



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Government Networks Committee
February 5, 2021, 8:00 am – 9:00 am
Zoom Virtual Meeting**



Agenda

Meeting Objectives:

- a) Provide status of NFWF GEBF & RESTORE funding
- b) Review CCMP Objectives
- c) Review status of watershed planning in coastal Alabama

1. Welcome and Introductions

GNC Co-Chairs:

- Commissioner Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County
- Commissioner Billie Jo Underwood, Baldwin County

2. Review and Approval of Minutes

3. Old Business

- a) NFWF GEBF/RESTORE Update
- b) EPA-NEP Program Evaluation Findings

4. New Business

- a) Status of Watershed Planning in Coastal Alabama

5. Adjourn

Minutes

In attendance: Billie Jo Underwood, Baldwin County Commission; Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County Commission; William Puckett, Alabama Soil & Water Conservation Committee; Tony Strunk, City of Daphne; Joe Davis, Baldwin County Commission; Scott Bannon, ADCNR-MRD; Margie Wilcox, AL House of Representatives; Shannon McGlynn, ADEM; Jeff Collier, Town of Dauphin Island; Chris Blankenship, ADCNR; Amy Hunter, ADCNR; Chris Thomas, EPA Region 4; Patty McCurdy, ADCNR-State Lands; Diane Burnett, SARPC; Newton Cromer, Saraland City Council; Mike McMillan, City of Spanish Fort; Casey Rains, City of Spanish Fort; Matt Anderson, City of Mobile; Sandy Stimpson, City of Mobile; Ralph Hellmich, City of Foley; Tony Ebright, City of Semmes; Chris Plymale, EPA Region 4

Staff: Roberta Swann, Bethany Hudson, Christian Miller

Takeaways

- The majority of RESTORE funded projects have been awarded and are in some stage of planning and implementation. The current suite of NFWF-funded projects for 2021 is still under development.
- CCMP objectives pertaining to the GNC fall under Technical Assistance and Capacity Building and focus on aiding coastal communities better manage environmental resources.
- The MBNEP passed its recent program evaluation and the CCMP is an official federally approved management plan.
- Coastal watershed planning is continuing and the NEP is focused on completing the remaining watershed plans with a focus on getting WMP development for the Eastern and Western Delta complexes underway as soon as possible.

Meeting began at 8:05 a.m. Commissioner Ludgood welcomed the group, went over the agenda and Commissioner Underwood asked for a motion to accept the minutes from the previous meeting which was made by Joe Davis and seconded by William Puckett. The minutes were accepted.

NFWF/RESTORE update, Amy Hunter

RESTORE

- Mobile County Blueway user survey is open and would appreciate you taking it and passing it along: <https://www.mobilecountyblueway.com/>
- All Bucket 1 projects have been funded and are moving on through procurement process and engineering and design.
- Bucket 2: Finally received notice of award for comprehensive living shoreline study which will be moving into implementation.
- Bucket 3: 29 projects total, 15 have been awarded to date. Baldwin and Mobile counties both have projects in process. Bayou La Batre and the City of Mobile also have multiple projects underway.
- Center of Excellence is progressing; the Sea Lab is making the necessary changes to support the research that will take place under this program. <https://alcoe.disl.edu/>

NFWF-GEBF

- Development of 2021 project slate is underway. This list hasn't been finalized, but construction of the Dauphin Island Causeway shoreline project is expected to be one of them. Project scope is approximately 3 miles (from the foot of the DI Bridge to Bayfront Park).
- Dauphin Island: E&D for the restoration of the East end beach is underway. The West End of DI was acquired with NRDA bird money. Aloe Bay project is going well.
- Regular updates and project information can be found here: <https://www.alabamacoastalrestoration.org/>

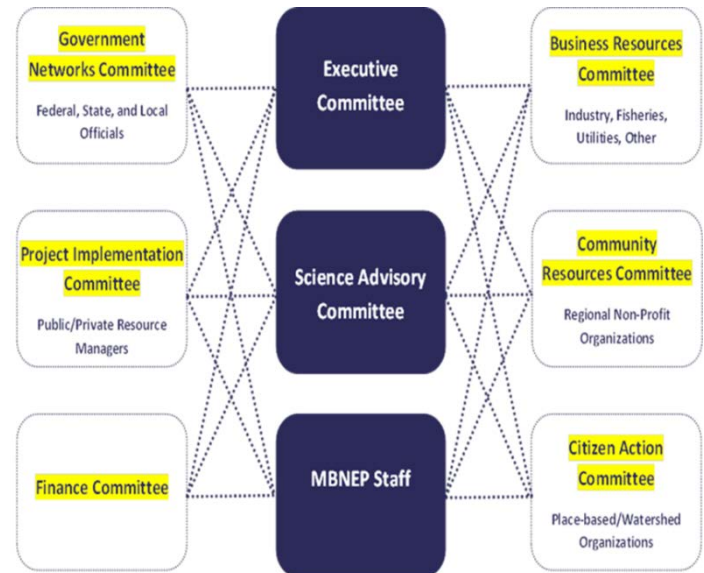
Clean Water Alabama

- initiative of Joe Faust and others in Baldwin County to raise awareness of coastal water issues and increase stewardship of Baldwin Counties natural areas

- Group coalesced after Hurricane Sally to help solve issues related to trees and debris in local waterways.
- Group is very new, but they have actively championed the implementation of the Weeks Bay Watershed Plan. Joe and Teddy Faust will be able to share more information at an upcoming meeting.
- Online Survey can be accessed here:
https://universityofalabama.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6YHbKccN5mshONE
- Joe Davis mentioned that Baldwin County has been working with Commissioner Blankenship on ways to address the debris that are clogging up inland streams.

Overview of the MBNEP and CCMP

- Roberta welcomed the new members to the GNC and stated that the CCMP was similar to a lot of the comprehensive plans communities have developed and implemented, although the MBNEP's CCMP has a focus on the natural environment
- The NEP's Management Conference is made up of several sectors of the community, approximately 400 community leaders and various state and federal agencies comprise the committee membership.
- As part of the last CCMP update the GNC was polled and indicated the following challenges/opportunities:
 - Challenges: Political will/Buy-in, Funding, Development pressures, Inconsistencies/lack of regulations, Stormwater Management
 - Opportunities: Regulatory Changes, Incentives/Innovative Financing, Education, Legislative Action, Infrastructure improvements
- The GNC falls mainly under Technical Assistance and Capacity Building. One of our charges at the NEP is to aid local communities, many of whom may lack in-house capacity, to help improve environmental management.
- One of those objectives is the establishment and operation of watershed partnerships and task forces. The D'Olive Intergovernmental Task Force is an example. Members include cities of Daphne, Spanish Fort, Baldwin County, ADEM, and this group has helped to guide restoration efforts in the Watershed.
- Another objective is to maintain the South Alabama Regulatory Review which is a comprehensive review of Federal, State, and local ordinances related to environmental management and provide recommendations for improved environmental management. This document is currently being updated and the current version is available here:
http://www.mobilebaynep.com/images/uploads/library/FinalReport_withAppendices_Matrix.pdf
- Another objective is to provide a resource library of videos and other tools for aiding environmental management.
- Also working to provide regular and relevant training opportunities for local government resource managers. Recently, workshops have been held for watershed hydrologic models that have been developed.
- The Create a Clean Water Future program was established by a coalition of local municipal staff to provide resources to educate and provided resources (including the educational videos). This website can be accessed here: <https://www.cleanwaterfuture.com/>



The MBNEP Management Conference

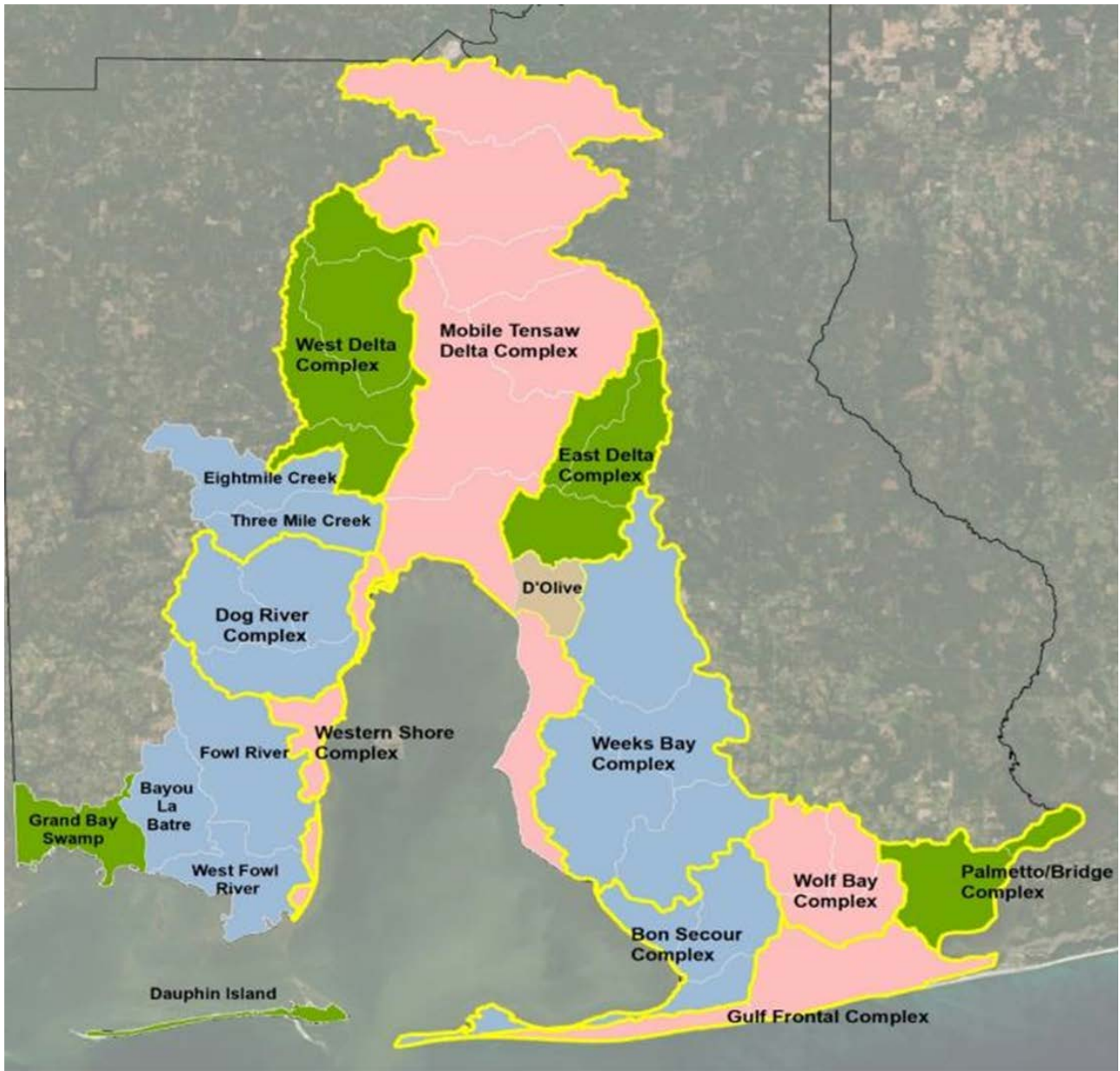
EPA-Program Evaluation

- The MBNEP passed the recent program evaluation with flying colors. The review team did ask the

MBNEP update the coastal monitoring framework. Applauded the work through the Clean Water Future Program and the Management Conference and how so many sectors of the community are engaged.

- Chris Plymale noted that the MBNEP does a great job and the “dings” were very inconsequential. EPA Region 4 appreciates the efforts of everyone involved with the MBNEP.
- The MBNEP’s CCMP is an official federally approved plan, so this plan can be cited in any funding application that requires linking it to a federally approved plan.

Watershed Planning Update



- The current status of watershed planning in coastal Alabama
 - Recently completed WMP – Wolf Bay
http://www.mobilebaynep.com/images/uploads/library/Wolf_BayWMP_web.pdf
 - Under Development – Western Shore, Gulf Frontal, MTA Delta, D’Olive (update), Fly Creek/Eastern Shore, Dauphin Island
 - On Deck: Eastern Delta, Western Delta
- It is imperative to have baseline watershed assessments underway in both the Western and Eastern Delta complexes in order to feed information into WMP development.
- Each of the watersheds is unique in the communities and issues that are involved
- The Western Delta complex has four individual HUC 12 watersheds: Cold Creek, Gunnison Creek,

Bayou Sara, and Lower Chasaw Creek. Grouping multiple watersheds together has some benefits in economy of scale to reduce the overall cost per HUC12, but it may make more sense to break them up into multiple watersheds complexes for planning purposes.

- These plans are actively being utilized to put funding on the ground. To date, projects identified as part of a watershed planning process have led to over \$337 million in BP spill-related funding.
- Regular updates on coastal watershed planning can be found on the MBNEP website.

Meeting adjourned @ 9:05 am