell stated that during this committee process that the members on the Executive Committee have to represent their individual committees, and that everyone has a responsibility make sure these stated concerns are addressed.

Finance Committee Report

Ms. Morgan gave the Finance Committee report. The FC last met on 3/27/14. Eliska stated that support from municipalities is lacking/spotty and that the plan is to work with Commissioners Gruber and Ludgood to develop and investment strategy focused on MS4 permitting and return on investment in dollars committed to MBNEP. Eliska also said that the NEP is currently looking to fill a position for a Restoration Manager, and asked the committee to approve the staff expansions.

Old Business

Ms. Morgan said that the process for funding two of the first NFWF projects, \$6.7 million for D'Olive and \$2.05 million for Fowl River, has been slow. Contracts have been received and the hope is that on-the-ground work will commence soon. The online portal opened yesterday with project submissions coming in for a mid-April pre-proposal date. The State works with NFWF, and a final call on projects will be Gov. Bentley's to make. The oyster contract has been signed already. Ms. Powell interrupted Old Business to indicate an omission to the agenda, the approval of the Government Networks Committee's five year strategy.

The **Government Networks Committee's** five year strategy was presented by Commissioner Gruber and focused on the following Goals and objectives:

1. Establish long-term capability of local governments to manage and maintain coastal environmental resources.
2. Minimize impacts and amount of contaminated stormwater runoff entering coastal waterways.
3. Advocate for the protection and restoration of Gulf-fronting beaches, dunes, and shorelines as a first line of defense in protecting and increasing resiliency of coastal communities and economies and habitats that provide valuable ecosystem services.

GNC Strategy discussion

Patric asked what is meant by the proposal to protect beaches, concerned that armoring will become more prevalent. Patty said this isn't the intent. Casi then suggested adjusting wording to read "consistent w/CCMP recommendations." Casi also asked about the education piece, "did you lay out a plan for where information/education will be accessed?" Christian stated that part of this will happen during the GNC meetings, there is an included educational program based on key issues identified by Commissioners Gruber and Ludgood. Patti thanked Commissioners Gruber and Ludgood for their leadership and said there should be some tweaks to the strategy. She stated that the GNC wasn't quite as "cooked" as other committees, but huge strides have been made. Commissioner Gruber expressed hopes for reduced attention to geopolitical boundaries and more efforts to work together. With no further comments Casi made a motion to approve the GNC strategy. The motion was seconded by Chris Miller and approved unanimously.

New Business

Patty said that the Respect the Connect draft can now go out for public input. Tiffany England then updated the group on the progress of the 2014 Bays & Bayous Symposium which will take place at the Mobile Convention Center Dec. 1-3. The theme is "Building Blocks of Coastal Resilience." Committees and chairs are coming into place. There are four focus areas: Community, Economy, Cultural, and Ecosystems. LaDon said, "We are looking for good stories to tell." Dr. Dardeau suggested a session on indicators, "If you have data, present it!" LaDon said, "A well-executed plan B is better than an unexecuted plan A."

Casi stated that there is a concern/frustration in the NGO community about the Citizens Advisory Committee on the RESTORE Council and suggested using the NEP as an advisory council for projects. It was indicated that Roberta wouldn't have a problem with this, but would leave it up to the EC. Patty said she didn't know how the AL Council would move, but draft regulations talk about broad public engagement, and that MBNEP has a lot of those connections already established. LaDon said that there is a need for funds to monitor post-DWH. Sea Grant has been approved for a two-year pilot and one of the new positions will be located in Mobile at AUMERC. Ms. Powell said that AL Coastal Restoration (<http://www.alabamacoastalrestoration.org/>) is a portal for individuals to suggest projects, and opened in response to citizens' interest. It isn't a formal request for projects. The PIC's WMP initiative will be submitted to the portal. LaDon informed the group of the President's recommendation that STEM funding should all pass through the Department of Education, and no longer be allowed from EPA, NOAA, and others. Representatives should be made aware that this should not be supported.

With no further discussions of new business, LaDon made a motion to adjourn. Eliska seconded it, and the meeting was adjourned at noon. A video of the March 28, 2014 Executive Committee meeting in its entirety can be viewed at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptXNykZm7rI>