



Eastern Shore Watershed Management Plan Steering Committee Kick-Off Meeting

**Tuesday, April 13, 2021 ~ 9:00 a.m.
Fairhope Civic Center Auditorium
Fairhope, Alabama**

1. Roberta Swann kicked off the meeting introductions around the room and described MBNEP's organizational mission and purpose/role in development of Watershed Management Plans (WMPs) in the Alabama Coastal Counties.
2. Eliska Morgan outlined the objectives of this first meeting of the Eastern Shore WMP Steering Committee.
3. Suzanne Sweetser provided a summary of the components of a WMP and the need for public participation in guiding the WMP's development. She encouraged the attendees to view the poster-size watershed map and aerial photographs that were displayed in the meeting room. She emphasized the need to identify all pertinent data to assist in the characterization of the current quality of the watershed, identify problems/issues, leading to development of watershed management recommendations to facilitate watershed improvements. For example, we want to protect good habitats and areas with good water quality, and to restore/improve degraded priority areas identified. The Team is in the Data Needs phase of the WMP at this time—scheduled completion within 30 days. An online watershed survey will be available soon for public input regarding problem identification, data sources, data needs, etc. (email announcement will be provided to participants and others with expressed interest in the Eastern Shore WMP, and the survey will be located on the MBNEP website). She then summarized some watershed facts such as the subdivision of the Eastern Shore Watershed into seven subwatersheds located from just south of I-10 southward to Pelican Point at the mouth of Weeks Bay, a coastline distance of 23 miles, with 48 miles of streams.
4. Randy Davis and Troy Ephriam then facilitated an interactive discussion among attendees regarding problem areas within the watershed and issues/opportunities that need to be addressed in the WMP. Comments discussed include:
 - a. Joey Nunnally, Baldwin County Highway Department, summarized the post-hurricane cleanup of trees in navigable streams on the Eastern Shore that is being undertaken by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. A survey of the woody debris damage areas has been completed and a contractor will soon begin to remove the identified navigation obstructions. Only applies to navigable waters. County could not get funds on their own since they were not responsible for the waterways. State talked with FEMA but will not use their money—state will pay. City of Fairhope cleared all material behind 98 and bay.

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- b. Casey Williams, Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce, stated that drainage is a big watershed problem, citing drainage problems leading from areas located upstream of places like Bay Front Park in Daphne through huge drainage pipes/tunnels. These drainage conduits have degraded the beachfront areas in the Daphne area with concrete rubble and rebar exposed along the existing shoreline (dangerous). Connectivity of the shoreline beaches is another problem. Chamber of Commerce is good resource for outreach—has 1300 members.
 - c. Teddy Faust, Tax Assessor, mentioned concerns of potential contaminated sediments in the depositional areas as you boat northward toward the causeway along the Eastern Shore area. He also is concerned about the loss of grass beds along the shoreline where they historically existed to support the abundant fish and shellfish resources along the Eastern Shore.
 - d. Cathy Barnette, Dewberry Engineering, stated that better communication and cooperation between the political entities along the Eastern Shore is needed, e.g., Fairhope, Daphne, Spanish Fort. She also mentioned Metro Quest software where you can drop a pin on a map and identify issues.
 - e. Corey Martin, Fairhope City Council, stated that a more cohesive regulatory approach is needed not only for the Eastern Shore area, but also looking upstream to those areas through which the rivers and stream flow that feed into Mobile Bay.
 - f. Kim Burmeister, Fairhope Planning Board, Code Enforcement, stated that the Team must create partnerships locally to address watershed issues, such as the MS4 partnership dealing with Eastern Shore transportation issues that includes cooperative efforts by Fairhope, Daphne, and Spanish Fort. She also mentioned not pointing fingers—we are all part of the problem. Focus on ownership of problem and fixes. Need more cohesive ordinances.
 - g. Ashley Campbell, Baldwin County Planning & Zoning Department, stated this WMP should build upon the template of interagency cooperation that came out of the D'Olive Creek WMP, that has led to several million dollars of stream restoration efforts since that plan was completed in 2010. She recommended Team identification of the key priorities to be addressed in the recommendations for the WMP and not to get derailed on issues that can lead to dead end political/emotional hot topics.
 - h. DISL doing BP-funded, 10-year study on how water flows through Mobile Bay watershed.
 - i. No stormwater tax exists for Eastern Shore.
 - j. ACF has citizen data reports since 1995.
5. In closing, Eliska played the short video highlighting the Eastern Shore WMP. She reiterated that the watershed survey will be completed and put online soon (notifications will be sent out).
 6. Mike Eubanks stressed the importance of getting involved in this planning effort and asked the Steering Committee to encourage others to participate to create ownership.
 7. Attendees Included:
 - a. Roberta Swann, MBNEP
 - b. Christian Miller, MBNEP
 - c. Eliska Morgan, Thompson
 - d. Suzanne Sweetser, Thompson

- e. Steve O'Hearn, Thompson
- f. Mike Eubanks, Thompson
- g. Randy Davis, M&R
- h. Martha Davis, M&R
- i. Troy Ephriam, Ephriam Environmental
- j. Tim Thibaut, Barry Vittor & Associates
- k. Chris Warn, ESA
- l. Amy Paulson, ESA
- m. Mayor Sherry Sullivan, City of Fairhope
- n. Corey Martin, Councilman, City of Fairhope
- o. Kim Burmeister, City of Fairhope
- p. Joey Nunnally, Baldwin County Highway Department
- q. Ashley Campbell, Baldwin County Planning & Zoning Department
- r. Casey Fulford, Coastal Restoration Planner, AL Association of Conservation Districts
- s. Teddy Faust, Tax Assessor (resident)
- t. Casey Gay Williams, Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce
- u. Elizabeth Tonsmeire, Local Resident/SALT Board member
- v. Jeannie Paradise, Fly Creek Marina
- w. Cynthia Barnette, Dewberry Engineering (Daphne resident)
- x. Lisa Adams, Mobile County Environmental Dept. (Fly Creek resident)