

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

Friday, February 5, 2021 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Attendees:

Judy Adams for John Driscoll, Alabama State Port Authority
Scott Bannon, ADCNR Marine Resources
Chris Blankenship, ADCNR
Casi Callaway, Mobile Baykeeper
Greg Dansby for Ben Malone, USDA-NRCS State Office
Jennifer Denson, Partners for Environmental Progress
Troy Ephriam, Ephriam & Associates Consulting, LLC
Walter Ernest, Pelican Coast Conservancy
Mimi Fearn, Dog River Clearwater Revival
Leslie Gahagan, City of Foley
Judy Haner, The Nature Conservancy
Patric Harper, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Helene Hassell, Dauphin Island Sea Lab Foundation

Amy Hunter, ADCNR
John Lehrter, Dauphin Island Sea Lab
Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County Commission
Patti McCurdy, ADCNR State Lands
Justin McDonald, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Eliska Morgan, Thompson Engineering
Chris Plymale, US EPA Region 4
William Puckett, Alabama Soil & Water Conservation Committee
Bill Sisson, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce
Frank Smith, Wilkins Miller Wealth Management
LaDon Swann, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium
Beth Thomas, Alabama Power
Chris Thomas, US EPA Region 4
John Valentine, Dauphin Island Sea Lab

MBNEP Staff Present: *Roberta Swann, Kelley Barfoot, Madison Blanchard, Tiffany England, Herndon Graddick, Bethany Hudson, Jason Kudulis, Christian Miller, Henry Perkins*

1. **Introductions/Call to Order:** Ms. Swann asked that each person sign in using the chat box for attendance.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Commissioner Blankenship asked for comments or revisions to the minutes from the August 26, 2020 meeting. Jennifer Denson made a motion to approve, Judy Haner seconded the motion.
3. **Director's Report**
 - a) Top Accomplishments:

CCMP 2013 – Present: Ms. Swann discussed the activities that the Management Conference has accomplished during CCMP period beginning in 2013. We will be reaching out to members to include their work with our numbers.

 - Watershed planning has been a big part of the work we have been doing. There are 6 plans that contain 13 watersheds under development and 9 plans that contain 17 watersheds published. In implementing those plans we have reconnected 71 acres of flood plain, protected 300 acres of freshwater wetlands, and restored 3 miles of streams and 483 acres of tidal wetlands. D'Olive Bay has been our target area with the most work done. Through the efforts of reducing pollutants in the watershed, the Joes Branch sub-watershed was de-listed from ADEM's list of impaired waters.
 - Through our efforts at Langan Park Lake in the Three Mile Creek watershed last summer, we removed 18,606+ adult apple snails and destroyed 88,491+ apple snail egg clutches. We put out an RFQ for continued work. There has been 3,645,443 pounds of documented trash removed from Mobile Bay waters since 2013. Around 14.7 miles of shores is being or has been stabilized. The Three Mile Creek kayak launch at Tricentennial Park is done of 20 new or upgraded access points.
 - Under the Technical Assistance and Capacity Building objective of the CCMP, we have produced 26 videos. In 2020 there are 388 active members of the Management Conference and 49 Create a Clean Water Future members. There are 89 active volunteer monitors measuring physical and chemical data in Mobile and Baldwin counties, with 29 volunteers measuring bacteria loads. In partnership with ADCNR, we have published 16 newsletters. We have partnered with Alabama Power to install 60 rain barrels in the Prichard area.
 - Overall, from 2013 – 2020 the dollars invested through the MBNEP activities is \$32,247,322.

4. Committee Reports (MBNEP Management Conference Co-Chairs)

Science Advisory Committee

Dr. Amy Hunter reported on the SAC meeting from January 29, which continued to have great participation with 42 attendees. Committee members, co-chairs, and staff reviewed and discussed the timeline of the current CCMP including the goals and objectives for Ecosystem Status and Trends. Updates were shared on EST 1 (increasing access to data), EST 2 (monitoring environmental change), and EST 3 (modeling connects and showing value). Next steps will be creation of subcommittees to discuss implementation of the two versions of stressor evaluation matrix (rapid response and ecosystem models), assist with decadal study integration into NEP monitoring, and to diversify the expertise of the SAC to include more social scientists. Dr. Melissa Partyka was introduced as the new liaison for the SAC.

Project Implementation Committee

Ms. Judy Haner reported on the January 28th PIC meeting, which had over 50 attendees. The meeting started with where the PIC is as a committee right now and discussing all the work going on. Plans have been completed and are being implemented for Bayou La Batre, West Fowl, Fowl River, Dog River, Three Mile Creek, Weeks Bay, Bon Secour, and D'Olive, which is currently being updated. Wolf Bay is now complete. Currently in planning, we have the Western Shore, Mobile Tensaw Apalachee Delta, Fly Creek, and the Gulf Frontal Complex. The State gave updates in the PIC meeting on some ongoing sewer projects, public access efforts, research and education projects, and land acquisitions. The committee discussed need for more meetings; topical focused themes; site visits and field meetings project specific. We intend to offer a survey to prioritize topic specific needs.

Government Networks Committee

Commissioner Merceria Ludgood presented on the February 5 GNC meeting, which had 30 participants. There were several newcomers from the recent elections. The GNC discussed the Technical Assistance and Capacity Building CCMP objective. The committee talked about challenges from last year and new opportunities for the members of the GNC. The 2018 South Alabama Regulatory Review is being updated with a focus on including local regulations dealing with litter. In the meeting Christian Miller reviewed the current status of watershed planning and discussed efforts to begin development of plans for remaining coastal watersheds.

Community Action Committee

Ms. Leslie Gahagan reported on the January 26 CAC meeting, which continues to have better participation with the virtual meetings. Guest speaker and Master Gardener, Bob Howard, provided an in-depth explanation of the process to identify an area in one's yard for a rain garden, how to calculate the size and depth of the garden, which natives to plant, and the ecological services rain gardens provide. The meeting topics are driven by the CAC members, which makes the meetings more productive.

Business Resources Committee

Mr. Frank Smith reported on the BRC meeting scheduled for February 10. Through a partnership with Alabama Power, the committee has been supporting the oyster aquaculture industry and are working on a revolving loan fund for local oyster farmers. Mr. Henry Perkins discussed the Truck Bed Trash Can Competition. Through a partnership with Dog River Clearwater Revival, we put together a pitch competition for the general public to design a "truck bed trash can" to help address the issue of litter flying out of truck beds. Three finalists were selected from video submissions. The contestants pitched their designs on a live show hosted by WKRG, where a panel of judges determined the winner. The winning design was a sleek trash can that mounts above the wheel-well in a truck bed. We arranged for him to meet with experts in business plans, manufacturing, and patent law. Ultimately however, he determined that he didn't have the capacity to bring this thing to market, so he agreed to sell us the IP for \$1, and we're working now with the Melton Center for entrepreneurship at South Alabama to build this product out with the help of a student team and bring it to market.

Community Resources Committee

Ms. Casi Callaway reported on the CRC meeting from January 20. The CRC Trash Abatement Work Plan has been approved with individual subcomponents that include reduction in trash/litter prevention, litter removal, increased recycling, policy, education, awareness, and behavior change. Subcommittees are being formed to refine metrics for each subcomponent. As CRC organizations pursue projects falling under each subcomponent, a CRC Trash Abatement Database is being developed to facilitate collaborative opportunities and avoid duplication or redundancy, and ensure data is tracked, accurate, and shared.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee has not gotten the attention it deserves. They have already goals determined and are committed to develop a plan for diversifying a funding base.

5. Old Business

- CCMP Approval: The US EPA has given us approval of the CCMP, and it is officially an approved plan.
- Program Evaluation Findings: We passed! The big issue is that we need to update our assessment and monitoring framework, which we are doing through a study with Dr. John Lehrter. Mr. Chris Plymale commended our watershed planning and implementation efforts and trash abatement.

6. New Business

7. Other / Announcements

- We lost one of our bay champions, Dottie Lawley, from complications of COVID. She was part of the first Mon Louis Island living shoreline project and she went on to become one of the Western Shore's leading oyster farms.
- Big projects in this coming year will be Deer River construction and Fowl River construction and getting that funding in place. We just sent an intent to contract with Headwaters Construction Firm for our 12 Mile Creek project. We put out an RFP for invasive species management focused on apple snails in Three Mile Creek. We will be wrapping up several Watershed Management Plans this year, including: Fly Creek, Western Shore, Tensaw-Apalachee, and Dauphin Island. Lower Fish River is our big project right now.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.