



Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Executive Committee Meeting
International Trade Center, Killian Room/Zoom Virtual
Friday, March 22, 2024, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.



In-person Attendees:

Chris Thomas, U.S. EPA Region 4
Chris Blankenship, ADCNR
Justin McDonald, USACE
Brandon McCray, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Jennifer Denson, Partners for Environmental Progress (*proxy for Steve Stewart*)
Jennifer Dimaio, U.S. EPA Region 4
Lebaron Byrd, MOWA Choctaw Indians
Keith Martin, Poarch Band of Creek Indians
Bradley Byrne, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce
Troy Ephriam, Ephriam & Associates Environmental Consulting, LLC
John Barton, TC Boiler
Eliska Morgan, Thompson Engineering
Patti McCurdy, ADCNR, State Lands
Will Underwood, ADCNR, State Lands
Steve Jones, Geological Survey of Alabama

Marc Wyatt, U.S. EPA GoMD
Catherine Reaves, Alabama State Port Authority (*proxy for John Driscoll*)
Dottie Byron, Dauphin Island Sea Lab/ALCoE
Shannon McGlynn, ADEM, Nonpoint Source
Beth Thomas, Alabama Power Company
Leslie Gahagan, City of Foley
Charles "Skip" Gruber, Baldwin County Commission
Ted Henken, Fowl River Civic Association
Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County Commission
Elizabeth Roney, Congressman Jerry Carl's Office
Laura Smith, Baldwin County Soil & Water Conservation District (*proxy for William Puckett*)
LaDon Swann, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium
John Valentine, Dauphin Island Sea Lab
Scott Bannon, ADCNR
Wayne Pendle, Second Mile Consulting

Virtual Attendees:

Fred Leslie, ADEM

MBNEP Staff Present:

Bethany Hudson, Christian Miller, Henry Perkins, Vanessa Romero, Bekah Farmer, Jason Kudulis, Cody Aloj, and Roberta Swann.

Key Takeaways:

- a) *Member Orientation*
- b) *Approval of Year 3 Bipartisan Infrastructure Plan*
- c) *Overview of CCMP Planning Status and Future*

- 1. Introductions/Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 10:01 am. The group did a quick round of introductions.
- 2. Approval of Minutes:** Commissioner Chris Blankenship asked for comments or revisions to the minutes from the September 29, 2023, meeting. Hearing no remarks, Eliska Morgan made a motion to approve, and Commissioner Merceria Ludgood seconded the motion.
- 3. Directors Report:** Roberta Swann delivered a report covering the new member orientation, which included an organizational overview, an explanation of the CCMP "Pillars of Action," insights into funding investments to achieve CCMP implementation, details on obligations related to EPA funding, and a status of the CCMP's rewriting.

4. **Approval of Year 3 BIL Workplan:** Roberta Swann gave a detailed overview and update of the projects within the BIL Workplan:

Coastal Monitoring Program: \$100,000

- **ARCOS:** The project is underway, and equipment is being installed at the lighthouse location to enhance data collection capabilities for monitoring purposes. **YR 3 Budget:** *No funds allocated.*
- **Baldwin County Monitoring:** This program is advancing through collecting data via seven stream gauges and efforts to construct a hydrologic model for Western Perdido Bay to improve water quality management and ecological assessment. **YR 3 Budget:** *\$50,000*
- **Mobile County Monitoring:** Focused on re-establishing continuous monitoring at USGS gauges in Bayou Sara. This initiative is accompanied by strategic planning efforts to develop a more comprehensive and integrated environmental monitoring program. **YR 3 Budget:** *\$50,000*

Justice 40 Green Infrastructure Initiative: \$342,471

- **Eight Mile Creek Watershed Program:** Advancing the already-in-progress Watershed Management Plan by identifying and initiating key activities that accelerate its implementation. **YR 3 Budget:** *\$100,000*
- **TMC/Lower Chasaw Gulf Village:** This project, in partnership with Mobile County, is devoted to continuing to develop and execute a comprehensive stormwater management plan. **YR 3 Budget:** *\$50,000*
- **Wolf Bay- Beulah Heights:** MBNEP will continue to support the installation of green infrastructure in partnership with the City of Foley. **YR 3 Budget:** *\$72,514*
- **General LID Installations:** Dedicated to expanding the LID project inventory for Justice 40 areas, this effort seeks additional financing to roll out a comprehensive watershed LID plan for Toulmins Spring/Gum Tree Branch. **YR 3 Budget:** *\$75,000*
- **Project Delivery:** Ongoing coordination with engineering firms, communities, and funders to steer the successful implementation of projects. **YR 3 Budget:** *\$44,957*

Comprehensive Shoreline Management Plan: \$348,659

- **Shoreline Management Plan:** The Shoreline Management Plan has been initiated with efforts to reestablish an interagency task force alongside the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It focuses on integrating the beneficial use of dredged material for the stabilization and augmentation of shorelines. **YR 3 Budget:** *No funds Allocated*
- **Shoreline Cost Share Program:** Begin planning a cost-share program, engaging with stakeholders to ensure collaborative and effective resource allocation. **YR 3 Budget:** *\$300,000*
- **Project Delivery:** Continue coordination with engineering firms, communities, and funders, thereby ensuring the guided implementation of projects to achieve desired outcomes. **YR 3 Budget:** *\$48,659*

5. **Vote for Year 3 BIL Workplan:** Commissioner Chris Blankenship called for a vote to approve the Year 3 BIL Workplan. Hearing no remarks, Commissioner Skip Gruber made a motion to approve, and Commissioner Merceria Ludgood seconded the motion. The motion passed without objection.

6. **Committee Reports (MBNEP Management Conference Co-Chair)**

Science Advisory Committee

Dottie Byron reported on the March 15, 2024, SAC meeting. The SAC embraced a new 30-day review procedure designated for the appraisal of documents, specifically focusing on the 2023 stressor matrix report. The gathering proceeded to a thorough review of the 2018-2023 CCMP implementation evaluation, accompanied by an analysis of the recommendations put forth by the Shafer Report. The agenda then transitioned into breakout group discussions, where the strategies for EST were discussed. The groups deliberated the current strategy's advantages, disadvantages, practicality, and potential gaps. Looking ahead, the committee noted upcoming off-cycle meetings, namely the Monitoring Summit and the State of the Bay Workshop.

Project Implementation Committee

Will Underwood reported on the March 21, 2024, PIC meeting. The committee held an input session for the development of the new CCMP. They reviewed the evaluation and recommendations concerning implementing Ecosystem Restoration and Protection initiatives.

Jason Kudulis continued with an update on restoration projects:

D'Olive

- Pine Run- Out for bid
- Tour on June 22 for Executive Committee members

Lower Fish River

- Marlow- Warranty and maintenance
- Magnolia River Watershed – Magnolia River and Schoolhouse near procurement

Fowl River

- Construction soon

Three Mile Creek

- 12-Mile Creek restoration- Supplemental planning
- Apple snail treatment continues

Deer River

- Phase I 95% complete

Christian Miller then gave a quick update on the status of Watershed Management Plans since the last meeting:

- **Mobile Tensaw-Apalachee Delta-** Complete
- **Eastern Shore-** Complete
- **Dauphin Island-** Complete
- **Western Perdido (Palmetto/Bridge Creeks)-** Final Draft
- **Western Delta-** In progress
- **Eastern Delta-** In progress
- **Grand Bay-** In Progress
- **Eight Mile Creek-** In Progress

Government Networks Committee

Charles "Skip" Gruber reported on the March 22, 2024, GNC meeting. The committee's recent session included an in-depth review of the Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Strategies alongside a thorough evaluation of CCMP recommendations. The group engaged in a robust discussion about the Supreme Court Decision on the Waters of the U.S. and its potential repercussions for local resource management. Baldwin County's strategy of utilizing zoning regulations to bolster natural resource protection was also a focal point of conversation.

Business Resources Committee

John Barton, Eliska Morgan, and Steve Stewart reported on the March 14, 2024, BRC meeting. The committee heard a presentation by Christensen Global Strategies, which set the stage for a discussion on how the BRC could effectively gather the business sector to foster a burgeoning green economy within coastal Alabama. The session prompted the formation of working groups focused on asset mapping, communication, education, engagement, and waste to value circular economy, all of which are integral to sustainable development. Additionally, there was interest in broader "Carbon Capture" opportunities, either by developing projects collaboratively with partners or through targeted education and outreach sessions.

Community Action Committee

Leslie Gahagan reported on the March 12, 2024, CAC meeting. Insightful presentations from City of Mobile and Mobile County representatives sparked discussion about the committee's mandate concerning the CCMP. Members deliberated on the direction they envisioned for the group and explored ideas for its expansion to include non-traditional groups, emphasizing a collective commitment to the growth of the committee's environmental endeavors.

Finance Committee

Patti McCurdy announced that the FC will meet on April 5, 2024. She elaborated on the need for fiscal stability and the importance of match dollars.

7. Old Business

No old business.

8. New Business

No new business.

9. Other/Announcements/Adjourn

Commissioner Chris Blankenship announced the GOMESA call for proposals will end on April 23, 2024. Additionally, there will be a ribbon cutting at ADEM's new office on March 28, 2024. The meeting adjourned at 11:16 am.