

## **Mobile Bay NEP Community Resources Committee Meeting Minutes**

Killian Room, International Trade Center  
March 14, 2019

### **In attendance:**

Casi Callaway, Mobile Baykeeper  
Walter Ernerst, Pelican Conservancy  
Yael Girard, Weeks Bay Foundation  
Tom Herder, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program  
Vickii Howell, M.O.V.E. Gulf Coast Community Development Corporation  
Dr. Tina Miller-Way, Dauphin Island Sea Lab Discovery Hall Program  
Christian Wagley, Healthy Gulf

At 1005, Casi opened the meeting and asked for self-introductions.

**Diverse Delta Report.** Yael Girard provided a report on the Diverse Delta media campaign approved by the CRC in September 2018. Coastal AL is so high in biodiversity, but also second in nation in species extinctions. The campaign is an opportunity to showcase what we have, and how we can mitigate problems. She summarized activity thus far through the 12-month campaign:

- October: Existing events incorporated into the 12-month timeline of material.
- November: Edible Coastal Wonders/Baygiving
- December: The Gift of local conservation: Diverse December
- January: An Eco-resolution (to support native and combat invasive species)
- February: I-Heart Estuaries from RAE and other groups
- March: A little more open.... #trashtag – taking before and after pictures of trash problems and cleanups

A copy of the PDF for Diverse Delta scheduling will accompany these minutes as an attachment.

Noting a lack of momentum, she questioned whether we want to continue pursuit of this initiative. After some discussion, the following were suggested:

- If CRC organizations were charged with populating the website over a specific month, the effort could be sustained, and shares by partner organizations could drive attention.
- The whole “Delta” concept is more flexible, with diversity being the important topic, so the range of content could include any areas within the two county area.
- Media attention could be increased with appropriate strategies.
- Including a hashtag like #MobileBayNEPCRC would help the Committee establish a media presence.

**We can follow up this meeting with an email to solicit cooperation and content by CRC organizations.**

**Draft Work Plan for CRC.** Tom Herder was called on to explain development of a CRC workplan. With the range of problems across the many 12-digit HUCs for which WMPs will be developed, many of the major issues of concern can be “boiled down” to the “stories” of trash, oysters (and all the things benefitting or impairing oysters), and dirt (erosion, ship channel maintenance, beneficial uses, shoreline enhancement, and marsh creation). A “Story of Trash” video currently is currently under production.

The topic of stormwater was suggested as a fourth story, and, while that issue falls across the other three stories, most participants appeared to agree that certain issues related to stormwater (flooding, sanitary

sewer overflows, etc.) should be considered as a fourth story topic, whether these are envisioned as a first-year project or could be stretched across multiple years.

**Discussion of the Strategies and Metrics.** Tina led the discussion and explained the matrix we would review. First, everything NOT pegged for CRC focus across the four action areas was removed (first distillation), then all goals and objectives not recommended for CRC in Year One were eliminated to cull the preliminary list down to a manageable number. Thirty-seven goals and objectives still remained. Our goal was to identify goals and objectives we wish to prioritize over some of the others.

With the first Goal considered – ERP-3 *Restore/expand human connections to nature as a mechanism for improving environmental protection*, and Objective ERP-3.1 *Protect and conserve priority habitats for public benefit and access by acquisition or easement*, discussion began with the suggestion this was clearly PIC business. It was countered that with CRC tool of education and advocacy, Objective 3.1d – *Support conservation activities in the greater Mobile Bay Watershed* - is something CRC folks can do without great effort and could be included in our work plan.

MBNEP-recommended performance measures (in red font, column J) could be modified to reflect CRC scope and abilities. Members were directed to add new measures of success, if there are better ways to measure it, and if those listed are not measures of CRC success, we can eliminate those.

A Workplan Engagement data sheet was prepared to provide CRC organizations a place to report which CCMP Goals, Objectives, or Actions in which they are already involved, plus information about partners and funding and expected time course for implementation. The “homework” assignment was for each organization to consider things they are already doing to help inform development of an implementable CRC work plan. Existing outreach material about conservation easements or acquisitions, *The Guide for Landowners of Alabama*, already exists and is available through existing CRC entities, so the metric on Performance Measures for ERP-3.1 on the spreadsheet was adjusted to reflect dissemination. The number of decision makers contacted about acquisitions/easements was suggested as another measure, reflecting quantifiable interactions with decision makers on the value of land conservation, and that was added as a separate measure. A presentation by land conservation experts to the PIC would be of value and was recommended.

Chairs provided a caution about getting too in the weeds, with directions to focus on recommending appropriate performance measures. The discussion moved on to ERP-3.2 – *Create seven new access points, at least five in Mobile County, incorporating environmental and cultural themes into interpretive signage* - the discussion turned to Blueway Plans. Lower Three Mile Creek and points along Eight Mile Creek south of the University of Mobile campus, and potential access sites. The importance of the “homework assignment was reiterated towards workplan development.

The discussion advanced to TAC Strategies and TAC-3.2 *Improve regulatory framework to better protect coastal resources* – and Activity TAC 3.2a – *Maintain South Alabama Regulatory Review Database for stormwater management*, the Regulatory Review Database, whether it exists, and who created it. John Carlton’s regulatory review, done in conjunction with the Weeks Bay WMP, was completed, but no one was sure that a Regulatory Review Database had been developed. One suggestion for a Performance Measure was “the number of ordinance changes,” providing an easy box to check. The discussion turned to Activity 3.2d – *Inform elected officials about existing ordinances for reducing non-point source pollution and support changes to improve effectiveness*. Tracking the number of meetings with decision-makers was suggested as a metric. Auburn, Conservation Alabama, and others will all be involved in informing elected officials (advocacy) as our education organizations could be involved in creating educational tools.

With regard to TAC-3.3 –*Support actions to protect and restore coastal habitats, increasing community and economic resilience*. Creating PowerPoint slides with talking points to lay the groundwork by informing or increasing awareness of the problems with water supply – flooding and drought. No one expressed excitement about Activity TAC-3.3a, *Promote the adoption of a State of Alabama Water Plan* as an appropriate Performance Measure, especially in the first year, so we added the metric “Create a messages document to inform about the Water Plan.”

Activity TAC-3.3b - *Promote improved management of shorelines best practices* - is something Eric Sparks at Mississippi State is actively pursuing, and getting MBNEP’s *Property Owner’s Guide to Living Shorelines* published was suggested as a Performance Measure. More discussion ensued about workshops and marketing to marine contractors. Some expressed that the regulatory environment remains somewhat prohibitive compared to installation of bulkheads or traditional armoring. A suggested Performance Measure was gathering all of information available to market the technology. A January 30 Evaluating Alabama’s Living Shoreline Reference Guide: Stakeholder Workshop was mentioned. It may have satisfied that measure, and perhaps MBNEP could include available information in their online library if we can capture what was accomplished there and check that box as a Performance Measure.

Moving along to Activity TAC-3.3c, *Improve understanding of the dredge management process and investigate ways to utilize material for restoration purposes*, some discussion ensued over whether this was CRC business. No one was passionate about the CRC involvement. The discussion returned to Activity TAC-3.3b, and contractor training, and a suggestion was offered to make this a Year Two activity with another that Thompson Engineering, who provides outstanding training (Stormwater QCI Training) could include contractor training.

Objective TAC-3.4 is *Inform elected officials and the public about changing climatic conditions and sea level rise*, actions a, b, and c, to inventory, create, and employ, respectively, outreach materials to educate elected officials and the public. Performance measures were added to indicate potential CRC involvement.

Moving to Goal TAC-4, *Build capacity of grassroots groups and citizens to create more resilient and environmentally-responsible communities*, with Activity TAC-4.2 to Develop comprehensive strategy for volunteer water quality monitoring; expand citizen science and community engagement programs to inform status and trends. Assessing an inventory of who is performing water quality monitoring and where gaps exist would be a valuable activity. The discussion included suggestions of hosting a comprehensive water quality monitoring workshop and existing organizations in Mobile County public schools. We should consider how this could be made “cool” to students, and the conversation continued.

Chairs wrapped up proceedings by directing CRC organizations to address the “homework” sheet developed to understand which potential goals, objectives, and activities are already being undertaken by CRC folks. Tom will forward the strategy matrix as amended in this meeting to aid CRC organizations in getting the Workplan Engagement form completed and returned to [therder@mobilebaynep.com](mailto:therder@mobilebaynep.com) by an agreed-upon deadline.

As to scheduling future quarterly CRC meetings, which were already tentatively scheduled by MBNEP staff and shared with the CRC Chairs, we agreed that these dates are positioned for us to report to the Executive Committee. Quarterly CRC meeting will be held on May 8 and September 4, and we’ll get this information out to membership as soon as possible. Tom was asked if we could make call-ins available for CRC meetings, and he said he would ensure that was done.

Chairs suggested that, having done a lot today and not finishing, perhaps we could make the May 8 meeting longer, allowing us to complete our workplan. The CCMP should well be published before that

meeting, so a “homework deadline” should be imposed, and we can review our charges as a committee at the May 8 meeting. Comment period for the updated CCMP is March 18, so it was expressed that the May 8 meeting should determine which tasks we will undertake and how. **A deadline for returning the homework/Workplan Engagement sheet was set as April 5.** All pertinent material should be forwarded to Tom early in the week, and he’ll share with the Committee via email.

The meeting adjourned at 1200.