

Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Executive Committee Meeting
International Trade Center, Killian Room / Zoom Virtual Meeting
Thursday, May 26, 2022, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Attendees:

Judy Adams, Alabama State Port Authority
Scott Bannon, ADCNR Marine Resources
Leslie Gahagan, City of Foley
Patric Harper, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Helene Hassell, DISL Foundation
Amy Hunter, ADCNR RESTORE
Patti McCurdy, ADCNR State Lands
Justin McDonald, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Eliska Morgan, Thompson Engineering

Maggie Oliver for John Driscoll, Alabama State Port Authority
Bill Puckett, Alabama Soil & Water Conservation Committee
Elizabeth Roney, Congressman Jerry Carl's Office
Beth Thomas, Alabama Power Company
Billie Jo Underwood, Baldwin County Commission
John Valentine, Dauphin Island Sea Lab

Zoom Attendees:

Greg Dansby for Ben Malone, USDA-NRCS
Mimi Fearn, Dog River Clearwater Revival
Chris Plymale, U.S. EPA Region 4

LaDon Swann, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium

MBNEP Staff Present: *Roberta Swann, Christian Miller, Jason Kudulis, Tiffany England, Kelley Barfoot, Madison Blanchard, Henry Perkins, Marti Messick, Melissa Partyka, and Bethany Hudson*

1. **Introductions/Call to Order:** Ms. Swann asked for a quick round of introductions, starting with the people on the Zoom call.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Patti McCurdy, filling in for Commissioner Blankenship, asked for comments or revisions to the minutes from the March 15, 2022 meeting. Hearing no remarks, Helene Hassell made a motion to approve, and Bill Puckett seconded the motion.
3. **Director's Report**
 - a) **Fiscal Impact Analysis:** A fiscal analysis of Dauphin Island has been completed. The project was done to support the Dauphin Island Watershed Management Plan (WMP), using EPA dollars. The key recommendation to come out of this analysis is to help the Town of Dauphin Island in the future to categorize costs and revenues to better understand the distribution of recovery costs across the island for future decision support related to potential property assessments. There weren't many recommendations for stormwater issues.
 - b) **Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendment (CZARA):** MBNEP, with ADCNR have been working on getting a packet together for the approval of the Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendment for the State. This is important so we don't lose out on availability of Section 319 non-point source funding, which is a major funding source. We are about 90% complete.
 - c) **Bays and Bayous:** The Bays and Bayous Symposium will be in Alabama for 2022, to be held at the Mobile Convention Center. The date is January 23-25, 2023 due to COVID delays. We have all the committees formed, a theme (Finding Balance: Ecology, Economy, and Community), and are currently working on sponsorships.
 - d) **CCMP Rewrite:** We need the approval of the one-year action plan related to the fifth year of implementing our CCMP. We are authorized under Section 320 of the Clean Water Act and with our reauthorization there were some changes as one of which was to do a five-year CCMP. MBNEP is proposing a complete re-write of the current CCMP because we have done so much watershed planning and implementation of those plans. There are a lot of new tools to help us plan for the next five-year period, like the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' ACCP. We have already started discussions with the SAC.

The budget for the CCMP re-write consists of \$50,000 of EPA dollars which we had budgeted for the Fisheries Fund that was freed up by Alabama Power awarding us the \$50,000 for that program, \$60,000 was left over from Professional Services, and \$50,589 remaining from our Coastal Monitoring fund that was not expended. The components to the CCMP re-write are Community Input, CCMP Implementation Assessment, Environmental Stressor Assessment/Data Development, and Management Conference Engagement and Strategy Development.

- e) Year 5 Budget Approval: Our Year 5 budget was sent out to the committee beforehand. Our EPA allocation is \$750,000, we've budget \$490,100 in Match, and have an \$8,000 surplus from previous years. Budget lines are Coastal Monitoring, Citizen Volunteer Monitoring kits, Video Production, *Current Connection* Newsletter, *Create a Clean Water Future* Campaign, Special Events and Educational Promotional Materials, Management Conference meetings, Program Management, and \$150,000 towards the CCMP re-write. Dr. Amy Hunter motion to approve, Helene Hassell seconded. Hearing all ayes and no objections, the Year 5 Budget is approved.

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

Science Advisory Committee

Dr. Amy Hunter reported on recent ADCNR restoration dollars. The Governor's Restoration Summit in Spanish Fort May 19, where she announced the 12 projects that will be the first slate of water quality projects. There were \$216 million worth of requests for only \$35 million worth of funding. These are some of the approved projects mentioned: City of Fairhope- sanitary sewer overflow mitigation project; The University of South Alabama- Three Mile Creek headwater improvements that looks at sediment reduction in several places on campus; USA/DISL- coastal Alabama water quality and sediment baseline monitoring; City of Saraland- sanitary sewer inflow and infiltration project; Town of Dauphin Island- stormwater management and drainage improvements; Town of Loxley- Corn Branch tributary restoration; and Grand Bay- a septic to sewer project. To view a storyboard of all Alabama's Deepwater Horizon Restoration Projects please visit <https://www.outdooralabama.com/alabama-coastal-restoration-project-map>. Federal GOMESA funding had over \$40 million in State disbursement, but this year it's only \$27 million.

Dr. Hunter then reported on SAC's May 20 meeting held as hybrid with majority of participants engaging virtually. At the February meeting SAC members engaged in an exercise to help prioritize future monitoring of habitats, ecosystem services, stressors that were highlighted in the current CCMP. Results of that activity were discussed along with additional priorities based on stressor matrix and WMPs. There was an open discussion about approaches for the SAC to look into watershed management plans and help to prioritize/synthesize monitoring approaches. In the coming months the SAC will work out approaches for members to contribute toward targeted approaches for the 2023-2028 CCMP Update.

Project Implementation Committee

Patric Harper discussed the May 19 PIC meeting, which was all virtual. The PIC continued watershed specific themed agendas to drill down. Mississippi Sound was most recent. Members visited a D'Olive stream restoration project in April and another trip is being planned for later in 2022, perhaps in Orange Beach to learn more about their marine debris activities.

Next, MBNEP staff Christian Miller gave updates on watershed planning. Western Shore, Gulf Frontal, and the D'Olive Update are all complete. MTA Delta, Eastern Shore, and Dauphin Island plans will be completed in June and July. Western Perdido, Western Delta, and Eastern Delta plans are newly started. Grand Bay will be the last plan of this RESTORE-funded group. The Eastern Shore WMP team hosted a meeting on May 25 to inform the management measures that are coming out of the plan, mostly prioritized for stormwater restoration work. The Western Perdido team will be having a community meeting soon.

Mr. Kudulis gave an update on restoration projects. D'Olive's Pine Run restoration project team will be hosting a community meeting for Timber Creek property owners soon. Canterbury construction is wrapping up by the end of the month. Three streams in Lower Fish River are now under engineering and design and

working on landowner access. Marlow construction is about 50% complete and the team is working with Baldwin County to close Etta Smith Road, which has been a traffic and safety hazard. Fowl River Spits 60% design and permitting are ongoing and construction is to begin over the winter. In Deer River we are conducting supplemental field work to inform additional restoration alternatives.

Government Networks Committee

Commissioner Underwood presented on the GNC, who's meeting was the Friday before today's EXC meeting. Ashley Forwood, Justin McDonald, and David Newell with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reviewed the Alabama Coastal Comprehensive Plan. This proactive and stakeholder-driven planning tool was commissioned by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources with the objective of facilitating a greater understanding of the dynamic social, environmental, and economic landscapes that comprise the communities of coastal Alabama.

John Carlton reviewed the recently updated South Alabama Regulatory Review. This product is a comprehensive review of Federal, State, County and municipal ordinances and regulations related to stormwater management, natural resources protection, and coastal issues including shoreline protection. This latest update also reviewed trash/litter/recycling ordinances and enforcement mechanisms. This product has been a valuable resource for local county and municipal planners working to address local stormwater and natural resource protection issues.

Community Action Committee

Leslie Gahagan reported on the CAC. The committee met in February with and talked a lot about retaining memberships and organizations for the committee to stay relevant and active. There was a meeting planned for May 10 that was supposed to get all the grassroots monitoring efforts together to discuss using members' monitoring data. This is a regular topic because there's been a lot of interest in getting trained- over 40 monitors. The CAC wants to start working on getting members to take on some of these sites that have been abandoned in the past.

Business Resources Committee

Eliska Morgan reported on the March 18, 2022 BRC meeting. The Coastal Alabama Fisheries Fund has been very successful, with six applications in review, and should have all the money loaned out soon. There was an informational Oyster Farmers & Catchers meeting held in March, which had 60 attendees. Henry Perkins has also conducted 2 business development sessions in Bayou la Batre. The OystersAlabama.com site has been growing with visitors nearly doubling monthly. Mr. Perkins receives several emails a week from people who've visited the site and are interested in buying oysters. Members will be meeting with Sweet Grown Alabama to see about some sort of partnership. A Cause to Clean was a clean-up event on the causeway on May 14th. Organized with PEP and TC Boiler, businesses were invited to come pick up trash between the Austal traffic light and Felix's. With 70 volunteers from 17 businesses, 100+ 55-gallon bags of trash and 30 tires were picked up. An Alternative Packaging subcommittee has met a couple times. The subcommittee is talking to restaurants, manufacturers, and other non-profits working on this issue, and developing a strategy to try and change use practices long-term in target areas, starting in Baldwin County.

Finance Committee

Roberta Swann and Helene Hassell reported on the Finance Committee. The May FC meeting is being rescheduled due to scheduling conflicts. Ms. Swann discussed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) the MBNEP has been working on with Baldwin County that the FC will meet to discuss at their next meeting. The MOA will further solidify the relationship between MBNEP and our local governments who have supported us with Match dollars over the years. The document lays out the responsibility of the county or the local government, what they can expect from the MBNEP, and clarifies our relationship and why they're investing in our program.

5. Old Business

6. New Business

- Leslie Gahagan announced a community cleanup Memorial Day weekend in the Mills community, which is in the Magnolia River watershed.
- Commissioner Underwood spoke about Baldwin County and plans for a fully integrated low-carbon recycling and rolling plant. Novelis Incorporated, which is a world leader in aluminum recycling, plans to create a 3,000-acre mega-site in Bay Minette.
- Ms. Swann relayed that there will probably be an off-cycle Executive Committee meeting once the Infrastructure Workplan is complete so it can be approved. We are waiting on final guidance from EPA to complete the draft workplan.

7. Other / Announcements

The next meetings will be August 26, and December 2.

The meeting adjourned at 11:06 a.m.