Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Management Conference

CCMP Update Extension, Year 1



Work Plan October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024

Prepared by Mobile Bay National Estuary Program www.mobilebaynep.com







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Preface

In 1972, the Clean Water Act was created to restore and maintain the chemical and biological integrity of the nation's waters so they can *support the protection and propagation of fish, shellfish, wildlife, and recreation in and on the water*. In 1987, the National Estuary Program (NEP) was created by the U.S. Congress via amendments to this Act to identify, restore, and protect nationally significant estuaries. Authorized under Title 3, Section 320, Public Law 94-117, 33 U.S.C. 466, and reauthorized in 2021 under bipartisan support, the goal of this program is to protect and restore the water quality and living resources of estuaries and associated watersheds designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator as estuaries of national significance.

NEP's work to implement estuarine ecosystem-based management by characterizing the priority problems in their estuaries and surrounding watersheds, developing Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (CCMPs) that list and describe actions to address those problems, and identifying partners, including lead entities, to implement the actions. Locally, the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP), in existence for the last 28 years, facilitates the creation of the CCMP and its updates through coordinating scientific assessments of where and what stresses are impacting the health of our estuarine ecosystems, capturing the input of citizens throughout Mobile and Baldwin counties, and initiating the development of actions identified by community leaders, resource managers, and scientists to conserve, restore, and protect those things valued most about living in coastal Alabama.

The second CCMP, *Respect the Connect: A Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Alabama's Estuaries and Coast* was published in 2013. Since its publication, many of the strategies for measuring ecosystem health, restoring watersheds, building community capacity, and expanding citizen education and involvement have been implemented, resulting in some noteworthy successes. However, implementation of this Plan is far from complete.

In 2019, the MBNEP concluded the process of updating *Respect the Connect* as a requirement of the **National Estuary Program Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan Revision and Update Guidelines** (EPA, May 2016). This updated Implementation Plan reaffirms the goals of the 2013 - 2018 Plan; acknowledges the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of implementing the strategies in that Plan; identifies barriers to implementation of the current strategies; and refines the objectives and suggested activities identified to accomplish the reaffirmed goals. The outcome of this effort provides the MBNEP Management Conference with a road map for meeting the environmental needs of Mobile Bay, its surrounding watershed, and coastal Alabama for the next five years.

The following Annual Work Plan has been prepared using the updated strategies included in the CCMP Update for October 1, 2018 - September 30, 2023. The period for implementing this CCMP is being extended through September 30, 2025, to allow time for the evaluation, assessment, community engagement, and strategy development of a new CCMP for 2025-2030.

INTRODUCTION

MBNEP's mission is to promote the wise stewardship of water quality and living resources of Alabama's estuaries. MBNEP's purpose is to catalyze actions of estuary stakeholders, build community organizational capacity for sound resource management, and leverage commitment and investment to ensure the estuary's sustainability. MBNEP's objectives are: 1) engage estuary stakeholders in the development of CCMPs; 2) expand resources and involvement in the implementation of these CCMPs; and 3) promote how to best protect this nationally significant ecological, economic, and cultural resource to ensure its conservation for our lifetime and beyond. To maximize effectiveness in promoting estuary health, the program's guiding principles are:

<u>Those that live it know it</u> - Citizens, anglers, boaters, scientists, hunters, and others have a unique insight into the environmental challenges we face, what works, and what doesn't. **Stakeholder input is vital to developing long-term solutions to local challenges.**

<u>Economic opportunities must be available</u> - Our coast is an economic engine, creating significant wealth for our State each year through activities such as trade through the Port of Mobile, recreational and commercial fishing, tourism, hunting, and coastal construction. Many jobs depend on coastal water quality, healthy populations of fish and wildlife, and the mosaic of habitats providing essential natural functions.

<u>It happens in the river, in the sea, and on the street</u> - Residents, towns, cities, counties, business and industry, academia, community developers, and social services all have a vested interest in preserving the quality of life derived from Mobile Bay and coastal Alabama's estuaries. Involvement of citizens in carrying out activities aimed at improving the Bay and its watersheds is paramount to ensuring the long-term health and vitality of the Mobile estuary. **Citizens must be actively engaged in balancing the many uses of the Bay so that we can preserve its unique natural resources for all of our needs.**

Our vision: Alabama's estuaries (where the rivers meet the sea) are healthy and support ecological functions and human uses. Everyone deserves the opportunity to experience the beauty and bounty of Alabama's estuaries - its rivers, creeks, bays, and bayous; abounding diversity of fish and wildlife; productive wetlands; and forests, dunes, and beaches. Alabama's estuaries are integral to our common good.

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GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION



Although the actual watershed for Mobile Bay encompasses more than two thirds of the State of Alabama and portions of Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee, MBNEP's primary target area is limited to southern Alabama. This includes all of Mobile and Baldwin counties from the Florida border west across coastal Alabama to its border with Mississippi.

In addition, the target area extends seaward to the threemile State jurisdictional limit. It includes Mississippi Sound, west to the Mississippi/Alabama border and Perdido Bay, east to the Florida state line. Major waterways include the Tombigbee, Tensaw, Apalachee, Blakeley, Escatawpa, Mobile, Alabama, Dog, Fowl, Fish, Magnolia, Bon Secour and Perdido rivers; Chickasaw, Norton, Three Mile, and Eight Mile creeks; Wolf and Perdido Bays, Little Lagoon; and the Intercoastal Waterway.



PART ONE: 2023 - 2024 WORK PLAN

The original period of performance of the current CCMP is October 1, 2018-September 30, 2023. This period is being extended to September 30, 2025, during which time the MBNEP will lead the Management Conference through a complete re-write of this plan for the next ten years extending to September 30, 2030.

The following workplan summarizes how Section 320 U.S. EPA funds will support implementation of the current CCMP from **October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024**. For each action area, the CCMP goals are bolded, and the objectives are indicated below Goals as numbers (e.g., 1.1). Please note: the objectives listed are for the five-year period. Activities planned for the coming year are then listed by their associated objective number.

Overall, key areas of focus for the coming year will center around synthesizing the last 10 years of activities related to data collected to measure ecosystem status and trends; compiling the recommendations included in the 13 comprehensive watershed plans published; measuring the extent to which the capacity of our coastal community has been built to improve management of what is valued most about living along the Alabama coast; and assessing the effectiveness of actions to promote wise stewardship across our coastal communities. These activities will include but not be limited to community input, scientific assessment, restoration evaluation, and strategy development.

BUDGET OVERVIEW: 2018 - 2024

Each year the MBNEP receives an allocation from EPA to support activities geared toward achieving the objectives of the CCMP. The EPA requires the funding provided as part of a "cooperative agreement" to be matched with non-federal dollars in a 1:1 ratio, either in cash or in-kind valuation. The table below reflects the cumulative amount of cash funding received to date and what is anticipated to implement the sixth year of this CCMP. In addition to funds received by state and local governments to implement the program, MBNEP has successfully competed and been awarded non-federal grant dollars to implement CCMP objectives. These funds provide the balance of our EPA Section 320 match obligation.

Revenues	Year 1: FY 2018-2019	Year 2: FY 2019-2020	Year 3: FY 2020-2021	Year 4: FY 2021-2022	Year 5: FY 2022-2023	Year 6: FY 2023-2024	Total All Years
Total Available			1 00 6 100				< = 0 / 0 = 0
Budget	997,076	953,488	1,086,188	1,174,600	1,248,212	1,340,100	6,784,052
EPA Annual							
Appropriation	625,000	600,000	662,500	700,000	750,000	850,000	4,187,500
Match							
Actuals/Projected							
Year 6	372,076	353,488	423,688	474,600	490,100	490,100	2,596,552
Net Surplus/(Deficit)							
from previous year					8,112	17,500	

The following pages provide details of the MBNEP Annual Workplan for the 2023-2024 program year based on anticipated funding.

Revenues	FY 2023-2024 Budget
Total Available Budget	1,357,600
EPA Annual Appropriation	850,000
Match (Actuals)	490,100
Net Surplus/(Deficit) from previous year	17,500
Expenses	
Estuary Status and Trends	10,250
EST 2: Environmental Monitoring/Communication	10,250
Ecosystem Restoration and Protection	9,000
ERP 5: Access Enhancements- ADA Accessibility	9,000
Technical Assistance and Capacity Building	37,902
TAC 3: Government Capacity Building-Training	2,500
TAC 4: Grassroots Capacity Building- Citizen Monitoring	35,402
Education and Public Involvement	97,217
EPI 3: Community Education Program- Newsletter	8,000
EPI 3: Community Education Program- Signage	2,000
EPI 3: Community Education Program- Video Production	28,000
EPI 4: Create a Clean Water Future Campaign	25,217
EPI 5: Community Event Program- Special Event sponsorships	12,000
EPI 5: Community Event Program- Special Event outreach materials	15,000
EPI 5: Management Conference Support	7,000
Management and Program Administration	1,203,231
Program Delivery/Operation	1,026,153
Indirect Charges	177,078
Total EPA Budget	1,357,600

EST - ESTUARY STATUS AND TRENDS: GOALS/OBJECTIVES

EST-1: Increase availability and use of data related to how coastal ecosystems and their services respond to man-made stresses.

- 1.1 Establish a data management and usage strategy.
- 1.2 Maintain or improve existing level of watershed scale monitoring and data analysis to assess trends in coastal ecosystem health by watershed.
- 1.3 Promote consistent system-wide monitoring to assess trends in coastal ecosystem health.

EST-2: Establish a process for measuring, analyzing, and communicating change in marine, estuarine, and freshwater ecosystem conditions.

2.1 Synthesize monitoring data to develop a watershed condition index to track and communicate trends in watershed restoration and management.

EST-3: Model/predict connection between ecosystem condition and the ecosystem services people value.

3.1 Manage system for multiple services.

E	stuary	y Status and Trends	Past Year Funds Reprogrammed/ Available	FY 2024 Budget	Total	Description
Ε	ST-1:	Coastal Monitoring	_	_	_	
Ρ	rogra	m				
E a C	ST-2: nd Eco omm	Environmental Monitoring osystem Response unication	117,66	10,250	127,916	
	2.1	State of Alabama's Estuaries and Coast	117,666	10,250	127,916	Work with Science Advisory Committee to Publish a report on the State of Alabama's Estuaries and Coast to communicate status and trends of environmental conditions; refine SAC operations and charge
E R	ST-3: esear	Ecosystem Modeling, ch, and Evaluation	-	-	-	

ERP - ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION AND PROTECTION: GOALS/OBJECTIVES

ERP-1: Develop comprehensive management plans for all coastal watersheds (at the 12-digit-hydrologic-unit-code scale).

- 1.1 Develop 12 new coastal watershed management plans for those basins discharging into priority fishery nursery areas.
- 1.2 Prioritize watersheds/seek funding for watershed management plans in non-tidally influenced coastal watersheds.
- 1.3 Update existing watershed plans to include new watershed planning criteria.

ERP-2: Implement comprehensive watershed management plans with a focus on priority habitats.

2.1 Develop a Coastal Alabama Habitat Restoration Plan to guide watershed management plan implementation.

ERP-3: Improve ecosystem function and resilience through protections, restoration, and conservation along shorelines of coastal Alabama beaches, bays, and backwaters.

3.1 Develop a Comprehensive Regional Shorelines Plan for stabilization and protection.

ERP-4: Improve management of invasive species through coastal Alabama watersheds.

4.1 Develop invasive species management plans (ISMPs) for coastal watersheds.

ERP-5: Restore and expand human connections to nature as a mechanism for improving environmental protection.

- 5.1 Protect/conserve priority habitats for public benefit/access through acquisition or conservation easement.
- 5.2 Create seven new access points, with at least five in Mobile County, incorporating environmental and cultural themes into each site's interpretive signage.

Ecosystem Restoration and Protection		External Funds	Past Year Funds Reprogrammed /Available	FY 2024 Budget	Total	Description
ERP-1	L: Watershed Planning		31,292	-	31,292	
1.1	Mobile Tensaw Apalachee- 7/31/23	Х				
1.1	Eastern Shore- 7/31/23	Х				
1.1	Western Perdido Bay- 8/30/23	Х				
1.1	Western Delta- 12/31/2023	Х				
1.1	Eastern Delta- 6/30/24	Х				
1.1	Eight Mile Creek	Х				
1.1	Grand Bay	Х				
1.1	EPA Reserve to support watershed planning		31,292		31,292	Support for watershed plan implementation
ERP-2	2: Watershed Plan Implementation		-	-	-	
2.1	D'Olive- Stream/Wetland Restorations	х				
2.1	Weeks Bay- Stream/Wetland Restorations	х				
2.1	Three Mile Creek- Stream/Wetland Restoration	х				
2.1	Three Mile Creek- Rain Barrel Program	х				
2.1	EPA Reserve to support watershed implementation					
ERP-3	8: Shoreline Stabilization, Enhancemen	nts, and	-	-	-	
FIOLE	Comprehensive Shorelines					
3.1	Management Plan	Х				
3.1	Fowl River- Marine Spits Restoration	Х				
3.1	Western Shore- Deer River Shoreline	X				
ERP-4	I: Invasive Species Management	<u> </u>	6,588	-	6,588	
4.1	Invasive Species Management	x	6,588		6,588	Support publication of an outreach piece to educate property owners about the dos and don'ts of invasive species management
ERP-5	: Access Enhancements		-	9,000	9,000	
5.2	ADA Accessibility			9,000	9,000	Install one ADA Accessibility Mat at a location to be determined

TAC-1: Build capacity of water dependent industries to improve working waterfronts and preserve fishing communities.

- 1.1 Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the current status of all safe harbors, including, but not limited to, USACE-designated locations.
- 1.2 Pilot a peer lending program to support fishing business investment in best management practices.
- 1.3 Promote the assessment, improvement, and designation of estuary ports as "Green Ports."
- 1.4 Develop planning tools to balance multiple uses of marine, estuarine, and freshwater resources.

TAC-2: Build capacity of the business community to support ecosystem protection and restoration.

- 2.1 Engage the business community in support of implementation of the CCMP.
- 2.2 Engage businesses in influencing local resource management decision-making.

TAC-3: Build capacity of local governments to manage and enhance coastal environmental resources.

- 3.1 Support implementation of eight coastal watershed management plans.
- 3.2 Support establishment and operation of watershed plan partnerships and task forces to ensure local ownership of implementation activities.
- 3.3 Improve elected officials', planning commissions', and other land-use decision makers' understandings of the relationship between land use, water resource management decisions, and environmental impacts.
- 3.4 Improve regulatory framework to better protect coastal resources.
- 3.5 Support actions to protect and restore coastal habitats, including community and economic resilience.
- 3.6 Inform elected officials and the public about changing climatic conditions and sea level rise.

TAC-4: Advocate integration of environmental protection into community and economic development.

- 4.1 Advocate inclusion of watershed management plan recommendations into local policies, ordinances, and plans.
- 4.2 Advocate inclusion of better building practices in long-range planning to improve environmental and community resilience.

TAC-5: Build capacity of grassroots groups and citizens to create more resilient and environmentally responsible communities.

- 5.1 Support and promote opportunities to expand grassroots capacity development.
- 5.2 Develop comprehensive strategy for volunteer water quality monitoring to expand citizen science and community engagement programs to inform status and trends.

TAC: Technical Assistance and Capacity Building		External Funds	Past Year Funds Reprogrammed/ Available	FY 2024 Budget	Total	Description	
ТАС	-1: Fis	sheries Capacity Building		4,454	-	4,454	
	1.2	Coastal Alabama Fisheries Fund	x	4,454		4,454	Support costs associated with small business loans to oyster farmers capitalized with private funding
	1.2	Oysters Alabama Website					
TAC	-2: Bu	siness Community Capacity Building	-	-	-	-	
TAC-3: Government Capacity Building		5,005	2,500	7,505			
	3.3	Hydrologic Modeling Workshop- Municipal/County staff		5,005	2,500	7,505	Municipal training and production of hydrologic modeling of scenarios to determine impacts of proposed developments
	3.3	South Alabama Stormwater Regulatory Update					
TAC	-5: Gr	assroots Capacity Building		8,298	35,402	43,699	
	5.2	Sustain Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program		8,298	35,402	43,699	Purchase kits and chemicals for water monitors and to partner with Mobile Baykeeper to expand Volunteer monitoring in Mobile County

EPI - EDUCATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: GOALS/OBJECTIVES

EP1-1: Improve the private sector's understanding of how coastal natural resources and estuaries contribute to economic, cultural, and community well-being.

- 1.1 Conduct 15 tours to introduce the private sector to watersheds.
- 1.2 Develop outreach to improve private sector understanding of opportunities for environmental protection.

EPI-2: Increase the private sector's involvement in and support for protecting the estuary and coast.

- 2.1 Create a minimum of five service opportunities to engage private sector "teams" in participating in restoration or cleanup efforts.
- 2.2 Identify and connect private sector partners to a minimum of three existing projects celebrating the cultural heritage of Alabama's estuaries and coast.

EPI-3: Improve community understanding of how estuaries and coasts support what people value about living in coastal Alabama.

- 3.1 Create and support recreational and educational programs and events that connect more people to local waterways, fish, and wildlife.
- 3.2 Educate youth about watersheds, water quality, and environmental issues relevant to the CCMP's six values.

EPI-4: Use the *Create a Clean Water Future* campaign as a framework for encouraging actions to improve water quality.

- 4.1 Support Partners for Environmental Progress in launching the CCWF campaign through its business members.
- 4.2 Engage local government in adopting the CCWF campaign to promote improved stormwater. management and quality of water flowing through the Mobile Bay Watershed and into coastal waters.
- 4.3 Create a strategy for implementing the CCWF campaign at the community level.

EPI-5: Increase community involvement in and support for stewardship, volunteer, and educational opportunities.

5.1 Promote environmentally friendly public events (e.g., parades, sporting events, fishing tournaments, etc.).

EPI- E Involv	ducation and Public vement	External Funds	Past Year Funds Reprogrammed/ Available	FY 2024 Budget	Total	Description
EPI-1: Private Sector Education			10,000		10,000	
1.2	Lead Boat Tours and host special events to raise awareness about environmental assets/concerns		10,000		10,000	Host at least one event to educate private sector about opportunities to advance sustainable growth along the Alabama coast
EPI-2	Private Sector Involvement		-	-	-	
EPI-3	Community Education		37,080	41,000	78,080	
3.1	Semi-Annual Alabama Current Connection Newsletter	х	7,000	8,000	15,000	Production of semi-annual newsletter in partnership with ADCNR
3.1	Interpretive and Locational Signage to educate about Watersheds		5,080	2,000	7,080	Install roadway signage for the Eastern Shore and Western Perdido watersheds
3.1	Digital Media and Video Production to communicate needs, concerns, values		25,000	28,000	53,000	Development of a series of short videos highlighting past 10 years of accomplishments of Mgt. Conference in implementing the CCMP
EPI-4: Raise Awareness through Clean Water Future Campaign		40,649	25,217	65,866		
4.1	Clean Water Future Campaign		40,649	25,217	65,866	Refresh, refine, and expand reach of Clean Water Future website and its resources
EPI-5	Community Involvement and		291,456	31,000	322,456	
5.1	Provide support for community events		3,770	12,000	15,770	Provide sponsorship for events which raise awareness about environmental issues;
5.1	Develop and distribute materials to promote wise stewardship		(558)	15,000	14,442	Produce outreach materials to distribute at special events to raise the general public's awareness about environmental issues
5.2	Re-write of CCMP		281,389		281,389	Citizen engagement, scientific synthesis, strategy development, and publication production of CCMP 2025-2030
5.2	Management Conference Support		357	7,000	7,357	Participation support including but not limited to refreshments at Mgt. Conference meetings, incentives for community engagement, childcare, transportation assistance

ESTUARY STATUS AND TRENDS: NARRATIVE

Throughout the implementation of the updated Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for October 1, 2018 - September 30, 2023, the MBNEP Science Advisory Committee (SAC) will build a Watershed Condition Framework for coastal Alabama. Scientists, State, and local resource managers will continue to collect data to improve environmental monitoring and the SAC will pursue opportunities to establish baselines and other scientific data necessary to better understand the relationships between anthropogenic activities and ecological functions throughout our coastal landscape.

EST-1: COASTAL MONITORING PROGRAM



Project	Coastal Monitoring Program
CCMP Action	EST-1
Purpose/Goal	Increase availability and use of data related to how coastal ecosystems and their services respond to man-made stress
Benefits/Outcomes	Improve understanding of pollutant loads, Increase community participation in monitoring, Increased knowledge of environmental status & trends
Outputs/Deliverables	Baseline monitoring data, restoration monitoring data, Watershed condition framework support
Clean Water Act Relevance	Improve monitoring of wetland function & coverage, Improve water quality, Support TMDL implementation
Project Partners	University of South Alabama, DISL
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	-
FY 2024 Budget	-
Total Budget	-

<u>Overview</u>

The Coastal Monitoring Program supports monitoring of environmental conditions at both the watershed and larger ecosystem scale. Within this program, baseline conditions are established for watersheds and for restoration projects for the purpose of measuring and assessing ecosystem responses. In addition, on a periodic basis, system-wide monitoring of habitats and submerged aquatic vegetation is undertaken to track changes across the Alabama coastal landscape. Most monitoring related activities are funded through receipt of external grants, most often, from either National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund or RESTORE. Highlights of these activities include:

Coastal Watershed Sediment Baseline Studies:

Historically, the MBNEP has led, with the assistance of the Geological Survey of Alabama, the characterization of land use, erosion, and sedimentation in coastal watersheds to identify sources of sediment and establish baseline data and sedimentation rating curves useful in watershed planning. Investigators utilized modeling techniques to determine bed and suspended sediment loads and identify sources of sediment, including manmade and natural drainage ways. Monitoring is based on precipitation and resulting stream discharge and includes basic field-acquired physical and water-quality parameters. Data have been used to determine impacts of land-use change and to focus resources in areas of greatest need for remedial action. MBNEP develops this data for all coastal intertidal watersheds as a precursor to comprehensive watershed planning. Sediment studies have been completed for the D'Olive Watershed, Fowl River, Bayou La Batre, West Fowl River, and Deer River watersheds and the Dog River, Bon Secour River, Weeks Bay, Wolf Bay, Eastern Shore, Gulf Frontal and Mobile-Tensaw-Apalachee watershed complexes.

Restoration Baseline Monitoring:

To assess the outcomes and success of restoration efforts, determination of pre-project conditions is as critical as post-restoration monitoring. As MBNEP prepares to undertake shovel-in-the-ground restoration efforts on the Deer River shoreline and marsh system, the Fowl River marsh spits, and an incised tributary to Lower Fish River, efforts are already underway to perform baseline monitoring at each of these projects. With Stantec implementing restoration plans for 12 Mile Creek, University of South Alabama Professor Dr. Alex Beebe has supplemented their efforts using his Environmental Sciences students to collect data related to stream geomorphology as part of course laboratory fieldwork. Baseline monitoring is part of the work scope of contractors developing engineering and designs for restoration and stabilization of the Deer River shoreline and tidal creeks, the Fowl River Marsh Spits, and a tributary to Lower Fish River.

2024 Objectives: (These activities will be conducted with external funds)

Coastal Watershed Sediment Baseline Studies: Eastern Delta (in process), Perdido (in process), Grand Bay

Restoration Baseline Monitoring: Lower Fish River, Deer River, Fowl River

EST-2: ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND ECOSYSTEM RESPONSE COMMUNICATION



Project	Environmental Monitoring & Ecosystem Response Communication
CCMP Action	EST-2
Purpose/Goal	Improve community understanding of estuarine health and coastal resilience
Benefits/Outcomes	Increase knowledge about environmental status and trends
Outputs/Deliverables	Communications tools and reports, State of Alabama's Estuaries and Coast
	Improve monitoring of wetland function & coverage, Improve water quality,
Clean Water Act Relevance	Support TMDL implementation
Project Partners	ADCNR, EPA, MBNEP
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	117,666
FY 2024 Budget	10,250
Total Budget	127,916

Overview

During the five years of RESPECT THE CONNECT implementation, the SAC created a monitoring framework to evaluate individual subwatersheds of the Mobile Bay Watershed in standardizing restoration monitoring to answer these questions: what, if any, changes occurred in the water quality, sedimentation, flow, biology, and habitat quantity and quality because of restoration efforts and management plan implementation? How are potential ecosystem health indicators related to stressors and ecosystem functions/services? What is the long-term status of the biological condition in the Mobile Bay watershed?

The recommended protocols in this framework will result in standardized data collection for restoration efforts throughout Mobile and Baldwin counties, allowing comparisons both temporally and spatially and improved decision making and data preservation for future use. The monitoring program outlined within this framework is incorporated into all watershed management plans (WMPs) ensuring utilization of this framework uniformly across all restorations and watersheds in Mobile and Baldwin counties. The Mobile Bay Subwatershed Monitoring Framework is a living document and is continually reviewed and refined to ensure consistency with larger regional networks. The monitoring framework is implemented as follows:

- 1) Baseline data is collected as part of comprehensive watershed planning.
- 2) The framework is referenced and implemented as applicable to the objectives of all restoration projects.
- 3) Long-term monitoring recommendations in each WMP conform with the framework.
- 4) MBNEP coordinates the periodic reporting of monitoring data in outreach products to communicate status and trends both at the watershed scale as well as estuary wide.
- 5) MBNEP coordinates data synthesis to develop tools and products for assessment of restoration success, adaptive resource management, and baseline establishment.

2024 Objectives: (These activities will be conducted with external funds)

State of Alabama's Estuaries and Coast will be produced by the end of the grant period. Funding from this grant will augment past year allocations to hire a science team to lead the SAC through the *State of Alabama's Estuaries and Coast* development process.

EST-3: ECOSYSTEM MODELING, RESEARCH, AND EVALUATION



Project	Ecosystem Modeling, Research, and Evaluation
CCMP Action	EST-3
Purpose/Goal	Identify biological indicators, Increase understanding of estuary health
Benefits/Outcomes	Increased knowledge about environmental response to restoration activities, Increased knowledge about environmental status and trends
Outputs/Deliverables	Research metadata & datasets, <i>State of Alabama's Estuaries and Coasts</i> data support, Watershed condition framework support
	Improve monitoring of wetland function & coverage, Improve water quality,
Clean Water Act Relevance	Support TMDL implementation
Project Partners	DISL
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	-
FY 2024 Budget	-
Total Budget	-

Overview

While science is driven by data acquisition, spatial and temporal gaps in data limit our understanding of observed and predicted ecosystem responses, changes, or trends. Models are developed and widely used to predict ecosystem responses to changing levels of stress when gaps in available data limit our understanding of expected impacts of stressors. Models allow investigators to test responses to as-yet-unrealized or potential levels of stress to guide resource management decisions.

2024 Objectives:

N/A

ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION AND PROTECTION: NARRATIVE

Ecosystem restoration refers to returning a damaged ecological system to a stable, healthy, and sustainable state. Although it is impossible to return an ecosystem to the exact same condition as prior to disturbance, restoration to improve ecosystem function and service delivery will contribute to community health and well-being, protection against sea level rise, economic sustainability, recreation, and community quality of life.

The conservation, restoration, and/or protection of coastal watersheds with a focus on freshwater wetlands; streams, rivers and associated riparian buffers; and intertidal marshes and flats continues to be the focus of the Updated CCMP for October 1, 2018 - September 30, 2023. To ensure all restoration efforts are based in sound science and are part of an overall management program, a precursor to restoration efforts will be the creation of comprehensive watershed management plans (WMPs) at the 12-digit Hydrologic Unit Code scale. All WMPs will be based on U.S. EPA guidance, addressing the following key elements:

- Identification of causes of impairment.
- Estimation of pollutant load reductions expected from restoration/management measures.
- Description of non-point source reduction measures/critical areas where those measures will take place.
- Estimation of the amount of financial support needed to implement plan recommendations, including monitoring.
- Creation of an outreach and education plan to increase residents' understanding of restoration measures and to engage them in long-term implementation of the plan.
- Schedule for implementation, key implementation milestones, and implementation evaluation criteria.

The State of Alabama has prioritized funding from the NFWF Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund and federal RESTORE dollars to develop WMPs for all the State's tidally influenced drainages. MBNEP has recruited assistance from its Project Implementation Committee (PIC) partner agencies and municipalities to guide WMP development and assist in the development and evaluation of Requests for Qualifications to select engineering/planning contractors.

In addition to watershed planning and restoration, the PIC has identified priorities for increasing the installation of living shorelines throughout our two coastal counties and the number of public access points to facilitate connections to our coastal waters and open spaces.

ERP-1: WATERSHED PLANNING



Project	Watershed Planning
ССМР	ERP-1
Purpose	Support watershed management planning and implementation activities for all tidally influenced drainage basins
Outputs/Deliverables	Watershed plans, technical assistance, project development
Benefit/Outcome	Improved watershed management at local scale
	Improve monitoring of wetland function & coverage, Improve water quality,
Clean Water Act Relevance	Support TMDL implementation
Project Partners	MBNEP, NFWF, Municipalities, ADCNR RESTORE
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	31,292
FY 2024 Budget	-
Total Budget	31,292

<u>Overview</u>



MBNEP continues to facilitate watershed management planning for all of Alabama's tidally influenced drainages. To date, with funding largely from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund and RESTORE, WMPs have been completed for the following watersheds and complexes of watersheds:

- Bayou La Batre
- West Fowl River
- Fowl River
- Western Shore
- Dog River
- Three Mile Creek
- D'Olive, Joes Branch, Tiawasee
- Weeks Bay
- Bon Secour
- Wolf Bay
- Gulf Frontal
- Dauphin Island

Watershed management plans in progress for the coming year include Western Perdido Bay, Eastern Shore, Mobile Tensaw Delta, Western Delta and Eastern Delta. A joint effort with the State of Mississippi to conduct watershed planning in Grand Bay is on deck. The Eight Mile Creek watershed plan, completed in 2009, will be updated using funding from the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources State Lands Coastal Section and Mobile County.

2024 Objectives: (These activities will be conducted with external funds)

Watershed Management Plans: Western Perdido Bay, Eastern Shore, Mobile Tensaw Delta, Western Delta and Eastern Delta

ERP-2: WATERSHED IMPLEMENTATION



Project	Watershed Implementation
ССМР	ERP-2
Purpose/Goal	Implementation of watershed management plans to improve water quality, habitats, fish and wildlife, and community resilience
Benefit/Outcome	Improve ecosystem function and protection, Improved community management of ecosystem restoration and protection activities
Outputs/Deliverables	Expanded access, Improved stormwater management facilities, Stabilized/restored degraded stream segments, riparian zones, and wetlands
Clean Water Act Relevance	Improve monitoring of wetland function & coverage, Improve water quality, Support TMDL implementation
Project Partners	ADNCR, ADEM, Baldwin County, Mobile County, Municipalities, NFWF, Property Owners, RESTORE
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	-
FY 2024 Budget	-
Total Budget	-

Overview

Watershed management plans are developed to provide watershed-specific blueprints for resource management, with characterizations and analyses driving project recommendations. Each watershed has its own issues, but nonpoint source pollution conveyed over impervious surfaces to receiving waters is common to all. A WMP is a living document designed for implementation. Most implementation efforts are funded through grants competitively awarded or sponsored through the State of Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources as part of its funding priorities through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund. Another significant source of funding is the Alabama Department of Environmental Management Section 319 program. Following is a summary of implementation efforts by watershed.

Three Mile Creek Watershed: Implementation of the Three Mile Creek WMP can be divided into three different overarching programs: environmental restoration; expanding access to the water and open spaces along the creek through the creation of 6.5 miles of trail; and comprehensive community engagement to ensure to ensure projects undertaken meet the needs of the communities who live closest to the creek and its tributaries. Key implementers of this plan include the Mobile Area Water and Sewer Service, Mobile County, the City of Mobile, MBNEP, Mobile Baykeeper, and the University of South Alabama.

Twelve Mile Creek With a grant secured from the EPA through the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council and the RESTORE Act, MBNEP hired contractors to restore/stabilize an impacted 1,800-linear-foot reach of the Twelve Mile Creek tributary to Three Mile Creek. Twelve Mile Creek, one of six main tributaries within the Three Mile Creek Watershed, originates in the extreme southwestern portion of the watershed and flows through concrete armored channels and culverts and natural streamways over three miles north and east from its headwaters to its confluence with Three Mile Creek at Municipal/Langan Park. The armored channels prevent natural infiltration of stormwater to groundwater, resulting in increased water volume, flow velocity, and flooding in the stream channel.

A major issue in unarmored reaches within the upper portions of Twelve Mile Creek is stream-bank erosion. Sediment from channel and bank erosion has accumulated downstream, reducing creek water depth and the cross-sectional flow area, resulting in higher water flow velocities during storm events. This has led to further channel erosion and sediment transport to downstream lakes at Municipal/Langan Park, reducing retention volume and carrying pollutants, including oxygen-demanding substances and nutrients. Engineering and design have been completed, a USACE Nationwide Permit and implementation funding has been secured, and construction reached substantial completion with installation of native plants in the winter of 2021. Future efforts will focus on monitoring and assessment activities and control of invasive plant species within the footprint of the restoration.

In addition to Twelve Mile Creek restoration, the City of Mobile is addressing the lower reaches of Twelve Mile Creek and Langan Park Lake, as well as the restoration of hydrology in historic channel of lower Three Mile Creek. Litter abatement is being conducted through the City of Mobile and its contract with Osprey Initiative and plans for the construction of the next .6 miles of trail are moving to construction.

Weeks Bay Watershed: A priority recommendation of the Weeks Bay Watershed Management Plan, approximately 1,437 linear feet of stream and riparian area in the community of Marlow were stabilized using

Natural Channel Design techniques in the Lower Fish River Watershed (HUC 031602050204). The project goals were to protect water quality and improve community and ecosystem resilience in Weeks Bay. Project objectives included reducing the amount of sediment carried into Lower Fish River and Weeks Bay, reintroducing ecological function, and mitigating future impacts of development.

Completed in August 2022, the Marlow project is in the lower reach of Spring Branch near its outfall to Fish River. The result of a headcut, the site was deeply incised, resembling a gully that was approximately 20 feet deep and confined with failing side slopes and loss of floodplain



connectivity. Native plants have been planted and the project is now in the warranty period with postconstruction monitoring underway. This project will improve the quality and clarity of the water necessary for re-establishing submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) beds.

In addition to the Marlow project, relevant information related to sediment and nutrient delivery and loading from the WBWMP (2017) and other available sources (aerial photography, soils maps, Weeks Bay hydrologic model, etc.) was reviewed to narrow the geographic focus and identify and rank additional sites within lower Fish River subwatersheds for development of remedial measures. Targeted field assessments in lower Fish River subwatersheds revealed some issues but not of the severity and scale to consider for engineering and design. MBNEP and partners agreed to expand the geographic area to include the Magnolia River Watershed (MRW) which also feeds to Weeks Bay. Three stream segments in the MRW were selected for engineering and design. Sites include an unnamed tributary draining to the Cold Hole, a culturally and recreationally important site on the Magnolia River, multiple shoreline bluffs directly on the Magnolia River, upstream of the confluence with Schoolhouse Branch, and Schoolhouse Branch, a major tributary to the Magnolia River.

2024 Objectives:

N/A

ERP-3: SHORELINE STABILIZATION AND ENHANCEMENTS



Project	Shoreline Stabilization and Enhancements
ССМР	ERP-3
Purpose/Goal	Restore intertidal marshes and flats, Stabilize shorelines
Benefit/Outcome	Enhanced fishery and saltwater habitats, Improve water quality, Improved access
Outputs/Deliverables	Acres of marsh protected, Acres of marsh restored, Linear feet of shoreline stabilized
Clean Water Act Relevance	Improve monitoring of wetland function & coverage, Improve water quality
Project Partners	MBNEP, Mobile County, NFWF, Property Owners
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	-
FY 2024 Budget	-
Total Budget	-

Overview

A key component of healthy estuaries is the stabilization of the shorelines using environmentally friendly techniques to protect property from shoreline erosion while sustaining the flora and fauna of these important habitats. The main objective of soft shoreline stabilization is to achieve a balance between the need for protection against erosion while maintaining and enhancing shoreline functions. Several MBNEP Management Conference members are engaged in promoting shoreline stabilization across the Alabama coast. Below are projects led by the MBNEP to achieve this objective.

Fowl River Spits Stabilization: With a WMP, sediment study, and hydrologic model completed for the Fowl River Watershed, a priority concern of stakeholders – engineering and design plans for restoration of disappearing and degrading marsh spits located in the River's transitional zone between fresh and brackish water continue. The project purpose is to restore important coastal spits and wetlands within the transitional reaches of Fowl River. Project goals include improving habitat and water quality and preserving coastal hydrology. Objectives include protecting 12,600 feet of shoreline and restoring and enhancing 52 acres of coastal marsh. With funding secured through the NFWF GEBF, the project has advanced to 60% design plans.

In addition, MBNEP NFWF funding will be used to leverage funding from NRCS to execute a wetland easement on the Canon property, identified in the WMP for conservation and restoration.

Dauphin Island Causeway Stabilization/Wetland Creation: This project involves stabilization of the shoreline and creation of marsh and shellfish habitat along the erosion-impacted, approximately two-mile-long Dauphin Island Causeway. State Route 193, known as Dauphin Island Parkway (DIP), provides the primary vehicular access to south Mobile County and Dauphin Island, Alabama's only barrier island, and the single emergency/hurricane evacuation route between the Island and mainland. The 10,090 ft (1.91 mi) Dauphin Island (DI) Causeway, between the Heron Bay Cutoff Bridge and the Gordon Persons/Dauphin Island Bridge and is only four feet above sea level.

Approximately 280 acres of healthy, productive salt marsh habitat, comprising both black needle rush (*Juncus roemerianus*) and smooth cord grass (*Spartina alterniflora*), lie on the western, or leeward, side of the Causeway, but the eastern, or windward, side is devoid of vegetative habitat. Only sparse patches of persistent

common reed (*Phragmites australis*) remain along the roadway. Many of the State's commercially and recreationally significant fish and shellfish populations rely upon salt marshes for critical nursery habitat. Additionally, the Causeway lies landward of the State's most active wild oyster harvest area. The proposed project will employ scientific inquiry to develop an effective design to enhance resilience related to fisheries by employing best management practices providing optimum habitat opportunities for fish, shellfish, and oysters, while buffering the energy of wind and waves affecting habitats.

MBNEP received funding for engineering and design for this project from both the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's GEBF and National Coastal Resilience Fund (NCRF). MBNEP partnered with Mobile County, who agreed to act as a project lead to complete engineering and construction.

Deer River Shoreline Stabilization: The Deer River marsh system was prioritized in the Western Shore Watershed Management Plan (WSWMP). Sufficient migration space is not available in the Deer River Watershed (352 acres or 4% of Watershed area) to sustain resilient marshes into a future beset by sea level rise (SLR). To ensure the Deer River marsh system continues to provide ecosystem services, it is critical to protect it and enhance its resilience. This project will protect and restore 58% (275 of existing marsh acres, 30 acres created, and 305 acres total) of the remaining resilient marsh habitat within the Watershed. The following priority WSWMP management measures were recommended to address critical issues and areas that will be met by this project:

- Identify shoreline management and habitat creation opportunities.
- Restore and stabilize shorelines in the coastal zone of the WSW Complex.
- Improve watershed resilience by preserving lands for marsh and habitat migration.
- Advocate for beneficial use of dredged sediments and thin layer sediment placement.

The proposed project is intended to address shoreline recession, marsh deterioration, and loss of natural function from erosion, apparently caused by heavy storms, tidal impacts, and wakes from cargo ships entering or exiting the Theodore Ship Channel. Long-time Hollinger's Island residents have expressed concern over degraded water quality, sedimentation and shoaling, and solid waste pollution entering the marsh system through the gaping breach formed along the Bay shoreline. Residents recall times when Deer River had navigable depths of 10 feet and recreational fishing was a primary source of food and bait for fishing Mobile Bay.

The goal of this project is to protect one of the largest intact marsh complexes on the western shore of Mobile Bay to enhance the resilience of environmental resources, and the first line of defense protecting infrastructure critical to significant maritime operations and an adjacent residential community. Objectives of the project include:

- Provide wave attenuation from the erosive forces of winds, wave actions, and boat wakes necessary to protect the remaining 275 acres of existing critical marsh habitat.
- Reestablishing connectivity in the Middle Fork of Deer River by restoring the hydrology of the tidal creek system to sustain the currently healthy marsh but sediment-impaired channel.
- Creating at least 30 acres of additional marsh habitat.

MBNEP has a draft Memorandum of Agreement in place with the USACE to deliver 200k cu/yd of beneficially sourced, suitable marsh fill material, from the Mobile River Turning Basin to the project site.

2024 Objectives:

N/A

ERP-4: INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT



Project	Invasive Species Management
ССМР	ERP-4
Purpose/Goal	Reduce and eradicate invasive aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna
	Enhanced fishery and saltwater habitats, Improve water quality, Improved
Benefit/Outcome	access
	Acres of wetland protected, Acres of wetland restored, Invasive species
Outputs/Deliverables	management, Linear feet of riparian buffers restored
Clean Water Act Relevance	Improve monitoring of wetland function & coverage, Improve water quality
Project Partners	MBNEP, Mobile County, City of Mobile, NOAA Gulf Corps, EPA RESTORE
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	6,588
FY 2024 Budget	-
Total Budget	6,588

Overview

Across coastal Alabama, the introduction of exotic plant and animal species has impacted native communities and ecosystems. Introduced invasive nuisance species, without natural predators, displace native communities of plants and animals and eliminate the habitats and food they need and ecosystem services they provide, while spreading unchecked. MBNEP supports invasive species management through on-the-ground activities as well as publication of comprehensive invasive species management plans.

Using external funding MBNEP has focused on invasive species management throughout the Three Mile Creek Watershed. In the three years of activity over 67 acres have been actively managed for control of both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species. This has included a concentrated effort to reduce the population of island apple snails throughout the Watershed utilizing both mechanical and chemical control methods which have to date resulted in over an 80% reduction in the number of adult snails and egg clusters observed during control events in Municipal Park Lake.

2024 Objectives: (These activities will be conducted with external funds)

Support publication of an outreach piece to educate property owners about the dos and don'ts of invasive species management.

ERP-5: ACCESS ENHANCEMENTS



Project	ADA Improvements
ССМР	ERP-5
Purpose/Goal	Habitat conservation and access enhancements to reconnect residents and visitors to nature of the Alabama coast
Benefit/Outcome	Expanded community engagement & ownership, Improve ecosystem function and protection, Improved community management of ecosystem restoration and protection activities
Outputs/Deliverables	ADA mats installed, Acres acquired, Miles of trail, Ramps improved
	Improve monitoring of wetland function & coverage, Support water quality
Clean Water Act Relevance	standards
Project Partners	TBD
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	-
FY 2024 Budget	9,000
Total Budget	9,000

Overview

Access is an important component of coastal protection because the more connected people are to the environment, the more they will value and protect it. Enhancing access includes a combination of protecting intact habitats to ensure abundant species diversity and environmental integrity; and developing appropriate access to Alabama's coastal natural resources for all people, including those with mobility impairments. MBNEP has promoted access through support for priority habitat acquisitions and access site expansion and accessibility.

ADA Access Mats: MBNEP has established an annual program for ensuring ADA accessibility at public access locations.

2024 Objectives:

Install one ADA Accessibility Mat at a location to be determined.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING: NARRATIVE

As a backbone organization serving the MBNEP Management Conference in achieving collective impact along the Alabama coast, nowhere is impact more important than in the continuous improvement of how our coastal assets are used and managed. The mission of MBNEP is to provide the necessary tools to integrate environmental protection into community development. This is accomplished through a combination of the creation of incentives and decision support tools to expand coastal economies, improving the regulatory environment to ensure restoration investment success, providing the tools necessary to continuously improve environmental management best practices, and building a network of volunteer scientists willing to supplement resource manager efforts to monitor environmental conditions.

TAC-1: FISHERIES CAPACITY BUILDING



Project	Fisheries Industry Support and Enhancement
ССМР	TAC-1
Purpose	Support alternative industries which couple fishing livelihoods and ecosystem service delivery
Benefit/Outcome	Preservation of fishing heritage and increased adoption of business practices improving water and habitat quality
Outputs/Deliverables	Development of a public-private partnership framework for sustainable operation of a peer-lending program
Clean Water Act Relevance	Improve water quality
Project Partners	Alabama Power, Auburn University, MASGC, 22nd Street Bank
Past Year Funds Reprogrammed/Available	4,453
FY 2024 Budget	-
Total Budget	4,453

Overview

In coastal Alabama, the commercial marine seafood industry provides more than 12,000 jobs, \$555M in sales, \$219M in income, and \$287M in general profits annually. Oyster landings account for roughly 2% of this revenue. Alabama's seafood economy is less reliant on imports than other states, with imports accounting for slightly more than 3.6% of the total economic impact.

Oyster market prices in 2019 ranged from \$0.50 to \$0.70 per oyster with a weighted average price of \$0.59 per oyster. Alabama oysters are considered high-quality and fetch higher prices, selling for \$0.85 per oyster in 2019, which nearly doubles historic highs. Between 2007 and 2016, Alabama oysters sold for \$1.50 more per pound than the national average. In 2019, the market value for Alabama oyster commercial operations was at least \$1,452,000 and the total number of single market oysters sold was at least 2.425 million.

The market demand for Alabama oysters has consistently outpaced supply, and therefore any aquaculture development or expansion in Alabama can reasonably expect a positive return on investment. There are two methods of oyster harvest employed in Alabama: wild caught oysters harvested from reefs and oysters produced via aquaculture, a method of controlled farming. In 2019, there were 21 commercial oyster aquaculture operations in Alabama. In 2009, there were no oyster farms in Alabama, demonstrating how young this industry

is in this State. Nine Oyster farmers reported 34 full-time employees and 30 part-time employees in 2019. At least 74 acres were permitted for oyster aquaculture, with at least 40 acres used in production.

Coastal Alabama Fisheries Fund: The mission of the Coastal Alabama Fisheries Fund (CAFF) is to pilot a peer lending program to support fishing business investment in best management practices through the creation of an inventory of successful fishing community peer-lending programs, development of public-private partnership frameworks for sustainable operation of peer-lending programs, and establishment of peer councils to develop policies for use and loan terms. Objectives are to:

- Secure capital for the purpose of loaning to commercial fishermen, initially oyster aquaculturalists, through grants, donations, etc.
- Establish a council or body to review and approve loan applications, ideally comprising partially of peer members from the relevant fishing industry.
- Partner with a financial institution to set the terms of and issue loans to borrowers approved by the council or body and to then recover payments and interest from borrowers.
- Grow CAFF through further fundraising as well as interest collected to better serve commercial fishing industries.
- Establish, assist, or otherwise develop a third-party entity to manage and grow this fund in a dedicated and sustainable capacity.

This revolving loan fund, modeled as a peer lending program, was launched in 2022 with the first loan closing in February.

2024 Objectives:

Support defaults on small business loans to oyster farmers capitalized with private funding.



TAC-2: PRIVATE SECTOR CAPACITY BUILDING



Project	Private Sector Capacity Building
ССМР	TAC-2
Purpose	Promote creation of new businesses in support of environmental protection along the Alabama coast
Benefit/Outcome	Increased ability of business community to participate in management & protection of coastal natural resources
Outputs/Deliverables	Creation of new economic opportunities/businesses
Clean Water Act Relevance	Improve water quality
Project Partners	
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	-
FY 2024 Budget	-
Total Budget	-

Overview

Continuous improvement of how we manage and interact with our natural resources demands new ways of doing business. Continuous improvement is an ongoing effort to improve products, processes, or services by reducing waste or increasing quality. This continuous effort drives a competitive advantage and MBNEP seeks to support businesses willing to take calculated risks in improving environmental management and conservation practices.

2024 Objectives:

N/A

TAC-3: GOVERNMENT CAPACITY BUILDING

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Project	Government Capacity Building
ССМР	TAC-3
Purpose	Expand capacity of local governments to manage and enhance coastal environmental resources
Benefit/Outcome	Improve water quality, Improved health of fisheries, Improved watershed management at local scale, Reduced trash in waterways, Restoration & conservation of stressed habitats
	Trained county and municipal employees on the use of hydrologic models and
Outputs/Deliverables	software
Clean Water Act Relevance	Improve water quality
Project Partners	Mobile and Baldwin counties, Cities of Mobile, Daphne, Fairhope, Foley
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	5,005
FY 2024 Budget	2,500
Total Budget	7,505

Overview

CCMP success can be measured by the extent to which improved environmental management is institutionalized at the local and state level. This institutionalization can be in the form of government law, training of government staff, and increased coordination across geopolitical boundaries.

Watershed Plan Resolutions: Successful implementation of watershed management plans hinges on partnership-building leading to watershed communities effectively "owning" their watershed plans. Central to this effort is the adoption of the plans by the governing authorities which fall within those watersheds. To achieve this goal, the MBNEP works with local and county governments to pass resolutions of support for completed plans. These resolutions recognize the importance of the watershed plans in protecting water and habitat quality and serve as a first official effort to codify plan recommendations. As WMPs continue to be developed for Alabama's tidally influenced watersheds, the MBNEP will continue to encourage counties and municipalities to pass resolutions supporting completed plans. To date, eight resolutions have been passed by local governments in support of six individual watershed plans:

- D'Olive WMP/Baldwin County and cities of Daphne and Spanish Fort
- Three Mile Creek WMP/City of Mobile
- Dog River WMP/City of Mobile
- Fowl River WMP/Mobile County
- Weeks Bay WMP/City of Foley
- Bon Secour WMP/City of Foley

Local Government Training: On the final day of the three-day annual Gulf Coast Sustainability and Modeling Systems Workshop, conducted to increase the capacity of local engineering, construction, and government employees involved in stream restoration work, a training session was held by Hydrologist John Curry of Hydro, LLC. This single-day session, held specifically for local municipality and county staffs where hydrologic models have been developed, introduced participants to Gridded Surface Subsurface Hydrologic Analysis (GSSSHA) software used to model hydrology and inform decisions.

As watershed planning continues and hydrologic models are developed for all tidally influenced watersheds, it is imperative that these plans are institutionalized within local governments to inform resource management planning decisions. To ensure these tools are used to the greatest extent possible, the MBNEP will facilitate a subsequent, more in-depth training program for local municipal and county staffs. This follow up workshop will be scheduled post-pandemic to build the capacity of stormwater management staff use of the products to make planning decisions in a meaningful, scientifically informed manner.

Video Training: The MBNEP has increasingly used video production as a tool to increase the capacity of businesses, governments, and grassroots organizations and gathered videos from news outlets and other external media sources describing MBNEP activities or initiatives. To facilitate ease of access, the MBNEP is developing a video library in spreadsheet form that will be hosted online for viewers and web browsers listing video titles, publication years, producing entities, categories (general, educational, government/municipal, annual meetings, raw footage/B roll) and detailed descriptions. This video library is available on the MBNEP website under Library.

Watershed Implementation Task Forces: A key component of watershed management planning is ensuring an adequate organizational structure is in place to champion implementation recommendations and efforts. Since most watersheds fall across geopolitical boundaries (e.g., the Weeks Bay Watershed, which includes nine municipalities and Baldwin County), intergovernmental cooperation is vital to watershed management success. As the development of WMPs for tidally influenced Alabama watersheds continues, MBNEP will continue to support consortiums of governmental elected officials and staffs and watershed stakeholders, frequently derived from watershed planning steering committees, to ensure adequate organizational structure is in place to lead, guide, and prioritize WMP implementation. Here are highlights of a few already established:

- The D'Olive Watershed, an Intergovernmental Task Force meets quarterly to review WMP implementation status and coordinate uses of resources focused on stormwater management. Both Daphne and Spanish Fort have updated subdivision regulations to ensure consistency across political boundaries.
- The Three Mile Creek Partnership was established to support the City of Mobile and private sector stakeholders in implementing the WMP with a vision of creating a transformational corridor.
- The Fowl River Area Community Association has adopted Fowl River WMP and established an implementation subcommittee and volunteer water quality monitoring workgroup to develop long-term environmental monitoring data.
- Plan Lower Alabama Now (PLAN), overseen by the City of Foley to share and coordinate use of geospatial datasets to better inform watershed community growth and development, was created through a recommendation in the Weeks Bay WMP.
- Weeks Bay Watershed Implementation Team was established to champion implementation of the recommendations in this watershed plan.

2024 Objectives:

Support training of municipal staff and hydrologic modeling of proposed developments to determine impacts prior to permitting.

TAC-5: GRASSROOTS CAPACITY BUILDING



Project	Water Quality Monitoring
ССМР	TAC-5
Purpose	Expand citizen stewardship of the estuary through voluntary water quality monitoring activities
Benefit/Outcome	Increased community ownership and involvement in local environmental protection activities, Increased knowledge about science, monitoring, habitat management, and restoration of the Mobile Bay estuarine environment
Outputs/Deliverables	Trained water quality monitoring volunteer monitors
Clean Water Act Relevance	Improve water quality
Project Partners	Alabama Water Watch, Mobile Baykeeper, Community Action Committee, Wolf Bay Watershed Watch, Dog River Clearwater Revival, Fowl River Area Community Association, Little Lagoon Preservation Society
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	8,298
FY 2024 Budget	35,402
Total Budget	43,700

Overview

Watershed grassroots organizations lead community-based efforts to promote the wise stewardship of the water quality and living resources of Alabama's estuarine waters. The mission of MBNEP is to provide the necessary tools to support those efforts, accomplished through the delivery of:

- field trips that highlight coastal issues and possibilities,
- outreach and decision support materials,
- specialized training and education opportunities, and
- volunteer engagement in hands-on learning experiences.

These activities cultivate stewardship while improving the quality of Alabama's coastal resources. During the next fiscal year, MBNEP will support and help build capacity of these critical groups and other partners to successfully "provide the tools to promote the wise stewardship of the water quality and living resources of coastal Alabama."

Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring: Alabama Water Watch (AWW) is a citizen volunteer water quality monitoring program covering all of the major river basins of the State. The mission of AWW is to improve both water quality and water policy through citizen monitoring and action. Established in 1992, AWW is a national model for citizen involvement in watershed stewardship, largely because of its three interrelated components: citizen monitoring groups, a university-based program, and a non-profit association.

AWW uses EPA-approved monitoring plans with a community-based approach to train citizens to monitor conditions and trends of their local waterbodies. With a "data-to-action" focus, AWW helps volunteers collect, analyze, and understand their data to make positive impacts. The AWW vision is to have a citizen monitor on every waterbody in Alabama. The goal of AWW is to foster the development of statewide water quality monitoring by:

• Educating citizens about water issues in Alabama and the world.

- Training citizens to use standardized equipment and techniques to gather credible water quality information.
- Empowering citizens to use their data to protect and restore their local waters.

The MBNEP Community Action Committee has identified a need for increased training opportunities to provide citizens with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively participate in resource management decisions at the local, state, and federal levels. Monitors will learn the principles of Alabama Water Watch and how to monitor and evaluate physical, chemical, and biological features of water. Workshops will be offered free of charge to coastal residents and qualify for continuing education units with Auburn University. Volunteer water monitor training will concentrate in the following areas:

- **Bacteriological monitoring:** Levels of *E. coli* and other bacteria in water provide indicators of contamination to determine if water is safe for drinking, swimming, and aquatic life.
- Water chemistry monitoring: Testing of six physical and chemical parameters of water to determine pollution sources and long-term trends in water quality. Six parameters are measured, and results can be compared with standards that define conditions for healthy waterbodies.

Grassroots Training Initiative: The CAC has identified a need for training opportunities to provide citizens with the knowledge and skills necessary for effectively participating in resource management decisions at the local, state, and federal levels. The CAC has identified training priorities as follows:

- Watershed Education;
- Stormwater runoff education, including how the MS4 permit works;
- Volunteer water quality monitoring;
- Volunteer biological monitoring;
- Volunteer shoreline monitoring; and
- Implementing the *Create a Clean Water Future* campaign.

Volunteer Monitoring Training and Support: Provide/restock monitoring kits to trained volunteer water quality monitors and expand volunteer water quality monitoring in Mobile County.

2024 Objectives:

Purchase kits and chemicals for water monitors and to partner with Mobile Baykeeper to expand volunteer monitoring in Mobile County.

EDUCATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: NARRATIVE

The cornerstone of Section 320 of the Clean Water Act is the convening of a Management Conference, made up of federal, State, and local government; business and industry; academia; and citizens. The purpose of the Conference is to assess trends in water quality; identify causes of environmental problems; determine the relationships between pollutant loads and water quality, natural resources and uses within the service area; development and implementation of a comprehensive plan for addressing environmental management needs; monitor the effectiveness of plan implementation; and most importantly continuously improve environmental management of these resources through behavior change and adoption of best management practices. The effectiveness of this conference depends on education, outreach, and citizen involvement.

EPI-1: PRIVATE SECTOR EDUCATION PROGRAM



Project	Private Sector Education Program
CCMP	EPI-1
	Improve understanding about local environmental resources with the private
Purpose	sector
	Improved community understanding about watersheds and environmental
Benefit/Outcome	stressors
	Comprehensive trash campaign encompassing monitoring of debris,
	waterway restoration, incentive programming, community outreach, and
Outputs/Deliverables	canoe trips
	Improve monitoring of wetland function & coverage, Improve water quality,
Clean Water Act Relevance	Support TMDL implementation, Support water quality standards
	Partners for Environmental Progress, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce,
Project Partners	Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce, Coastal Alabama Partnership
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	10,000
FY 2024 Budget	-
Total Budget	10,000

Overview

Alabama residents recognize a healthy environment is intrinsically linked to their economic, cultural, and community well-being. Private sector support for better environmental management and adoption of best practices is built by reinforcing their understanding and experiences of how healthy ecosystems protect what they value most about living on the Alabama coast.

Watershed Tours: The MBNEP has conducted boat tours on local receiving waters and walking tours of drainage areas and restoration projects for elected officials, private-sector stakeholders, and members of the public at large as a component of watershed management planning and to familiarize this audience with conservation and restoration projects and initiatives. Tours focused on Three Mile Creek and D'Olive watersheds have been used to engage over 200 individuals on various issues and challenges and solutions to them. As planning continues, MBNEP will continue to engage stakeholders during tours to view problems, observe implementation of restoration projects, and to see projects successfully completed.

2024 Objectives: Host one event to educate private sector about opportunities to advance sustainable growth along the Alabama coast.

EPI-2: PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM



Project	Private Sector Involvement Program
ССМР	EPI-2
Purpose	Engage business community in assisting with implementation of the CCMP
	Improved community understanding about watersheds and environmental
	stressors, Increased involvement of business community in activities to
	protect estuarine resources, Increased public awareness of environmental
Benefit/Outcome	issues
Outputs/Deliverables	Invasive species management, Rain barrel installations
	Improve monitoring of wetland function & coverage, Improve water quality,
Clean Water Act Relevance	Support TMDL implementation, Support water quality standards
Project Partners	Alabama Power, Greif-Soterra, AM/NS Calvert, Camp Grace
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	-
FY 2024 Budget	-
Total Budget	-

Overview

In early 2022, friends of Camp Grace, a nonprofit serving other nonprofits, contacted MBNEP about ongoing erosion caused by stormwater runoff. We were able to quickly assemble a volunteer group of 15 engineers, contractors, and resource management professionals, representing seven different firms (Allen Engineering, Goodwyn, Mills, Cawood, Hydro LLC, Mott MacDonald, Streamline Environmental, Thompson Engineering, Volkert Inc.), to hold a stormwater summit to develop practical solutions to alleviate on-site stormwater runoff impacts potentially threatening Camp buildings, infrastructure, and guest safety. Meeting outcomes were used to provide Camp Grace with a list of priority measures to address identified issues.

In August 2022, implementation of Phase I priority measures began with construction to mitigate the most concerning stormwater runoff problems. During this time Alabama Power's Service Organization assisted with a rain barrel installation on four cabins. To date, nearly \$30,000 has been donated in-kind and for supplies to Camp Grace because of these efforts. In the coming year we will continue to work with Camp Grace to monitor site conditions and install more rain barrel systems with Alabama Power.

2024 Objectives: (These activities will be conducted with external funds)

MBNEP will continue to partner with Alabama Power and others to improve stormwater management at Camp Grace.

EPI-3: COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM



Project	Community Education Program						
ССМР	EPI-3						
	Educate community about w	Educate community about watershed, ecosystem characteristics,					
Purpose	environmental stressors, and	l project components					
Benefit/Outcome	Increased public awareness of	Increased public awareness of environmental issues					
	Biannual Alabama Current						
Outputs/Deliverables	Connection Newsletter	Educational videos	Interpretive signage				
	Improve monitoring of wetland function & coverage, Improve water quality,						
Clean Water Act Relevance	Support TMDL implementation, Support water quality standards						
Project Partners	ADCNR, MBNEP						
Past Year Funds							
Reprogrammed/Available	7,000	25,000	5,080				
FY 2024 Budget	8,000 28,000 2,000						
Total Budget	15,000	53,000	7,080				

Overview

Alabama Current Connection Newsletter: Raising environmental awareness involves translating the technical language of a natural science or related field into terms and ideas a non-scientist can easily understand. It helps if it is presented in a way that is entertaining and interesting to the coastal Alabama public. The Alabama Current Connection is a joint newsletter published by the MBNEP and the ADCNR-State Lands Division, Coastal Section to highlight current projects and initiatives, MBNEP Management Conference activities, and other issues of interest to coastal residents.

Video Production/Digital Media: The MBNEP has increasingly used video production to annually share Program activities, challenges, and accomplishments and to educate elected officials and municipal and county staffs on stormwater management, MS4, use of best management practices, and low-impact development; communities on watershed dynamics and environmentally favorable initiatives and behaviors.

Signage: The MBNEP develops and installs educational and interpretive signs in public places adjacent to onthe-ground projects to educate the public about 1) where they are in the watershed, 2) the ecosystem in the project area, and 3) project details.

2024 Objectives:

Newsletter: Co-produce a semi-annual newsletter, *Alabama Current Connection*, with the State of Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Video Production: Develop a series of short videos highlighting past 10 years of accomplishments in implementing the CCMP.

Signage: Install roadway signage for the Eastern Shore and Western Perdido watersheds.

EPI-4: CLEAN WATER FUTURE CAMPAIGN



Project	Clean Water Future Campaign
ССМР	EPI-4
Purpose	Educate the residents of Mobile and Baldwin Counties about ways to decrease harmful stormwater runoff
Benefit/Outcome	Improved community understanding about watersheds and environmental stressors, Increased public awareness of environmental issues
Outputs/Deliverables	Marketing campaign involving production of educational materials available on a website or distributed at community meetings and events
Clean Water Act Relevance	Improve monitoring of wetland function & coverage, Improve water quality, Support TMDL implementation, Support water quality standards
Project Partners	TC Boiler, Rogers and Willard, Town of Dauphin Island
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	40,649
FY 2024 Budget	25,217
Total Budget	65,866

Overview

With stormwater runoff providing the primary source of pollution to American waters, MBNEP, through its Business Resources Committee, hosts a stormwater media campaign, *Create a Clean Water Future*, to encourage wise stewardship of our estuarine waters and raise awareness of the importance of clean water to recreational and commercial uses, our economies, and our environment. Through the content of the CCWF framework, businesses, schools, groups, and communities are improving their understanding and actions related to reducing polluted runoff and preserving our unique way of life, dependent on healthy waterways.

The CCWF campaign explains what stormwater is and encourages actions resulting in the reduction of stormwater pollution at both individual and community levels. The campaign features a membership pledge for new affiliates, an attractive brand identifying members to their markets, an informative website with effective message delivery usable for diverse audiences, literature and videos, open-source signs and billboards, and even links to where more environmentally sustainable products can be purchased.

Trash Blows: The MBNEP has successfully transformed one special event, the Alabama Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo, with a concentrated focus on recreational fishing, into one that encourages positive stewardship behaviors through it's "Trash Blows" campaign, to reduce incidences of truck bed and recreational boat-carried trash blowing onto roadways during transportation. The MBNEP continues to work in partnership with the Town of Dauphin Island to install signage, including strategically placed banners and street signs (which are meticulously recovered, post-event), raising awareness of the problems of inadvertently dispersed trash. MBNEP provides a presence in the Rodeo tent and hosts a social media campaign that awards t-shirts to participants posting pictures of videos of trash cleanup activities on social media.

2024 Objectives:

Improve production and expand reach of educational materials and resources available on the Clean Water Future website or distributed at community meetings and events.

EPI-5: COMMUNITY EVENTS PROGRAM



Project	Sponsorships and Outreach			
ССМР	EPI-5			
Purpose	Educate the public about the things that are valued most about living in coastal Alabama			
Benefit/Outcome	Improved community understanding about watersheds and environmental stressors, Increased public awareness of environmental issues			
Outputs/Deliverables	Sponsorships for community events	Outreach materials for community events		
Clean Water Act Relevance	Improve monitoring of wetland function & coverage, Improve water quality, Support TMDL implementation, Support water quality standards			
Project Partners				
Past Year Funds Reprogrammed/Available	3,770	(558)		
FY 2024 Budget	12,000	15,000		
Total Budget	15,770	14,442		

Overview

Special Event Sponsorships: Special events like the Dauphin Island Sea Lab's Discovery Day, Alabama Coastal Birdfest, (Three Mile) Creek Fest, Stan Mahoney Youth Fishing Tournament, Coastal Kids Quiz, and Alabama Coastal Cleanup provide positive and engaging opportunities to educate the public about protecting the things most valued about living in Coastal Alabama. MBNEP will continue to support and provide a presence and a credible source of information at local environmental events in the two coastal counties. The program will maintain an annual calendar of festivals/events to coordinate support and participation.

Promoting Stewardship at Local Events: MBNEP's purpose is to provide the tools to support communitybased efforts to promote wise stewardship of the water quality and living resource base of Mobile Bay, its tributaries, and the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. Public education is essential to raising environmental awareness and promoting behaviors that will lead to sustainability of the resources that draw people to the coast.

2024 Objectives:

Support community events as follows:

Event	2024 BUDGET
Green Coast Council Sustainability Summit	500
Alabama Coastal Cleanup	1,000
AWF Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards	500
Alabama Water Resources Conference	1,500
DISL Graduate Student Symposium	500
Bays & Bayous Symposium	5,000
Coastal Kids Quiz	250
Alabama Coastal Birdfest	500
WBWW Stan Mahoney Youth Fishing Tournament	500
Other	1,750
TOTAL	12,000

EPI-5: MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE SUPPORT (ALL STAKEHOLDERS)



Project	Management Conference Support
CCMP	EPI-5
Purpose	Sustain and expand stakeholder involvement in the implementation of the CCMP 2018-2023
Benefit/Outcome	Improved community understanding about the issue of trash and how to improve management of this waterway impairment
Outputs/Deliverables	Quarterly meetings of the Management Conference Committees and organizational development
Clean Water Act Relevance	Improve monitoring of wetland function & coverage, Improve water quality, Support TMDL implementation, Support water quality standards
Project Partners	
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	357
FY 2024 Budget	7,000
Total Budget	7,357

Overview

Efforts to engage and inform key stakeholders of past efforts and future projects of the MBNEP are accomplished through quarterly meetings of and engagement with Management Conference committees. The Management Conference comprises diverse stakeholder committees who develop and implement the strategies of the CCMP. The MBNEP serves as a catalyst for activities of the Management Conference, helping to build community based organizational capacity for sound resource management and leveraging commitment and investment to ensure the sustainability of Alabama's estuaries and coast.

Management Conference Committee Coordination: The most important role of the MBNEP is its function as a backbone organization or convenor of stakeholder interests. Our job is to keep everyone at the table and focused on implementing a common agenda, the CCMP. We do this through the coordination of seven different management conference committees: Government Networks, Business Resources, Project Implementation, Science Advisory, Community Action, Finance, and Executive. These committees meet quarterly with a focus on implementing the strategies associated with their sections of the CCMP.

Government Networks Committee Meetings: Each quarter, the MBNEP brings together elected officials and State Agencies to discuss local concerns and needs and provide a space for education about state and federal programs and priorities. Four meetings were supported with Section 320 funding to provide refreshments at these early morning meetings.

Annual Breakfast: Each year MBNEP holds an annual breakfast/meeting to educate the Management Conference about the past year's accomplishments as well as recognize members for their service to the coastal area.

2024 Objectives:

Participation support including but not limited to refreshments at Management Conference meetings, incentives for community engagement, childcare, transportation assistance.

EPI-5: CCMP UPDATE



Project	CCMP Update
ССМР	EPI-5
Purpose	Sustain and expand stakeholder involvement in the implementation of the CCMP 2018-2023
Benefit/Outcome	Increased community involvement in and support for stewardship, volunteer, and educational opportunities
Outputs/Deliverables	Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan Update
Clean Water Act Relevance	Improve monitoring of wetland function & coverage, Improve water quality, Support TMDL implementation, Support water quality standards
Project Partners	
Past Year Funds	
Reprogrammed/Available	281,389
FY 2024 Budget	-
Total Budget	281,389

Overview

On January 13th 2021, H.R.4044, the <u>Protect and Restore America's Estuaries Act</u>, was signed into law. Introduced to the House in 2019 through the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and sponsored by Rep. Tom Malinowski (D – NJ), the act reauthorizes appropriations for the National Estuary Program until 2026 and nearly doubles the annual funding authorization. It also expands the range of supporting projects which would qualify for grants and recognizes the increasing threats towards estuaries such as pollution, accelerated land loss, and risks to biodiversity. These actions demonstrate a clear recognition by Congress of the economic and environmental importance of wetlands and coastal environments in the United States.

One of the conditions of reauthorization is the need to either revise or update our Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Alabama's Estuaries and Coast. The current CCMP was first developed for the period 2013-2018. This plan was revised for the period 2019-2023. Given, this workplan represents what we project to be done in the final year of this five-year CCMP implementation program, it is time for us to assess what has been done, identify gaps, gather additional information, and strive to produce a new CCMP which refines and improves the targeting of actions to improve environmental management across the Alabama coast for the next five-year period.

2024 Objectives:

Citizen engagement, scientific synthesis, strategy development, and publication production of CCMP 2025-2030.

MPA: PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The MBNEP Program Office works closely with all MBNEP Management Conference members on initiatives related to the CCMP. The Management Planning and Administration (MPA) budget provides resources for the Program Office to continue program planning, development, implementation, evaluation, and reporting. The staff provides organizational and logistical support for all the Management Conference committee meetings and coordinates/communicates as necessary with appropriate groups, including user groups, state, local, and federal agencies, and professional groups relevant to CCMP development and implementation. Staff provide EPA-required documents; develop and administer grants/contracts; monitor projects including coordination of work plans, progress reports, and draft/final reports with project leads; coordinate project work plans and activities with other local, State and Federal agencies; and provide for overall program coordination.

<u>Travel</u>

The administration amount includes \$15,000 for travel. Program staff will participate in regional, state, and national conferences and meetings relevant to estuarine management. Attendance at Association of National Estuary Programs workshops and EPA workshops and meetings will be stressed. Other anticipated conferences include GOMA and Alabama Water Resources Conference. In addition, staff will have local travel for site visits and meetings.

Indirect Cost Rate

The Dauphin Island Sea Lab is the administrative sponsor of the MBNEP and has a federally approved indirect rate of 43.8%. The cost of DISL administrative support is discounted for the MBNEP to 15% of all expenditures related to the U.S. EPA grant and any other small external grants awarded to the MBNEP. IDC calculated on direct costs of \$1,180,522 for a total budget of \$177,078 in indirect charges. Based on a 15% indirect charge, the MBNEP can capture the 28.8% unrecovered costs as additional match for the program. For all large external grants, the DISL follows federal regulations of charging 43.8% indirect costs to all direct activities and to the first \$25,000 of each contract executed as part of each external grant.

<u>Staffing Plan</u>

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Position	Employee	Responsibilities
		Generates financial and political support for program; participates in regional and national initiatives associated with program; engages in project identification and design; builds collaborative teams for
		accomplishing objectives; liaison between Program and local
	Roberta Arena	governments and other public agency leaders; spokesperson for estuary
Director	Swann	related activities and needs; oversees program activities.
Business and Grants Managor	Tiffeny England	Maintains budget, project files, financial record keeping, grant reporting; coordinates logistics and promotional materials for educational outreach and special events
Grants Manager		and special events.
Program Administrator	Bethany Hudson	processes; provides services associated with office manager as well as technical editing and graphic design.
		Coordinates activities of Project Implementation Committee in their facilitation of the Program's watershed approach to restoration,
		protection, and conservation; oversight of all restoration-related projects,
Restoration		including project design, implementation, coordination, and monitoring;
Program Lead	Jason Kudulis	develops, initiates, and coordinates baseline data collection.
		Coordination of the Government Networks Committee; engages partners
Public Sector	Christian Millor	for the development of comprehensive watershed management plans for
Science &		an or Alabama's intertidar watersneds.
Monitoring		Coordination of the Science Advisory Committee: conducts stressor
Program Lead	Blair Morrison	assessments; provides coordination support to scientific research interests.
		Coordination of the Business Resources Committee; cultivates
		relationships with a focus on the business community; enlists local
Private Sector		business community participation in watershed management planning and
Program Lead	Henry Perkins	implementation.
		Coordination of the Community Action Committee; engages diverse
Community		communities and educates audiences about issues affecting the Alabama
Engagement	Chamilto Duorom	coast and activities being undertaken to mitigate stress on coastal
Program Lead	Snemika Brown	
Communications		Coordinates distribution of public information, including press, outreach
Manager	Marti Messick	materials, communicates the value of wibivity through special events and media
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THE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

MBNEP initiated a reorganization of the Management Conference in 2006. The structure was revised to better provide a mix of Policy Makers (both public and private), Implementers (both public and private), and Grassroots (community groups and citizens) to ensure expanding support for CCMP implementation and identification and engagement of emerging issues related to CCMP objectives. The ultimate goal is an increased ability to function as a community capacity builder and provide improved public services in the environmental area to our coastal communities. Due to lack of activity, the Community Resources Committee was disbanded in August, 2021. The Mobile Bay NEP Management Conference now consists of five main committees: Community Action, Government Networks, Science Advisory, Business Resources and Project Implementation Committees.



- The Community Action Committee is composed of representatives of environmental grassroots organizations who work together to network, share information, develop issues, and provide cooperative training.
- The Business Resources Committee brings together a balance of interested community leaders from industry, business, environmental services, fishing, tourism, and other professional fields to identify commonalities among sectors to resolve coastal issues that impact their interests and develop resources and funding.
- The Government Networks Committee is made up of State agency heads, regional government administrators, and local officials of the southern Alabama area. The goal of this committee is to educate local officials about State priorities and programs and provide a venue for local officials to communicate local needs more effectively.
- The Project Implementation Committee includes representatives of resource management agencies and organizations that undertake projects related to CCMP objectives and goals.

- **The Science Advisory Committee** includes experts from the various scientific disciplines who provide insights, research, and a sound basis to be used by the other committees in their decision-making processes.
- The Finance Committee includes community leaders that are committed to assisting in the development of non-Federal matching dollars to implement activities of the CCMP.
- The Executive Committee is made up of representatives from each of the four main committees, EPA, the Science Advisory Committee, the Finance Committee and three at-large members develops policies on issues and funding, reviews/approves work plans and budgets, evaluates the performance of the Director, and sets financial goals.

A key principle of the Management Conference is to coordinate and cooperate with other ongoing resource management activities to avoid unnecessary duplication. In this regard, the program office plays a major role in coordinating estuary projects and outreach activities, thus providing a more far–reaching benefit than that of simply CCMP project management. During the next program year, MBNEP will continue to promote this management structure as a mechanism for garnering stakeholder ownership in implementing the CCMP.

FEDERAL PARTNERS



EPA Allocation and Non-Federal Matching Share

Each year the MBNEP receives an allocation from EPA to support activities geared toward achieving the objectives of the CCMP. These funds require a one-to-one match. Our current program is being supported by 3.3 million in federal dollars with more than 20 million dollars in matching funds and awards.



Gulf of Mexico Program (GMD)

The Gulf of Mexico Program facilitates collaborative actions to protect, maintain, and restore the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico in ways consistent with the economic well-being of the Region.



Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium (MASGC)

The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium is dedicated to activities that foster the conservation and sustainable development of coastal and marine resources in Mississippi and Alabama. Sea Grant is NOAA's primary university-based program in support of coastal resource use and conservation. The MASGC is an important partner to MBNEP in implementing many CCMP actions. MASGC provides technical expertise, program development assistance, and valuable research and is a leader of many initiatives related to CCMP objectives. At present, MBNEP is a member of the MASGC Advisory Council, and the MASGC Director sits on the MBNEP Executive Committee.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Participation (USACE)

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) actively participates in the implementation of many of the actions of the CCMP. At present, the Corps is a member of the City of Mobile Mayor's Task Force to coordinate implementation of the Three Mile Creek Watershed Plan. In addition, MBNEP works closely with USACE to coordinate permitting and environmental project planning.

STATE RESOURCES



AL Department of Conservation and Natural Resources State Lands (ADCNR)

Because ADCNR has a long term interest in Alabama's Coastal Resources and the statutory responsibility for the conservation, management, and protection of these resources through its State Lands Division, Marine Resources Division, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, State Parks Division and particularly through the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program, it has entered into a memorandum of agreement to provide annual funding to MBNEP as part of its non-Federal match requirement, as an investment toward implementation of the CCMP. MBNEP has received over \$860,000 over the past nine years and additional NOAA related grants, which are used to produce the *Alabama Current Connection* newsletter. *Alabama Current Connection* is a joint newsletter published by the ADCNR State Lands Division Coastal Section and the MBNEP to highlight current projects, management conference activities, and other issues of interest to coastal residents.



State of Alabama

MBNEP met with the head of ADECA on March 17, 2006 to request additional State funding support for the program. After much discussion and initial support by ADECA, MBNEP decided on pursuing other opportunities within State government for ongoing support. In 2007, MBNEP was added as a line item in the State budget through the auspices of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab for a designated amount of \$250,000 in 2007. This funding was reduced to \$76,088 for the past several years with an increase to \$100,000 in 2021.

State Match	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
State Appropriation	76,088	76,088	76,088	100,000	100,000	100,000
ADCNR	98,000	98,000	98,000	90,000	90,000	90,000

LOCAL RESOURCES

The following local governmental entities provide continuing financial assistance to the MBNEP on an annual basis to support the implementation of the CCMP. Although these communities only allocate funding annually, MBNEP anticipates expanded support from these and other coastal communities in the future. MBNEP will reach out to the City of Mobile, Daphne, Spanish Fort, Fairhope, Saraland, Satsuma, Chickasaw, Saraland, Spanish Fort, Dauphin Island, Gulf Shores, and Foley for additional investment. Past annual investment from municipalities includes:

	Year 1 /	Year 2 /	Year 3 /	Year 4 /	Year 5 /	FY 2024
Non-Federal Match	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	Budget
State Appropriation	76,088	restricted	76,088	100,000	100,000	100,000
ADCNR	98,000	98,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000
Baldwin County	50,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000
Mobile County	17,888	17,888	25,000	50,000	75,000	75,000
City of Mobile	50,100	50,100	50,100	50,100	50,100	50,100
City of Daphne	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
City of Spanish Fort	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
City of Fairhope	5,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
Dauphin Island				5,000	5,000	5,000
Satsuma					-	
Saraland				5,000	-	
Chickasaw					-	
City of Foley	20,000	20,000	20,000	27,000	40,000	25,000
City of Gulf Shores		2,500	2,500	2,500	-	
Carry Over from 467		20,000			-	
Alabama Power/Other private			15,000		7,500	
Transfer match for ADCNR					(30,000)	
Total Non-Federal Match	372,076	353,488	423,688	474,600	482,600	490,100

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

MBNEP depends on volunteer support and local contributions or other in-kind services to achieve program success. This in-kind support is generated from volunteer labor hours related to activities including but not limited to oyster gardening, crab monitoring, trap removals, and participation in area events. Based on a 15% indirect charge from DISL, the MBNEP can capture the 28.8 % unrecovered costs as additional in-kind match for the program. Other in-kind services include use of city-owned machinery, the value of land donated for conservation purposes, and private donations to cover expenses incurred for events and activities carried out by local grassroots organizations and sponsored by MBNEP.

Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Semi Annual Report as of March 31, 2023

The mission of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) is to promote wise stewardship of the water quality and living resources of Alabama's estuarine systems. Funded in part by the U.S. EPA and administratively sponsored by the DISL, MBNEP is a non-regulatory program, bringing together citizens; local, state, and federal government agencies; businesses and industries; conservation and environmental organizations; and academic institutions to meet the environmental challenges that face the unique and imperiled resources that characterize our coastal estuaries. The MBNEP is part of the Sea Lab's Coastal Policy Program.