

Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Executive Committee Meeting
Original Oyster House Banquet Hall, Spanish Fort, AL
Friday, September 20, 2019 10:00 am-12:00 pm

Attendees:

Chris Blankenship, ADCNR
Cade Kistler for Casi Callaway, Mobile Baykeeper
Greg Dansby for Ben Malone, USDA-NRCS State Office
Darrelyn Dunmore, Foley Main Street
Jennifer Denson, Partners for Environmental Progress
Mimi Fearn, Dog River Clearwater Revival
Leslie Gahagan, City of Foley
Patric Harper, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Amy Hunter, ADCNR
Chris Lee, J.L Bedsole Foundation

Jimmy Lyons, Alabama State Port Authority
Tina Miller-Way, Dauphin Island Sea Lab
Chris Plymale, U.S. EPA, Region 4
William Puckett, Alabama Soil & Water Conservation Committee
Bill Sisson, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce
LaDon Swann, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium
Beth Thomas, Alabama Power
Chris Thomas, U.S. EPA, Region 4
John Valentine, Dauphin Island Sea Lab

MBNEP Staff Present: *Roberta Swann, Christian Miller, Tiffany England, Jason Kudulis, Kelley Barfoot, Madison Blanchard, Katie Dylewski, Herndon Graddick, and Bethany Dickey*

1. **Introductions/Call to Order:** Commissioner Chris Blankenship called meeting to order at 10:09 a.m.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Commissioner Blankenship asked for comments or revisions to the minutes from the June 7, 2019 meeting. Jennifer Denson made a motion to approve and John Valentine seconded the motion.

Ms. Swann asked Commissioner Blankenship to give a quick update on RESTORE, NFWF, and NRDA. The NRDA public annual meeting was held last week (September 11) at Five Rivers. Restoration Plan III has several projects that include: Perdido River Land Acquisition, Dauphin Island West End Acquisition, Bayfront Park Restoration & Improvement, Gulf State Park Pier Renovation, Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge Recreation Enhancement, and some Bird Stewardship Projects. The public comment is open until October 3rd and the hope is that decisions will be made by December 13th and implementation of these projects will start at the beginning of the year 2020. NFWF GEBF received several projects in March, and full proposals in June, many of which came from NEP Watershed Management Plans. In November the board will make the approved projects public. Alabama RESTORE Council- Keri Coumanis is no longer the lead. Dr. Amy Hunter will be the primary contact for approved Bucket I and III projects. Kickoff meetings with municipalities have been started and scheduled for applications for Bucket III projects. The Federal RESTORE Council is a slowly moving process. Dr. Hunter made the announcement that the Centers of Excellence will be hosted at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (sent to Treasury for signature).

3. **Director's Report**

- a) **CCMP Update:** All the comments have been recorded and incorporated. One of the biggest changes was highlighting climate change (Dr. Crozier) and how actions will be affected by climate change. We hope to have a final document by end of October. Should we go through a second round of comments? No! We will have a formal approval at our Annual Breakfast on December 12.
- b) **Key Accomplishments:** There are several contracts awarded or are in negotiations right now. The Deer River Marsh Stabilization Engineering and Design Phase I contract was awarded to Thompson Engineering through our RFQ process. We have met with the two property owners and should have E & D alternatives the first of the year. The Fowl River Spits Engineering and Design contract is in the process of execution with Environmental Science Associates. The Dauphin Island Causeway Shoreline Restoration Engineering and Design Project was awarded to Mobile County, who has a pending subcontract with Geosyntec. This project

was funded through NFWF and NOAA Environmental Resilience Fund. Wood was selected through the RFQ process for the Mobile Tensaw Apalachee Watershed Management Plan, and the contract is in negotiations and needs approval from RESTORE. Geosyntec was selected through the RFQ process for the Little Lagoon/Gulf Frontal Watershed Management Plan and has already had the first round of Steering Committee meetings. Goodwyn Mills Cawood was selected for the Western Shore Watershed Management Plan and has the first Steering Committee Meeting next week (September 23). Our end of the year EPA report will be done September 30 and new funding starts October 1.

4. **Committee Reports** (MBNEP Management Conference Co-Chairs)

Science Advisory Committee

Dr. Amy Hunter reported on the July 30, August 7, and September 13 SAC meetings. Committee members, co-chairs, and staff continue extensive discussions regarding coal ash. An off-cycle meeting was held July 30. Dustin Brooks with Alabama Power shared their closure plan. The SAC reconvened the following week on August 7 to discuss potential next steps and the SAC's role (unbiased conduit of accurate scientific information). One next step was to have Marlon Cook review APCO publicly available rule compliance data and information as well as Baykeeper's Plant Barry Report. The group has invited Baykeeper to present October 11. Don Blancher provided an update on Moffatt and Nichol's habitat classification work. Using all kind of tools and technologies (different remote sensing platforms, machine learning, etc.) to develop more objective habitat classification moving forward. There was discussion about use of the evaluation protocol used in the development of the last CCMP looking at habitats, ecosystem services and stressors, as a framework for evaluating pollutants of concern going forward, including coal ash. This protocol would be a compilation of best available scientific expertise on the issues.

Project Implementation Committee

Patric Harper reported on the September 16 PIC meeting. Mark Berte presented on ACF's Interagency Coastal Regulations Program, which has been rebooted and had its first meeting. This program's goal is to have open dialog between state and federal entities on coastal regulatory permitting and enforcement policies.

Mark Anderson from TNC presented an update on Resilient Coastal Sites in the Gulf of Mexico. TNC looked at existing research, used several models (NOAA, USGS, SLAMM, etc.) and integrated them into a single model. They divided the coastline into individual sites, and each was ranked and measured. Results generate a ranking (or score) of resilient characteristics (above average, below average, etc.). Site resilience is defined as: the capacity of a site to sustain biodiversity and function under a changing climate. Resilience characteristics are broken into two groups: Physical (characteristics of the site, is there somewhere for the coastal habitat to go, to migrate) and Condition (ability to facilitate movement/migration).

Jeremiah Kolb from Five Rivers updated on GOMESA Projects – 8 executed agreements:

- 1) Department of Public Health – algal bloom monitoring
- 2) Baldwin County Commission – stream gauge at County Rd 32
- 3) AL Forestry Commission – landowner education on managing forests
- 4) Geological Survey of Alabama – Mobile Bay Delta and MS Sound, sediment quality studies
- 5) ADCNR – boat launch improvements
- 6) TNC – boat ramp improvements at Lightning Point
- 7) Dauphin Island – land acquisition and boat ramp for Aloe Bay
- 8) Daphne – D'Olive Bay dredging

Commissioner Blankenship announced that he knew of at least 3 more projects that had come across his desk. There will be a press conference soon to announce all these projects.

Mary Kate Brown from TNC presented on the Lightning Point Restoration, funded by NFWF GEBF. The project was permitted in April, notice of award was given to contractor, construction is slated to start at the end of

September, and construction is estimated to take 300 days following the NTP. Jacob Blandford presented on the half mile of shoreline protection and enhancement of 12 acres of marsh at Helen Wood Park. Engineering and design has not been started yet.

Christian Miller gave us an update on Watershed Management Plans.

- Wolf Bay: underway, upcoming steering committee meeting.
- Western Shore: have meeting next week 9/23, geared toward climate community resilience, using modeling we already have on hand for community engagement, hoping to fine tune this strategy and have consistency in the WMPs.
- Little Lagoon: Geosyntec under contract, will use a similar approach with climate community resilience, had first steering committee meeting last week, want to include folks from FL in this one.
- Mobile Tensaw Apalachee Delta: Wood was selected, Don Blancher with Moffatt & Nichol will help with project management, hoping to get them under contract in next few weeks.
- D'Olive: we will be updating this plan, working with Ashley Campbell to develop SOW, will be putting this RFQ out soon.
- Fly Creek: will be next RESTORE funded WMP, look for that RFQ in next few months.
- Marlon Cook is working under Vittor and collecting data, finally under contract.
- Marlon is working in Deer River, Fly Creek, and MTA Delta, his data will feed into these WMPs as we move forward.
- Cultural Resource Assessment NFWF report is complete and available online.

Katie Dylewski, MBNEP's newest Restoration Project Manager, gave project updates.

- Montclair Tiawasee: City of Daphne and NRCS project is complete, MBNEP project there is out for bid and working with Volkert to get the last property owner on board
- Gulf Corps will be doing invasive species mgmt. on D'Olive projects
- D4-D6 adaptive management was completed in July and is looking good
- TC1 & TC2: completed back in 2017, has stability issues and will be redesigned and constructed
- Deer River: Thompson is under contract and we are working now to secure property access to being field data collection
- Fowl River Spits: working to get ESA under contract
- Twelve Mile: applied through RAAMS for RESTORE implementation funding, at 60% design with nationwide permit, working with USA students and professors to collect field data
- Litter Gitters: this project is wrapping up in Three Mile. We exceeded our goal by almost 166% and this program will now move over to Dog River watershed in partnership with Dog River Clearwater Revival

Madison Blanchard gave an update on our Rain Barrel program in the Toulmins Spring Branch area in the Three Mile Creek Watershed. Stormwater management using LID rainwater harvest systems (rain barrels) The goal is to reduce urban flooding and provide residents in Prichard a free alternate source of water. So far, with the help of our partners Alabama Power and Greif Packaging, 98 barrels have been installed at 46 residences. Greif donated 200 barrels to start off this program. We will be having several community meetings to sign up homeowners for new rain barrels, get residents together to share ideas on how they use their water or ways they've enhanced their systems, and have an open forum for any questions on maintenance, etc. of their rain barrels. We are also partnering with the Prichard Housing Authority to install rain barrels at around 50 of their residential properties.

Government Networks Committee

MBNEP staffer Christian Miller gave the update on the September 20 GNC meeting. Baldwin County Commissioner Billie Jo Underwood and Mobile County Commissioner Merceria Ludgood will serve as co-chairs. Don Bates presented status of comprehensive coastal litter abatement program. Litter is an issue that resonates strongly with the members of the GNC. Marlon Cook reviewed findings from Plant Barry

hydrogeologic conditions. The committee also discussed potential ways of getting funding for watershed coordinators. Many of the watershed plans recommend the hiring of a watershed coordinator to implement the plans, but funding has been an issue, so that will be a discussion moving forward.

Community Action Committee

Leslie Gahagan gave the CAC update from their September 4 meeting. The CAC has created two Citizens Guide to Hazardous Waste & Recycling, one for Mobile County and one for Baldwin County. The guide outlines where citizens in each county can take items for disposal or recycling, and each document is out for public comment until September 30. Final documents will be available to the public and on the CWF website. The regional coordinator for CoCoRaRaHs spoke to the CAC on the rain fall gathering monitoring system, which is a daily rainfall monitoring system, and its website www.CoCoRaHS.org. He introduced the preferred rain gauge to the citizen monitors and briefly described its components, how it collects rain, and how to accurately measure the rain collected.

Business Resources Committee

Darrellyn Dunmore gave an update on the BRC. Due to all the MBNEP staff changes, we are conducting assessments of members, evaluating participation, and soliciting feedback from members on potential projects, outcomes, and procedures. Herndon Graddick, our newest hire, will be heading the committee. Our goal is to build a more robust and results driven Business Resources Committee.

Community Resources Committee

Dr. Tina Miller-Way gave the update on the September 4 meeting. The CRC has had difficulty with attendance, despite changes in meeting time, days, and place. It's been a struggle to determine the CRC strategy based on the CCMP due to lack of attendance and participation.

5. Old Business

a) Status of activities related to Coal Ash Information Program

- Interviews
 - ✓ Jimbo Meador
 - ✓ Avner Vingosh, Duke University
 - ✓ Abel Russ, Environmental Integrity Project
 - ✓ Marlon Cook
 - ✓ Electric Power Research Institute
- Fact Sheets (draft)
 - ✓ The Law
 - ✓ The Physical Science
- Presentations to SAC
- Abel Russ visits to Baykeeper, Alabama Power
- Background Research
- Film Storyboarding

6. New Business

- EPA approved \$750,000 budget for 2020
- MBNEP Annual Breakfast is December 12, 2019 @ 7:30

7. Other / Announcements

- The meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.