



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Government Networks Committee
March 31, 8:00 am – 9:30 am**



**International Trade Building
250 N. Water Street
Mobile, AL 36606**

Agenda

Meeting Objectives:

- a) Provide status of State projects and priorities
- b) Provide overview of 2023 legislative agenda
- c) Review critical issues and priorities for shoreline management in Coastal Alabama

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) State Update – Chris Blankenship, ADCNR
- b) MBNEP update – Christian Miller, MBNEP

4. New Business

- a) 2023 Legislative Overview – Beth Lyons, Lyon’s Law Firm
- b) Planning for Resilient Shorelines in Coastal Alabama – Dr. Bret Webb, U. South Alabama

5. Adjourn

Minutes

In attendance: Billie Jo Underwood, Baldwin County Commission; Ashley Henderson, Alabama Soil & Water Conservation Committee; Jeff Collier, Town of Dauphin Island; Amy Hunter, ADCNR; Chris Thomas, EPA Region 4; Cade Alred, SARPC; Mike McMillan, City of Spanish Fort; Leslie Gahagan, City of Foley; Nicole Taylor, SARPC; Margie Wilcox, AL House of Representatives; Skip Gruber, Baldwin County Commission; Matt Anderson, City of Mobile; Scott Hughes, ADEM; Scott Bannon, MRD; Chris Blankenship, ADCNR; Ralph Helmich, City of Foley; Frances Holk-Jones, AL House of Representatives; Veronica Hudson, City of Saraland; Cody Ledet, City of Spanish Fort; Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County Commission; Beth Lyons, Lyons Law Firm; Chris Plymale, EPA Region 4; John Valentine, DISL; Bret Webb, USA; Casi Callaway, City of Mobile

Staff: Roberta Swann, Bethany Hudson, Marti Messick, Henry Perkins, Blair Morrison, Christian Miller

Takeaways

- CCMP goals and objectives that fall under the purview of the GNC are found in the Technical Assistance and Capacity Building strategy and focus on building the capacity of local governments to better manage their own natural environments.
- There are multiple bills of local interest currently being introduced and discussed in the State legislature including the increasing of caps associated with economic development programs and funding for local projects at the Port and the new passenger infrastructure at Brookley Field.
- Across coastal Alabama shorelines have been eroding since the 1800's and are impacted by issues including human alteration of the natural environment, lack of sediment, wave action, and sea level rise.
- There is a need to comprehensively address the issues affecting shoreline erosion, to include making it easier administratively for nature-based shoreline stabilization to be undertaken and improving the capacity of local contractors to implement living shoreline projects.

Meeting was called to order at 8:05

A motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting was made by Skip Gruber and seconded by Mike McMillan.

Amy Hunter gave an update for ADCNR

- GOMESA proposals are due on April 4th, Will Underwood is the point of contact for any issues/questions.
- Bon Secour dredge material disposal site is complete
- Orange Beach sewer improvements are nearing completion
- Fairhope Working Water Fronts and sewer improvements are nearing construction
- Satsuma sewer/water infrastructure projects are almost ready to go to bid
- Bayou La Batre – extension of the sewer force main is almost ready to go to bid, the City Docks project was highlighted in the Lagniappe and is nearing going to bid
- 166 projects are currently in some phase of planning/design/implementation across Mobile and Baldwin counties.

Christian gave an update for MBNEP

- Dauphin Island Plan is final and can be accessed on the MBNEP webpage:
https://www.mobilebaynep.com/assets/uploads/main/00_Dauphin-Island-WMP_PRINT.pdf
- Middle Delta & Eastern Shore are wrapping up and will be out for comment soon.
- That leaves the Eastern Delta, Western Delta, and Perdido which are all in progress.
- The final WMP is Grand Bay which will be getting underway this summer.
- Reviewed the CCMP Technical Assistance and Capacity Building strategy goals and objectives that apply to the GNC
- TAC-3 “Build the Capacity of Local Governments to Manage and Enhance Coastal Environmental

Resources”

- Support implementation of eight coastal watershed plans
- Support establishment and operation of watershed partnerships and task forces
 - D’Olive Intergovernmental Task Force, Plan Lower Alabama Now, and Coastal Alabama Stormwater Team are all examples of intergovernmental groups that have arisen out of watershed planning to aid implementation of plan recommendations.
- Review and maintain South Alabama Regulatory Review (completed in 2018 & updated in 2021)
- Develop recommendations for improved enforcement of existing ordinances.
- Develop strategy for adoption of model ordinances.
- Establish resource library of videos and other tools to improve environmental management.
 - Video library and resources available on Clean Water Future & NEP website
- Conduct trainings for local government resource managers.
 - Recently held LID workshop in partnership with Auburn and Baldwin County
- The next cycle of CCMP development will be starting soon so there will be a need to work with the GNC on refining goals and objectives for the next CCMP.

Beth Lyons – State Legislative Update

- The legislature went into session on March 7, went into special session to deal with \$1 billion ARPA. Funds will be spent on Sewer infrastructure, hospitals/nursing homes, broadband internet, and public health programs. The special session lasted about one week and then went back into regular session. Must conclude by June 19.
- 366 bills have been introduced to date
- Renewal and expansion of economic incentives: Jobs Act and Growing AL Act gives income tax deductions/credits. Money will also be available for the development of brownfields.
- \$8.7 billion for education budget, \$3 billion general fund budget
- Supplemental appropriations bill for the education budget includes \$31 million for the Port, \$21 million for Mobile Downtown Airport, \$2 million for DISL
- Repeal of the grocery tax is being discussed. One version would only apply to foods that qualify for SNAP and would cost the State ~\$300 million/year in revenue. There’s no plan to replace the revenue and no bill has been introduced yet.
- Chris Elliot passed a bill through the senate to limit liquor liability. Currently everyone involved in serving someone could potentially be liable and this would limit it to the person who served the drink that pushed the person over the limit of intoxication.
- Patient’s rights bill passed in the senate that would allow a primary care giver to have limited visitation rights.
- Matt Simpson has a bill that would introduce mandatory sentencing for fentanyl crimes
- There is legislation to provide for more judges to help alleviate back logs in cases
- Historic tax credit cap is currently only \$20 million/ year, Rep Clarke is introducing a bill to raise the cap.
- Chip Brown is introducing a bill to allow for property owners to dredge in riparian area to utilize for shoreline stabilization/living shorelines. ADCNR has some issues with the current legislation and they are working on a substitute bill that would allow their oversight.
- There will be multiple abortion-related bills to create exemptions for rape and incest.
- Medicare expansion is another issue that will be discussed.
- Trigger activated devices (glock chips) legislation is being introduced to outlaw these at the State level.
- Bill is being introduced to raise the competitive bid limit from \$15,000 to \$25,000.
- There will likely be over 200 bills passed out of a total of 600+ that will be introduced, many of these will be bills that apply to limited locations.
- The “ban on bans” for plastic bags is not likely to ever be brought forward again, Rep. Wilcox has made sure that the legislature understands why that is such an important issue for the coast.

Bret Webb – Planning for resilient shorelines in Coastal Alabama

- Dr. Webb introduced himself as a professor of coastal engineering at the University of South Alabama and co-owner of Southcoast engineering specializing in coastal engineering and said he would focus on providing general information about coastal shoreline management in Alabama.
- There are over 600 miles of tidally influenced shoreline in the state of Alabama.
- These shorelines support abundant biodiversity and are important to manage
- \$25 billion dollar impact for shoreline-dependent industries, Port of Mobile and coastal tourism are the primary drivers.
- A healthy coast and ecosystem = a healthy economy.
- The overall status of shorelines is they are eroding. Management concerns relate to the built environment/infrastructure that has been placed in coastal areas.
- Comparing shorelines from the 1800s to today, the overall trend is that they are retreating at 1-3 feet/year.
- MBNEP, with funding from ADCNR, completed a comprehensive shoreline mapping of Baldwin and Mobile Counties in 2009-2012
 - [Shoreline Mapping of Baldwin and Mobile Counties Phase I](#)
 - [Shoreline Mapping of Baldwin and Mobile Counties Phase II](#)
 - [Shoreline Mapping of Baldwin and Mobile Counties Phase III](#)
- This is happening for several reasons:
 - Lack of sediments
 - Shoreline armoring
 - Sea Level Rise
 - Wave Action
- Lack of sediment into the system is what is driving this. Not getting the coarser sediments that we had normally received out of the Delta due to man-made manipulation of the systems (e.g. dredging).
- Armoring shorelines has the effect of cutting off the natural source of sediment to the system.
- Control of erosion and sedimentation in developed areas has removed another source of sediment to the system.
- The sediment that is currently in the Bay is all we will have to work with during our lifetimes.
- There is a strong correlation between population growth and increased armoring of shorelines
- As you armor shorelines it reduces habitat for fish and wildlife
- Sea Level Rise is one compounding factor that we have no control over. The rate of SLR at Dauphin Island as increased from 1 ft/100 years to ½ ft over the last 20 years. This rate of sea level rise is increasing.
- We have frequent storms that drive shoreline erosion and winds out of the south that drive wave action, also lots of vessel traffic. All of these waves have a cumulative impact on our shoreline in exacerbating erosion.
- Options: Do nothing, retreat from the coast, regrade the bank, stabilize/armor or enhance/manage.
- Traditional beach renourishment brings in large amounts of quality materials to return the beach to its original state.
- Living shorelines use native materials like sand, plants, oysters instead of armoring to help manage shoreline loss and is a practical alternative for homeowners to maintain their own shorelines.
- Bulkheading is generally easier and cheaper in the State of Alabama. Lots of times bulkheading is necessary (eg. Port facilities) but in a lot of areas natural methods are practical alternatives.
- Current permitting is not efficient for natural shoreline implementation.
- Also, a lack of technical expertise to install natural shorelines. Very few contractors have the capability to install living shorelines.
- Stephanie Smallegan/Patch is leading a living shorelines program funded by RESTORE out of the DISL Center of Excellence.
- It was recommended to have a report out of projects funded through the Center of Excellence at an upcoming GNC meeting.

- Investments from the Deepwater Horizon fines have helped to quick start a lot of shoreline enhancement/stabilization projects across coastal Alabama, but there is a lot more shoreline that needs to be addressed (privately held properties).
- Lots of shoreline protection measures have been undertaken on private property without permitting.
- There is an effort underway to raise the cap on GOMESA funding to 50% which would mean the State would receive more money for projects including shoreline enhancement projects.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 A.M.