



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Community Action Committee
Tuesday, February 8, 2022
Virtual Meeting - Platform: Google Meets
10:00 am - 12:00 pm**

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Review and Approval of Minutes
3. Presenter
 - a. Madison Blanchard, MBNEP Project Coordinator
 - i. Growing and Retaining Grassroot Group Memberships: Needs, Strengths, and Opportunities
4. Q&A
5. Announcements/Updates
6. Adjourn



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Community Action Committee
February 8, 2022, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Google Meet Virtual Meeting**



Minutes

Attendance:

Mimi Fearn, Dog River Clearwater Revival
Leslie Gahagan, Wolf Bay Watershed Watch
Mike Shelton, Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
Ted Henken, Fowl River Area Civic Association
Eric Holladay, Dog River Clearwater Revival
Jackie McGonigal, Wolf Bay Watershed Watch
Dennis Hatfield, Little Lagoon Preservation Society
Chandler Ogburn, Dog River Clearwater Revival
Harold White, Fowl River Area Civic Association
Morgan Counts, Dog River Clearwater Revival
Madison Blanchard, Mobile Bay NEP

Meeting Recap:

- The CAC is responsible for leading the following CCMP activities: EPI 4.3, EPI 3.1, TAC 5.2, TAC 5.1, TAC 4.2
- Grassroots Organizations involved in the CAC shared details on the successful methods to recruit and retain members. Grassroots Organizations who would like to implement recruitment methods that have been successful for other groups should contact the appropriate representative to complete a full transfer of knowledge.
- Local Grassroots Organizations show their credibility and value to the community through the projects and programs being implemented.

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 Community Action Committee (CAC) co-chairs, Mimi Fearn with Dog River Clearwater Revival and Leslie Gahagan with Wolf Bay Watershed Watch and the City of Foley.

2. Review and Approval of Minutes

Ms. Blanchard requested a motion to approve the minutes from the CAC's virtual meeting on October 12, 2021. Ted Henken made a motion to approve and Eric Holladay second.

3. Presentation and Discussion

Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) CAC Liaison, Madison Blanchard, provided a presentation focused on opportunities to grow and retain memberships of local Grassroots Organizations. This topic was suggested by the Grassroots Organizations involved in the CAC as they would like to explore different methods of member recruitment that have proven to be successful for other local organizations. Prior to the meeting, each Grassroots Organization involved in the CAC provided input on their strengths, needs, and opportunities related to growing and retaining

memberships. The goal of the meeting was to review each organization's needs and strengths, and share knowledge on recruitment opportunities.

The presentation began with reviewing the CAC-lead activities within the MBNEP's Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP). These activities are the portion of the CCMP that the CAC is responsible for and will guide the work undertaken by the CAC. Ms. Blanchard then reviewed the accomplishments achieved by the Grassroots Organizations and the CAC that have contributed to pushing the CAC-lead CCMP activities forward. The CAC-Lead CCMP activities can be viewed in Ms. Blanchard's presentation ([link below](#)).

The group reviewed each organization's membership needs and strengths, and began discussing opportunities to increase memberships. The discussed opportunities include recruitment methods that have worked for other local organizations as well as ideas suggested by each Grassroots Organization.

Mailing promotional materials about Little Lagoon Preservation Society (LLPS) has helped the organization recruit new members, secure donations, and make the community more aware of the group's projects and activities. To obtain the addresses of all residents living in the Little Lagoon area, LLPS requested a database query from Baldwin County. LLPS had a 15-20% return on investment from the database query.

Dog River Clearwater Revival's (DRCR) most successful methods of member recruitment and retention include mailing promotional materials to new property owners, conducting door-to-door neighborhood targeting, being active on social media, and having local events focused on entertainment and recreation. DRCR is able to obtain the addresses of new property owners by having a member who is a real estate agent access the MLS (Multiple Listing Services) database. Other aspects of the organization that have contributed to membership success include that the group has a welcoming atmosphere and that great attention is put toward putting personal touches on interactions with residents within the community. Examples of personal touches include calling or emailing new members who joined online, being conversational when seeing community members in public, and communicating with members often. DRCR representatives suggest implementing the 'Bring a Friend' method for meetings and events; this entails instructing members to bring a friend, family member, or neighbor which helps increase awareness of the organization and its membership.

Wolf Bay Watershed Watch's (WBWW) annual meeting increases their membership greatly. Annual meetings are heavily advertised, open to the public, and are followed by a pot-luck lunch. WBWW representatives emphasized that providing presentations on projects addressing relevant issues within the community brings a larger meeting attendance, keeps attendees engaged, and helps to retain members over the years. WBWW also suggests providing the option of economical membership levels to make memberships available to more of the community.

LLPS and WBWW have separate scholarship programs which have helped increase awareness of the organizations among young citizens and their parents, bring in new members, and has made LLPS highly recognized in Gulf Shores High School. Each organization awards one annual scholarship to graduating high school seniors entering environmentally-related fields of study. WBWW's scholarship program funding is sustained by sponsorships of their annual Youth Fishing Tournament. LLPS's scholarship program is being funded by \$25,000 that was donated by a local for the purpose of creating the program. WBWW and LLPS agree that scholarship programs are also an investment in their local communities as many of the awarded students have returned to the area and secured

jobs in resource management or environmental protection.

The success of LLPS and DRCR volunteer water quality monitor (VWQM) programs can be attributed to having devoted Volunteer Monitoring Coordinators within their organizations. Volunteer Monitoring Coordinators are individual local champions who help recruit volunteer monitors, help execute monitor trainings, ensure volunteers are collecting data monthly, and communicate with volunteer monitors about chemical restocks.

FRACA needs to recruit younger members, but the group does not actively seek new members. It is recognized that an individual champion is needed to lead efforts in improving memberships and member engagement. FRACA representatives state that the organization was formed as a civic group, not an environmental group. Ms. Mimi Fearn suggests potentially forming an active environmental Grassroots Organization in the Fowl River area; FRACA representatives support this idea.

It is noted that deciding which opportunities to push forward, including leading those efforts, will be undertaken by the Grassroots Organizations. It is suggested for Grassroots Organizations who would like to implement recruitment methods that have been successful for other organizations to contact the appropriate representative to complete a full transfer of knowledge.

Ms. Blanchard ended her presentation by emphasizing the importance of each Grassroots Organization promoting their work consistently and publicly, celebrating big and small accomplishments, and educating citizens on how their work contributes to their quality of life as a coastal resident. Local Grassroots Organizations show their credibility and value to the community through the projects and programs being implemented. These projects and programs will help draw citizens to your organization and having them involved in activities can help retain them as members. When strategizing on how to recruit and retain members, consider how your organization can use its projects, programs, and activities as incentive to draw citizens in.

Details on each Grassroots Organization's strengths and needs, as well as membership opportunities can be found in [Ms. Blanchard's Presentation](#). View or download MBNEP's [Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan \(CCMP\)](#).

4. Announcements and Updates

Ms. Blanchard reminded meeting attendees of the [Volunteer Water Quality Monitor Reporting Protocol](#) that was developed to aid in the process of reporting water quality issues to ADEM. The reporting protocol gives directions on how to complete an online report and tells what info to include. Please review the protocol if you are a volunteer monitor or Monitoring Coordinator.

An upcoming Alabama Water Watch Volunteer Monitor Training is scheduled for March 10, 2022 from 9am-4pm at the Lillian Volunteer Fire Station (11331 County Road 91, Lillian, AL 36549). Volunteers will be trained on water chemistry and bacteriologic monitoring. This training has limited spots; interested participants can contact Madison Blanchard at mblanchard@mobilebaynep.com

5. Adjourn

Ms. Blanchard thanked the meeting attendees for their time and input. The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 a.m. A motion was made by Ted Henken to adjourn and a second motion was made by Chandler Ogburn.