



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Community Action Committee
Tuesday, April 13, 2021
Virtual Meeting - Platform: Google Meets
10:00 am - 12:00 pm**

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Review and Approval of Minutes
3. Guest Speakers
 - a. **Jennifer Haslbauer**, ADEM
 - Citizen Water Quality Reporting: Why, When, and How to Report
 - Q&A
 - b. **Mai Fung**, Dauphin Island Sea Lab - PhD Student
 - Eutrophication in Weeks Bay
 - Q&A
4. Announcements/Updates
5. Adjourn



Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Community Action Committee
April 13, 2021, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Google Meet Virtual Meeting



Minutes

Attendance:

Mimi Fearn, Dog River ClearWater Revival
Leslie Gahagan, Wolf Bay Watershed Watch
Mai Fung, PhD Student - Dauphin Island Sea Lab
Jennifer Haslbauer, ADEM Water Division
Alan Stabler, Fowl River Citizen
Morgan Counts, Dog River Clearwater Revival
Vaughn Millner, Alabama Sierra Club
Judy Stout, Fowl River Citizen
Mike Shelton, Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
Debi Foster, Dog River Clearwater Revival & the Peninsula of Mobile
Dennis Hatfield, Little Lagoon Preservation Society
Ron Phelps, Little Lagoon Preservation Society
Ron Kailfeh, Citizen
Ted Henken, Fowl River Area Civic Association
Jackie McGonigal, Wolf Bay Watershed Watch
Chandler Ogburn, Dog River Clearwater Revival

MBNEP Staff:

Madison Blanchard

Meeting Recap:

- ADEM evaluates data from other agencies, industry groups, and citizen monitoring groups if the data meets ADEM requirements and complies with QA/QC requirements.
- ADEM only evaluates E.coli data collected in fresh waters and Enterococci in brackish or salt water. Although, if high E.coli levels are observed in a brackish or salt water environment, ADEM can be alerted to do their own pathogen testing to confirm the initial observation.
- ADEM reporting resources are linked below.
- MBNEP is looking to share monitoring stories and other interesting findings related to monitoring via social media. Submissions can be made to mblanchard@mobilebaynep.com

1. Welcome and Introductions

Madison Blanchard opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and requesting each participant to sign-in through the chat box on the Google Meet platform. She reviewed the agenda for the meeting and introduced the co-chairs.

2. Review and Approval of Minutes

Ms. Blanchard requested a motion to approve the revised minutes from the CAC's November 11,

2020 virtual meeting. Mike Shelton made a motion to approve and Debi Foster second. A motion to approve the CAC's January 26 meeting minutes was made by Mimi Fearn and second by Mike Shelton.

3. Guest Speaker, Jennifer Haslbauer

Ms. Blanchard introduced guest speaker Jennifer Haslbauer with ADEM Water Division who gave a presentation on Citizen Water Quality Reporting including why, when, where and how citizens should report identified water quality issues. Reporting water quality issues helps protect human health and aquatic life, assists ADEM in monitoring and determining impairments, and reduces or prevents future issues. Other topics of discussion included examples of citizen reporting success stories and online resources available for informing citizens.

[ADEM's Water Quality Assessment Methodology](#) provides a detailed description of how the status of surface water quality is determined including standard operating procedures (SOPs), types and sources of data, data requirements, and QA/QC considerations. ADEM evaluates data from other agencies, industry groups, and citizen monitoring groups if the data meets ADEM requirements and complies with QA/QC requirements. This assists ADEM in determining where to focus water quality priorities.

ADEM considers specific criteria when assessing a waterbody including pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, nutrients, toxins, color, odor, and taste. If ADEM has not assessed a water body, it is given the use classification of Fish and Wildlife until assessed. Perceived indicators of water quality issues that should be reported include fish kills, illegal dumps, chemical smell or strong odors, algae overgrowth, etc. Data based indicators that should be reported include high pathogen counts and significant chemistry changes. High pathogen counts and significant chemistry changes should be reported when 2 out of 8 samples have high pathogen counts or significant chemistry changes such as low dissolved oxygen.

Emergency issues should be reported to ADEM's Emergency After Hours phone line (1-800-843-0699). Fish kills, illegal dumps, odors, etc. should be reported to ADEM via phone, email or online complaint form. If data or photos of the issues can be provided, report via online complaint form or email. Any data submitted to ADEM for reporting purposes should include methods used in sampling (ie. study plans, SOPs, documentation of data being collected consistent with ADEM's methodology requirements). Citizen data or general concerns that warrant a review but aren't considered serious should be reported via email or online complaint form. ADEM's Complaint form includes the following sections- data of observation, description of the issue, affected environment, location and nearby facilities, photos, contact information, and QA/QC data if available. Septic tank concerns should be reported to the Alabama Dept. of Public Health ([link below](#)), and wildlife, habitat, or land concerns should be reported to the Alabama Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources ([link below](#)). All reporting resources are listed and linked below.

Ms. Haslbauer ended her presentation with a suggestion for citizen monitoring groups to monitor more 4a waters (waters with a TMDL in place) to help track improvements, and to identify priority areas within the watershed to monitor.

Mr. Dennis Hatfield states that Little Lagoon Preservation Society has been collecting E.coli data in a brackish environment using protocols provided by Dauphin Island Sea Lab researchers. This data has been submitted to ADEM in previous years and received the response that ADEM cannot evaluate

E.coli data collected in brackish waters. Ms. Haslbauer confirms that ADEM only evaluates E.coli data collected in fresh waters and Enterococci in brackish or salt water. Although, if high E.coli levels are observed in a brackish or salt water environment, ADEM can be alerted to do their own pathogen testing to confirm the initial observation. E.coli underestimates the pathogen levels in brackish and salt water, making it a good indicator that there's an issue. Additionally, the Alabama Department of Public Health considers E.coli data in brackish and salt waters for shellfish harvesting.

[View Ms. Haslbauers' full presentation](#)

ADEM Reporting Resources:

-[ADEM Website](#)

-[ADEM 303d list of Impaired Waters \(2020\)](#)

-[ADEM Complaint Form](#)

-[ADEM Department Contacts: Phone and Email](#)

-ADEM Mobile Central Office: (251) 450-3400 - 2204 Perimeter Road, Mobile, AL 36615

-ADEM Mobile Coastal Office: (251) 304-1176 - 3664 Dauphin Street, Suite B, Mobile, AL 36608

-ADEM Water Department: (334) 271-7823 h2omail@adem.alabama.gov

-ADEM Water Division Contacts:

Water Quality, Chris Johnson 334-271-7827

Drinking Water, Aubrey White 334-271-7773

Stormwater Management, Jimbo Carlson 334-271-7974

-[ADEM's Water Quality Assessment Methodology](#)

-[Septic tank concerns - Report to Alabama Dept. of Public Health](#)

-[Wildlife, habitat, or land concerns - Report to AL Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources](#)

4. Guest Speaker, Mai Fung

Mai Fung, a PhD student at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, gave a presentation on her research on Eutrophication in Weeks Bay to solicit feedback from the CAC and understand what issues are most important to citizens living in the study area. Eutrophication is caused by excessive inputs of nutrients from human activities resulting in increased phytoplankton growth. Additionally, eutrophication can cause hypoxic conditions and lead to shifts in phytoplankton communities. This research is being conducted in collaboration with Weeks Bay NERR and investigates how eutrophication is caused, how it is expressed within the system, and how it may be expressed in the future.

In order to understand how eutrophication is caused and expressed, relationships between environmental drivers and eutrophication expressions must be quantified, and the most important drivers of eutrophication must be identified. Environmental drivers include: nutrient loading, climate changes, and hydrology changes. Eutrophication expressions include phytoplankton growth, species abundance, and biomass and are measured via FlowCam imaging and light/dark O₂ incubations. Sampling is conducted monthly at 10 stations and will continue through October 2021. Expected study results include identifying the hierarchy of driver variables, quantifying the relationships between driver variables and eutrophication expressions, and identifying the dominant phytoplankton groups, abundances and biomass. Additionally, historical data will be compiled to analyze trends in eutrophication driver variables in order to observe past patterns and predict what those drivers may be in the future. All data developed from this study will be used for management prioritization and decision making.

[View Ms. Fung's full presentation](#)

5. Announcements and Updates

The next Community Action Committee Meeting will be conducted virtually using Google Meets on July 13, 2021 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. The topic for the next meeting will be Three Mile Creek(TMC) Watershed Planning and Restoration Implementation including citizens' roles in planning and implementation.

Ms. Blanchard announced that MBNEP is looking to share monitoring stories and other interesting findings related to monitoring via social media. The goal of this effort is to communicate volunteer and other environmental monitoring to the public. Monitoring stories or findings can be related to restoration, water quality, litter, habitat, shorelines, etc. Monitoring story submissions can be submitted to mblanchard@mobilebaynep.com

Ms. Debi Foster introduced Morgan Counts who will be the new Executive Director of Dog River Clearwater Revival (DRCR) starting May 1, 2021. Debi will be leaving DRCR at the end of June 2021.

Ms. Blanchard reminded attendees to inform her of any other topics they're interested in learning about through the CAC. Topics suggestions can be submitted to mblanchard@mobilebaynep.com

6. Adjourn

Meeting attendees thanked Ms. Haslbauer and Ms. Fung for their time and the meeting adjourned at 11:36 a.m. A motion was made by Ms. Debi Foster to adjourn.