

## Mobile Bay NEP Community Resources Committee Meeting Minutes

Remotely via ZOOM  
Wednesday, July 15, 2020

### In Attendance

Carol Adams-Davis, Mobile Sierra Club  
Casi Callaway, Mobile Baykeeper  
Debi Foster, The Peninsula  
Tom Herder, Mobile Bay NEP  
Cade Kistler, Mobile Baykeeper  
Connie Whitaker, Weeks Bay Foundation  
Angela Underwood, Weeks Bay NERR

Mark Berte, Alabama Coastal Foundation  
Walter Ernest IV, Pelican Coast Conservancy  
Herndon Graddick, MBNEP  
Martha Hunter, AL Rivers Alliance  
Nicole Love, Alabama Audubon  
Roberta Swann, MBNEP  
Caitlin Wessell, NOAA

**1. Welcome and Introductions** Attendees were welcomed and self-introduced.

**2 Approval of Minutes** Motion to accept minutes was made by Mark, seconded by Debi, and unanimously approved.

**3. Review Work Plan action items.** Reviewing the Work Plan Action items, several CRC members reported progress with assigned tasks.

**4. Work Plan development.** Walter suggested development and maintenance of a database to track funded initiatives related to trash. He felt that the effort would help us avoid duplication of effort and provide opportunities for collaboration. Casi suggested creating and maintaining such a database could use “a lift” from the MBNEP.

She recalled the MBNEP’s intent to concentrate on “oysters, mud (dirt), and trash,” which are ubiquitous concerns across the watersheds for which plans have been or are being developed.

In reviewing the Work Plan, Roberta suggested including purpose, goals, and objectives. She responded to the query about the three issues, explaining the MBNEP wants to tell a story to the community, and explained Management Conference involvement in each. The Business Resources Committee is involved with supporting the people involved in the oyster fishery. Sediments, often too much or too little, are addressed in all watershed management plans (WMPs) with precursor sediment loading analyses developed to inform them. With regard to trash, we don’t yet have a comprehensive trash strategy. She explained that in most MBNEP initiatives, the Purpose is usually our mission: to encourage the wise stewardship of the quality and living resources of Alabama’s estuarine waters. Developing Goals and Objectives is harder.

She explained the MBNEP’s involvement with trash and litter abatement. It began in 2011 with the Clean Up the Bottom cleanup, then development of the Three Mile Creek WMP. and then a Gulf of Mexico Program grant that funded Osprey Litter Gitter installations and maintenance and Baykeeper’s Strategic Watershed Awareness and Monitoring Program (SWAMP). The MBNEP has tried to stay focused on getting Litter Gitter technology across the two coastal counties.

The Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol (ETAP) for the EPA’s Trash Free Waters (TFW) Program was enhanced as part of the Three Mile Creek GOMP grant through the hard work of Baykeeper staff and Osprey Initiative, providing a solid assessment protocol incorporating the Urban Rapid Trash Assessment

(URTA) used by Baykeeper to track trash in One Mile Creek in an independent effort. Roberta noted that the protocol now used has been specifically modified to fit coastal Alabama. She mentioned the Dog River Clearwater Revival's grant, noting Alabama is on the forefront of tracking trash.

With information shared by MBNEP, Riverkeeper organizations secured a Fresh Water Land Grant, spreading trash abatement technologies upstream in the Mobile Bay Watershed. Osprey Initiative's expanding geographical breadth was mentioned. An additional TFW grant was secured by the Tampa Bay NEP to transfer litter reduction technologies employed in coastal Alabama across the Gulf and to focus up the waste stream to engage supply chain entities, like Coca Cola. In addition, the City of Mobile and Baykeeper partnered and were awarded a grant to expand comprehensive trash abatement activities across the City.

The MBNEP partnered with the DRCCR, Baykeeper, and Partners for Environmental Progress to develop a trash strategy for the greater Dog River Watershed. The strategy will be to determine the most effective sites for Litter Gitter installation and includes sensors, SWAMP, a truck bed trash campaign.

In response to a comment about the challenge for CRC members to understand what the MBNEP is doing, Roberta responded that quarterly Executive Committee meetings are designed to update all co-chairs of what each is doing with the expectation that the co-chairs to report back to their respective committees what was heard during these meetings.

**5. Trash Mob and Litter Summit.** The discussion turned spontaneously towards the Trash Mob, a hip hop, flash mob, type performance to encourage good litter-related behaviors in young people. With some CRC members expressing disinterest in participating in this initiative, they asked Roberta about the possibility of reallocating the funds appropriated for its implementation. She responded that the Program wants to use the Trash Mob in outreach efforts and has no plans to reprogram those dollars. However, the MBNEP budget includes \$10K allocated for Management Conference support. If the CRC or other committees have a need they would like addressed, she suggested they make a request to MBNEP who will work with the committee to secure funding for execution.

A trash summit, discussed at a meeting of Management Conference committee co-chairs over a year ago, was discussed as another potential CRC activity. With the COVID pandemic in effect, the discussion was fairly brief due to limitations on large group meetings.

The discussion returned to the Work Plan with a suggestion that purposes, goals, and objectives for each of the Work Plans seven sub-components: 1) Reduction in trash/litter prevention, 2) litter removal, 3) increased recycling, 4) policy or legislative actions, 5) formal education, 5) awareness, and 7) behavior changes. With these developed, opportunities for collaboration and determination of funds needed can be addressed. With the caveat that as a CZM employee, conflict of interest had to be avoided, Angela Underwood noted that Coastal Zone Management has funds available for plans or implementation. It was agreed that after more development of the purposes, goals, and objectives of the subcomponents, we could then begin seeking funding. It was left to determine who would undertake that development.

Debi volunteered to work on reduction in trash/litter prevention with Casi's help, but no one thus far stepped forward to develop litter removal. A question was posed about including education in these sub-components, and sub-components #5 and #6, directly addressed formal education and awareness, respectively. With committee members coming from different directions in the resource management community, there was a sustained discussion on the semantics of formal vs. informal education. One accomplishment in this discussion, where it was basically agreed to consider formal education as everything more than awareness, was that Nicole volunteered to address awareness activities (with Casi as a partner).

Debi Foster asked about the status of the WKRG Take Back the Coast Campaign. Herndon explained WKRG approached the MBNEP about a partnership opportunity, seeing the program as a clearing house of several different organizations, and stated there was some movement toward a focus on trash and access, which was pretty well developed prior to the March beginning of the COVID pandemic. However since the pandemic has remained on top of the news cycle, the campaign has taken a back seat. He stated there will be future opportunities to partner with WKRG on either their concept or something new, and has kept in touch with them with an eye on early 2021.

Back to Work Plan development, Angela and Caitlin volunteered to help develop the litter removal sub-component. Some leads were previously identified for sub-components: Mark Berte and ACF agreed to help develop the recycling sub-component, Tammy Herrington and Conservation Alabama were the logical leads on policy and legislative actions, Baykeeper and ACF already agreed to lead formal education, with Baykeeper leading awareness activities. Larissa Graham and Elizabeth Englebreton were viewed as logical leads for behavior changes.

**6. MBNEP Update** With time constrained, there was no opportunity to share the MBNEP update. However a discussion of the recently released coal ash film followed. Casi sought clarification of the role of the CRC or other Management Conference committees in determining what issues are pursued by the MBNEP.

Roberta responded that this issue arose after a Baykeeper request to local elected officials to support the transport option to close the Plant Barry Coal Ash Pond. She noted that members of the MBNEP Government Networks Committee did not want to act without education on the issue and options stimulated by the Coal Combustion Residuals Rule. The GNC asked the MBNEP to help them so they would be well informed and could communicate with their constituencies. MBNEP brought the request to the MBNEP Executive Committee whose consensus was to proceed with the development of an educational initiative which would provide an unbiased, balanced treatment of the issues.

MBNEP determined, since the topic of coal ash pond closure is so complex, the best approach seemed to be production of a short film, and from that point forward, MBNEP staff began gathering information in house. We reached out to the Environmental Integrity Project, who evaluated coal ash ponds and CCR Rule-stimulated closures across the country, and an EIP principal investigator, who provided guidance. In addition, two contractors were hired, one to evaluate the hydrogeology aspects of the site and another who evaluated the structural integrity of Alabama Power's proposed closure option.

Regarding which committees were involved in the development of the film, Roberta stated it was the decision of the MBNEP to engage the Science Advisory Committee in vetting information related to hydrogeology and structural assessment, as the role of the SAC is to vet information and ensure scientific integrity. They reviewed presentations by Dustin Brooks from Alabama Power; the hydrogeologist, Marlon Cook; and the structural engineer, Bob Snow, with the latter two also presenting their findings to the Mobile Baykeeper Board. In addition, the SAC Co-chairs were asked to review the film and provide comments before it was finalized.

Some further discussion involved questions of how the next controversial issue would play out and how the CRC could function effectively, united, and de-silo-ed. Another question involved why transport closure in the film was only based on use of trucks, rather than rail or barge. Roberta responded that nothing untruthful was presented in the film, and if there's anything missing, nothing precludes member organizations from presenting other educational materials or positions. With little time remaining, the discussion shifted to an August CRC meeting as part of the Program Evaluation process.

**7. Date / time / location of next meeting:** With the MBNEP undergoing its five-year EPA Program Evaluation the week of August 10, the best time possible for an opportunity to incorporate a virtual CRC meeting was on Thursday, August 13 from 1000 to 1130. It was suggested we could discuss the focus on trash abatement actions and maybe get the work plan into a format for presentation. A deadline, August 5, was suggested for development of purpose, goals, and objectives for the Work Plan's seven subcomponents, and a calendar invitation and agenda will be prepared for the August 13 meeting. With one conflict noted, we agreed to move the meeting to 1030-Noon. The PE team will need at least 15 minutes for questions.

**8. Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 1133.

DRAFT