



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program  
Government Networks Committee  
August 26, 8:00 am – 9:30 am**



**Spanish Fort City Hall  
7361 Spanish Fort Blvd.  
Spanish Fort, AL 36527**

**Agenda**

Meeting Objectives:

- a) Provide status of NFWF GEBF & RESTORE funding
- b) Review municipal challenges and lessons learned related to growth & development in Coastal AL

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

GNC Co-Chairs:

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

**2. Review and Approval of Minutes**

**3. Old Business**

- a) NFWF GEBF/RESTORE Update – Amy Hunter, ADCNR

**4. New Business**

- a) Planning for and Managing Growth in Coastal Alabama
  - i. Mike McMillan, City of Spanish Fort
  - ii. Brendan Schwandner, City of Saraland
  - iii. Shayla Beaco, City of Mobile
  - iv. Leslie Gahagan, City of Foley
  - v. Jeff Collier, Town of Dauphin Island
  - vi. Dan Bond, City of Gulf Shores

**5. Adjourn**

## Minutes

**In attendance:** Joseph Abston, Washington County Commission; Billie Jo Underwood, Baldwin County Commission; William Puckett, Alabama Soil & Water Conservation Committee; Jeff Collier, Town of Dauphin Island; Amy Hunter, ADCNR; Chris Thomas, EPA Region 4; Patty McCurdy, ADCNR-State Lands; Amy Hunter, ADCNR; Cade Alred, SARPC; Mike McMillan, City of Spanish Fort; Leslie Gahagan, City of Foley; Elizabeth Roney, Office of Rep. Jerry Carl; Nicole Taylor, SARPC; Newton Cromer, Saraland City Council; Margie Wilcox, AL House of Representatives; Skip Gruber, Baldwin County Commission; Ossia Edwards, City of Prichard; Stephani Johnson-Norwood, City of Prichard; Matt Anderson, City of Mobile; Chris Blankenship, ADCNR; Matthew Brown, Baldwin County; Jennifer Fiddler, candidate AL House of Representatives; Scott Hughes, ADEM; Patti McCurdy, ADCNR; Matt Simpson, AL House of Representatives; Pete Riehm, candidate AL State Senate, Bert Hoffman, City of Mobile; Shayla Jones Beaco, City of Mobile; Brendan Schwander, City of Saraland

**Staff:** Roberta Swann, Bethany Hudson, Marti Messick, Christian Miller

## Takeaways

- There have been many water-quality related projects submitted to the State for funding, which will continue to be addressed through RESTORE, GOMESA, and other sources of funding.
- Across coastal Alabama, communities are dealing with the challenges associated with growth and development. MBNEP should continue to lead efforts to increase the capacity of local governments to manage this growth and educate coastal communities on the importance of managing growth and balancing natural resource protection in order to increase resilience.

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 and a motion was made by Newton Cromer to accept the minutes from the previous meeting and seconded by Mike McMillan.

Amy Hunter gave an update on

- Buckets 1 & 3 – many of the projects are now moving to construction. Budget issues are common with cost increases across the board
- Bucket 5 (Center of Excellence) the first round of research grants has been awarded and should be getting underway soon as contracts are finalized.
- Bucket 2 (water quality) The first group of projects have been announced. Currently finalizing work plans.
- Build America/buy America is going to create some challenges with these projects that will need to be worked through as we move forward.
- NFWF projects currently under way include Graveline Bay, Dauphin Island east end beach, Mobile Bay Causeway restoration.
- The State has received their annual funding under GOMESA based on oil and gas production. There has been a significant decrease this year from \$40 million to \$25 million and there is concerned that this may be a trend. The Gov has decided not to put out a request for new proposals due to the backlog of projects still on the books. The majority of this year's funding will go to water quality projects. If you had a project submittal under the State's water quality program it will be considered for GOMESA funding this year.

The remaining portion of the program was dedicated to discussion of challenges that coastal communities are facing due pressures from increasing growth and development. We heard from six communities today who were charged with framing their presentation around the following questions:

- What are the main challenges your community is facing?
- Have you implemented any new regs/ordinances to help address these challenges?
- What lessons have you learned?
- How can the MBNEP/GNC help you address these challenges moving forward?

Mayor McMillian, Mayor – City of Spanish Fort

- The main challenges the community faces related to growth include stormwater, increased traffic, aging infrastructure, utilities, and schools.
- Stormwater is the primary challenge the City deals with due to the unique topography and amount of rain it is a constant need to address issues related to stormwater management.
- A lot of the roads were built prior to the City being incorporated so they don't meet current standards.
- Passed a comprehensive clean water ordinance which increased enforcement capabilities. Subdivision regulations were revised in 2016 and are frequently updated/amended as new issues arise.
- Every situations are unique, and should be assessed individually. The best way to handle it is to identify and address the problem as early as possible.
- The NEP's GNC meetings are very valuable. It allows us to hear from and interact with others around the coast and see how similar issues are being addressed in other communities.

Brenden Schwander, Planner - City of Saraland

- There are two major economic centers in the City, the older along the Hwy 43 corridor while a newer one has emerged along the Industrial Pkwy/I-65 intersection. Hwy 43 has historically been the main economic hub for the City.
- The Industrial Pkwy area is growing rapidly with lots of new retail, increasing traffic volume significantly. Hwy 43 has seen much slower growth.
- Main challenges include
  - A desire to promote positive development along Hwy 43
  - Sustain positive development along Industrial Pkwy
  - Sustain residential development throughout Saraland
- The City is looking for grants to improve the lighting and utilities along Hwy 43 to improve the aesthetic and increase development along that corridor.
- The City's land use ordinance has been modified to allow more control over what can be developed and where.
- Development has created challenges and stormwater is a primary concern to consider as development continues.

Shayla Jones Beaco, Executive Director, Build Mobile – City of Mobile

- The City has recently passed an updated Unified Development Code in July of this year. The City had been operating off a 60 year old zoning code which had been modified in a piecemeal fashion, leading to many conflicts throughout the document. The current administration has updated its comprehensive plan and followed with the updated UDC.
- There was a tremendous amount of public engagement throughout the process
- A technical advisory team was put together to help develop the new UDC
- Conservation Developments were allowed to help promote cluster development and retain as much natural/green space as possible.
- There are new water-focused zoning districts to account for the maritime needs of the City.
- Natural resource protection was added to encourage preservation of natural areas – requires setbacks from riparian/stream areas and wetlands.
- Mitigation of development within the riparian buffer zones is possible and include implementation of stormwater quality improvement/quantity reductions, stream/wetland restoration, buffer vegetation, reduction of post-development run-off volume to less than pre-development levels, removal of existing impervious surfaces, LID
- New overlay districts in some areas, for example there is a Peninsula overlay district that requires developers to incorporate one or more of the following LID practices: bioretention, water quality swale, rain garden, pervious parking.

- The new code does a better job of allowing the City to balance the needs and meet the challenges of continued development.
- There is a need to continue to educate the general public and we appreciate the NEP's help in this area.

Leslie Gahagan, Environmental and Nature Parks Director – City of Foley

- There is a trifecta of issues: traffic, drainage, and property values
- Stormwater is the primary problem the City deals with. The land is flat, we receive a lot of rain, and natural areas are being developed.
- ACAMP funded a flood response plan for the City – first thing we learned are the City deals with multiple types of flooding – river flooding, storm surge, debris-clogged channels. This plan helped identify critical flood prone areas and solutions for dealing with it.
- Passed new land development ordinance that has greenspace requirements, infiltration of first 1.25” and first flush treatments, post construction requirements and escrow account for maintenance of stormwater infrastructure, landscaping and tree preservation
- The City regularly utilizes watershed plans to help inform stormwater management and natural resource protection
- Maintenance of stormwater facilities is important to sustaining/increasing stormwater catchment capacity.
- Development of drainage studies to develop future projects and increase awareness of maintenance priorities.
- Have increased capacity to issue stop work orders for construction issues that requires immediate response.
- Keep funding for watershed plans and updates and supporting watershed implementation groups. Also, continuing to increase public education is critical.

Jeff Collier, Mayor – Town of Dauphin Island

- There has been 30%+ population growth on the Island with people moving to DI from all over the country and are not used to the issues that come with living on a barrier island.
- The natural habitat is important, and we have to be mindful of balancing the growth with the need to protect and preserve the natural areas on the island.
- Instituted a dune protection district to protect those natural features that control growth in those areas.
- Tree ordinance was passed to protect the tree canopy on the island. Also recently passed a new wetland ordinance to discourage development in these environmentally sensitive areas.
- Development has created additional challenges with stormwater management.
- Sea level rise and changes in shoreline are causing the Town to rethink how they develop and to encourage development in areas of the island that are more resilient and sustainable.
- Currently updating the zoning ordinance, short term rentals has been a major need to address the need to provide lodging for tourists while still maintaining the character of the island for full time residents.
- These types of forums that the GNC provides is critically important so we can continue to share with and learn from each other.

Christian shared for Dan Bond, Environmental/Grans Coordinator- City of Gulf Shores

- Growth and development pressures are compounding issues associated with stormwater management. Gulf Shores was the fastest growing city in the State according to the last census.
- The City's economy is dependent on tourism but that must be balanced with the need to protect and sustain the natural environment.
- Currently implementing 2014 sustainability plan. Key priorities are environmental stewardship, well-organized infrastructure, economic diversification, sustainability.

- Zoning – instituted overlay districts, specific use regulations, conservation subdivisions, conditional use permits
- Natural resource protection – tree protection ordinance, wetland protection regs, clay soils ordinance, flood plain protection ordinance

#### Open Discussion

- Billie Joe said the lack of home rule creates challenges for the County in managing a lot of these issues.
- Matthew Brown said that Baldwin County is working on their long-range plan. The County can only manage what the State allows them. There have been some novel approaches relating to flood plain management that have allowed the County to have some additional oversight when it comes to maintaining riparian areas.
- Also, a challenge with family division of property which has allowed some to skirt the land disturbance regs.

Meeting adjourned at 9:28 A.M.