Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Community Resources Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 30, 2020
Virtual Meeting through Zoom

Attendees:

Carol Adams-Davis, Mobile Sierra Club
Nick Bartkowiak, Mobile Baykeeper
Mark Berte, Alabama Coastal Foundation
Casi Callaway, Mobile Baykeeper
Walter Ernest, Pelican Coast Conservancy
Debi Foster, Dog River Clearwater Revival/The
Peninsula

Vickii Howell, M.O.V.E
Nicole Love, Alabama Audubon
Tammy Monistere, Conservation Alabama
Ilka Porter, Mobile Baykeeper
Angela Underwood, ADCNR/Weeks Bay NERR
Caitlin Wessell, NOAA
Connie Whitaker, South Alabama Land Trust

MBNEP Staff: Herndon Graddick, Tom Herder, Bethany Hudson

Meeting Takeaways:

1) **MBNEP's Herndon Graddick described the WKRG production of a Truck Bed Trash Design competition currently being planned.**

2) **Tom Herder and Bethany Dickey discussed development of a Management Conference Trash Abatement Database to be hosted on the Clean Water Future webpage with the purpose of 1) sharing ongoing and completed efforts and associated metrics involving trash abatement projects to provide opportunities for collaboration and avoid duplication of labor and 2) to tie the Database to the CRC Trash Abatement Work Plan to track project success and metrics.**

3) **Goals and objectives have been tentatively developed for Work Plan subcomponents #5 Formal/Informal Education, #6, Awareness; #1 Reduction in Trash/Litter Prevention; and #3 Recycling. Goals and objectives for subcomponent #2 Litter Removal were completed in August, and goals and objectives for subcomponents #4 Policy and #7 Behavior Changes are yet to be developed.**

Minutes

1. Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 1032 am by Walter Ernest, who requested that members virtually "sign in" on the chat app.

2. Approval of the Minutes
Walter called for a motion to approve the minutes from the past meeting (August 13, 2020). Tammy Monistere made the motion, which was seconded by Mark Berte. The motion carried.

3. Old Business

MBNEP Management Conference Committee Update: Tom Herder noted that no MBNEP Management Conference committees have met since our August meeting, so a new update wasn't prepared, but he introduced Herndon Graddick to describe the MBNEP/WKRG collaborative production being developed around a Truck Bed Trash Design Competition funded through a 2019 Dog River Clearwater Revival EPA Gulf of Mexico Program Grant in conjunction with Dauphin Island's Alabama Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo.

Herndon noted a Texas study indicating that up to 30% of roadside trash is inadvertently blown there from truck beds. The contest will have a Shark Tank feel, with designs presented by inventors and judged, and contestants eligible for a $3,500 cash award. The production will be 30 minutes in duration broadcast on WKRG digital feeds reaching half a million viewers. The main goal of the project is to raise awareness, with a new product hopefully also brought to market. Taping is scheduled to begin with hostess Devon Walsh on October 22 with release one week later. Herndon addressed questions including who will fund production and manufacture, who are the sponsors, and which trucks are suitable. He mentioned a couple of the sponsors, but as Casi again asked about the sponsors, Herndon agreed to share a list. He reported Palmer Toyota is particularly interested in involvement with the project.

Branding Update. Noting how many of us are involved in trash abatement activities, Casi introduced Nick Bartowiak, a Baykeeper employee and USA student brought on to help manage their funded Reduce the Use program. She mentioned different aspects of work being done, but wondered how we could employ stronger messaging and better branding. Many CRC members received an email leading to a Friday, October 3 meeting at 1000. Casi said she would share the link with Tom Herder for distribution across the CRC. She felt the need to get the right folks together to optimize language and message. She compared Ditch the Disposables to Reduce the Use, and the need to share branding, even if it's Create a Clean Water Future. It's a common problem, and she sought involvement in the branding effort. It was noted that Create a Clean Water Future was developed several years ago for this reason.

During the branding discussion, a suggestion was offered to create a database of trash abatement activities and to include recycling in the work plan. We responded that both of these are already in the works.

Several CRC members expressed interest in involvement in the branding discussion. A suggestion was made to involve Keep Mobile Beautiful in these CRC efforts, and the suggestion was met with general agreement. Debi agreed to share KMB's contact info with chairs. While it was pointed out that KMB need not necessarily be involved in the branding discussion, they will be included in CRC activities. After a criticism of the current CWF logo, we moved on from branding into New Business and database development.

4. New Business:
CRC Database Development with Metrics. Tom Herder explained that he began trying to develop the database, which in addition to providing information useful in avoiding duplication of labor and providing opportunities for collaboration, would also provide a tool for tracking progress and success with the CRC Trash Abatement Work Plan. He reported beginning development of a spread sheet, but with such a disparate range of projects over the Work Plans seven subcomponents and getting nowhere, he turned to the MBNEP's data manager, Bethany Hudson.

She developed beginning stages of the new data base with four projects: Ditch the Disposables, Three Mile Creek, Coastal Cleanup, and the Trash Blows Campaign, representative of the breadth of activities and metrics that will be tracked. She demonstrated utility associated with incorporating these projects into the database being developed for the MBNEP. She was willing to craft the tracking tool. She was asked how we would track metrics in an activity that wasn't a cleanup events, using Ditch the Disposables as an example, and she responded that social media shares or likes or new followers. Herder suggested survey responses might be a better metric and that the work plan already is populated with potential metrics. Bethany pointed out the new database will also tie back to the CCMP and can be used to track implementation activities there.

Another suggestion was made to track open rail containers and other large "culprits" we haven't yet considered.

Casi reiterated her concern about duplications, queried MBNEP staff about metrics from the Ditch the Disposables campaign, suggested that the campaign was focused on survey responses and reductions in numbers of single use containers, and asked if that was correct. Herndon responded that it was more about getting consumer feedback about tolerance for price. It was less about reducing actual waste but more about finding out what the tolerance was for different price points. Casi reiterated the two reasons for the database (avoidance of duplication and project tracking) and asked Bethany what she needs from CRC membership to populate the database. Bethany responded that spreadsheets or even manual data entry would work. Casi suggested that the work plan could guide database development, and Bethany indicated flexibility and a willingness to work with us. "Send me what you got," she said. Herndon volunteered to provide the data from the Ditch the Disposables campaign, and Tom reminded that Madison presented the data at the August 13 CRC meeting, but Casi missed that portion of the meeting.

Others expressed the value of trash abatement database development. Herder reiterated that this database should include any Management Conference trash abatement initiatives. With no more thoughts or questions, the meeting moved to Work Plan development.

CRC Work Plan/Development of Goals and Objectives for Work Plan Subcomponents. Casi displayed the Work Plan on the screen, acknowledged Angela Underwood and Caitlin Wessell for the fine work they did on subcomponent #2, Litter Removal, and invited Ilka Porter and Mark Berte to discuss subcomponent #5, Formal and Informal Education. With a purpose of identifying and enhancing educational resources pertaining to litter awareness and prevention, their identified Goals were 1) to increase the number of participants in existing litter awareness and prevention education programs and 2) increase the knowledge of education program participants. Ilka worked backwards starting with Objective #4 and finishing with objective #1. Objectives were as follows:
1. Identify current resources that provide litter awareness and prevention from all educational programs.
2. Identify current number of people ([not only] K-12 students and [but also] community members) being educated about litter awareness and prevention from all educational programs.
3. Increase number of people education by 10% each year.
4. Increase knowledge about litter issues by 10% each year using a collectively created pre and post survey from all educational programs.

Mark mentioned tasks listed, calling them "ideas they tacked on at the end," and they include collecting information form Mike Shelton, ACF, and Baykeeper; defining the different types of educational programs as formal or informal; employ drones, and investigating climate implications. The importance of having Keep Mobile Beautiful was reiterated, as they are a constant presence in schools. Ilka commented on the importance of presenting a common message, regardless whether it's SWAMP, Bay Buddies, or another program. A conversation on messaging could help ensure that messages reinforce one another. Tom expressed that links to presentations could be included in the database. The importance of education of kids who have influence on parents was also expressed. The question was posed: Will these objectives include measurable metrics?

Nicole Love presented goals and objectives for subcomponent #6 Awareness. She included three goals, each with their own objectives. The first goal was: Increase the number of community members exposed to litter prevention information. The first objective was identification of the target audience and determining if existing means are reaching this audience. The would involve creating a baseline survey to gauge what people are already doing and focus the campaign accordingly (with possible metrics: number of surveys distributed and number of respondents completing the survey). The second objective under the first goal was to review existing programs, events, and/or social media campaigns to determine their effectiveness.

The second Awareness goal was: Create and use one single branding campaign related to litter reduction and prevention, with three objectives: 1) Establish a brand, 2) Measure number of organizations using the branded campaign, and 3) Create new and/or update social media content and outreach materials to fill in gaps determined from surveys.

The third goal, to increase the number of community members with improved litter habits, has two objectives. The first is increase the number of people who see outreach materials or social media (etc.) by 10% as measured by numbers of surveys, social media metrics, etc. The proposed metrics for measuring success was the number of materials distributed, number of social media likes, tweets, etc. A follow-up survey could be used to see if behaviors have changed after the awareness campaign. A final metric could be the number of people who filled out a follow up survey and the number who reported changes in behavior. The second objective is to work with two to five established brands or companies identified through cleanups (or ETAP) to promote upstream litter prevention.

Some discussion followed, including pleas for reuse, rather than recycling, which was constructively criticized. The importance of surveys was reiterated by Nicole, who said that recycling was just a convenient example. It was noted that subcomponent 3# Recycling, was coming up. Carol Adams-Davis pointed out most of Mobile's recycling facilities are closed since Hurricane Sally. The facility that processes Mobile material in Pensacola has been destroyed, and it will be at least a month or two before it is back up. Only the Hitt Road facility remains open. She warned of lapses in good behavior with no opportunities to recycle.

Casi asked whether we captured awareness metrics, and Debi Foster felt that measuring awareness is particularly challenging and that measuring reductions was important to measuring awareness success. Nicole defended and explained survey strategies, and incentives to stimulate behavior changes were also mentioned. Ilka spoke of incentivizing surveys. Angela talked about surveys and self-reporting used in their marine debris education programs. She said you're taking it on trust, and she kindly asks survey respondents what keeps them from changing their behaviors. Six months out, is it a behavior change that sticks? There's a science to behavior change measurements. It was expressed that this was a good start on awareness.

Casi thinks we should mull this over until we've had some time to think about it. She moved the discussion to subcomponent #3 Recycling and handed off to Mark Berte. The single goal was to Increase recycling in coastal Alabama. This goal included four objectives: The first: Identify the places (communities and businesses) where recycling is happening. The second: Estimate the current weight of recycled materials collected each year and track a 10% annual increase. The third: Promote post-consumer recycled products to businesses, governmental entities, and the public (Mark feels this is of primary importance). The fourth:

Establish a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) in coastal Alabama. Some municipalities are already processing some recycled material.

Follow up discussion included recommendations of education and awareness efforts about the cost of litter. Two sections remain to be developed: subcomponent #4 Policy and #7 Behavior Changes, which will depend upon Larissa Graham (who's completing maternity leave) and Elizabeth Englebreton. Casi steered the discussion back to subcomponent #1 Reduction in Litter/Trash Prevention on which she and Debi collaborated.

The Reduction goal was To develop a unified data collection protocol to produce a complete, systematic, science-based data set reflecting the quality and quantity of litter. The three objectives included:
1. Determine the most accurate (and translatable) rate or unit of measurement.
2) Encourage city and county government to adopt usage of the agreed-upon rate/unit of measurement.
3) Encourage use of the same agreed upon rate of measurement by private trash collection-related businesses.

The database should be valuable in encouraging these objectives. The discussion moved to how we encourage the various entities to adopt measurement protocols. Step B will be to seek funding to ensure these are reasonable objectives.

Tom asked about the status of the Work Plan, and Casi responded we'll get it cleaned up (Walter, Casi, and Tom) before the November meeting, and she recommended everyone send what they're doing in one form or another to Bethany, who is working on database development.

Scheduling of next meeting. Tom indicated that the next CRC meeting is tentatively scheduled for November 3. When it was brought to our attention that November 3 is election day, we readily decided to move that back a week to November 10. To avoid conflicts, the meeting was scheduled for 1:00 to 3 pm. A tentative CRC meeting schedule for 2021 will be developed at that meeting.

5. Adjourn The meeting was adjourned at 1156.