

**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Executive Committee Meeting**  
**Original Oyster House Banquet Hall, Spanish Fort, AL**  
**Friday, June 7, 2019 10:00 am-12:00 pm**

**Attendees:**

Scott Bannon, ADCNR Marine Resources  
Chris Blankenship, ADCNR  
Casi Callaway, Mobile Baykeeper  
Greg Danshy for Ben Malone, USDA-NRCS State Office  
Jennifer Denson, Partners for Environmental Progress  
David England, Dauphin Island Sea Lab  
Troy Ephriam, Ephriam & Assoc. Environmental Consulting, LLC  
Mimi Fearn, Dog River Clearwater Revival  
Leslie Gahagan, City of Foley  
Judy Haner, The Nature Conservancy  
Patric Harper, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Ashley Henderson, Alabama Soil & Water Conservation Committee  
Amy Hunter, ADCNR  
John Lehrter, Dauphin Island Sea Lab  
Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County Commission  
Jimmy Lyons, Alabama State Port Authority  
Justin McDonald, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers  
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  
Beth Thomas, Alabama Power  
John Valentine, Dauphin Island Sea Lab

**MBNEP Staff Present:** *Roberta Swann, Tom Herder, Christian Miller, Tiffany England, Jason Kudulis, Sherry-Lea Bloodworth Botop, Katie Dylewski, and Bethany Dickey*

1. **Introductions/Call to Order:** Commissioner Chris Blankenship called meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. Ms. Swann introduced our two new staff members, Sherry-Lea Bloodworth Botop as Deputy Director, and Katie Dylewski as our new Restoration Project Manager.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Commissioner Blankenship asked for comments or revisions to the minutes from the March 22, 2019 meeting. Jimmy Lyons made a motion to approve and Jennifer Denson seconded the motion.
3. **Director's Report**
  - a) Annual Work Plan: Our annual workplan to EPA is due June 14. This will be our second year in the new CCMP 5-year plan. Our EPA annual appropriation is \$600,000, our projected match dollars from municipalities is \$389,188, and we have a surplus of \$22,988 from last year's workplan budget, equaling \$1,007,176. Our EPA money pays for program administration and project operations. Our work plan budgeted activities include: \$18,000 to jumpstart watershed management plans from planning to implementation; \$5,000 to fund ADA compliant mats for beach water access that will hopefully be leveraged with funds from Mobile County; \$2,500 for training municipal staff on hydrologic models to help with subdivision regulations; \$4,000 for management conference support with \$50,000 leveraged to move the needle on trash, our big initiative for the coming work plan year. Roberta asked for an approval of the Annual Work Plan, which includes appropriation requests to municipalities. Merceria Ludgood made a motion to approve, which Judy Haner seconded. The motion was unanimous.
  - b) CCMP Update Revised Timeline: With our re-authorization we either have to re-write or update our CCMP every 5 years, which ended in 2018. Because of our staff changes recently, we have decided to do a second comment period for the CCMP update. MBNEP will review the existing comments and put it out for comment August 30, 2019 for Executive Committee approval at the September meeting. We will submit to EPA for approval September 30, 2019. Judy Haner suggested highlighting the changes made since the last draft.
  - c) Key Accomplishments: Our rain barrel initiative and partnership with Alabama Power, Grief and Soterra started with 200 rain barrels. MBNEP funded two drainage studies that recommended rainwater catchment systems. One goal for this initiative is concentrating as many rain barrels as possible in a community with localized flooding. Troy Ephriam suggests placing 4 barrels at each house. He will be

meeting with the housing board to try to increase the storage capacity at industrial residences in the Toulmins Spring Breach headwaters. We had Conservation Corps members installing rain barrels last summer, which was expensive, but now Alabama Power has the volunteer labor.

MBNEP staff toured the AM/NS Calvert steel mill this week and will be starting a relationship to partner on invasive species management in Three Mile Creek. We have the newly completed Invasive Species Control Management Plan, which is very prescriptive, so we can start this new partnership quickly.

An RFP for the Deer River Coastal Marsh Stabilization and Restoration Engineering & Design closed last week and the selections are ongoing. We have entered into a subcontract agreement with Mobile County for the Dauphin Island Causeway Shoreline Restoration Feasibility Study, Engineering & Design project. The team consists of representatives from MBNEP, MASGC, National Marine Fisheries Services, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, ALDOT, ADCNR Marine Resources, and ADEM with Tina Sanchez as the lead. The Harrison Tract acquisition is a high priority for Dog River Clearwater Revival. Mobile County will take the lead on the project execution.

There are 11 ongoing projects in Three Mile Creek, for which there is a project group and an outreach group that have each met 3 times for discussion. Projects include: Litter Gitters, SWAT, 12 Mile Creek, Langan Park Lake dredging, etc.

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

##### **Science Advisory Committee**

Dr. John Lehrter reported on the May 10 SAC meeting. The Fowl River Marsh Study team shared their results with the SAC. These results were used to develop the RFQ for the Fowl River Marsh and Shoreline Stabilization and Restoration Engineering & Design project, due today. Dottie Byron and Ken Heck gave a presentation on SAV restoration and monitoring program.

##### **Project Implementation Committee**

Judy Haner reported on the May 16 PIC meeting. The Nature Conservancy is doing national work on resilient coastal sites along the eastern seaboard for restoration looking at sea level rise, tides, marsh migration, etc. There was also an update on the Coastal Alabama Restoration Tool that TNC is working on. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers' \$16 million South Atlantic Study is doing assessments on resilience by looking at climate change, sea level rise, etc. and focused on the local level. There are two tiers, looking at economic damages, environmental habitat effects, and social aspects.

Jason Kudulis, taking Paul Lammer's place, gave an update on some D'Olive Watershed projects. Project D4-D6's adaptive management was completed in April. He showed photos of projects DAF1 (Golf Course Trib), which is behind the Phelps home, and DA3, which's change order is moving rock downstream. Tiawasee Montclair is our next stream restoration project with Daphne Utilities and adjacent homeowners. NRCS has a 900 ft. Tiawasee Montclair stream restoration project right in the middle of the Lake Forest subdivision that the City of Daphne is overseeing. Jason recapped the information on the Deer River & Fowl River Spits Engineering & Design RFQs. Katie Dylewski, our new restoration project manager, gave an update on the Three Mile Creek projects ongoing. 12 Mile Creek is at 60% design and MBNEP is working on the budget for construction, which will start late 2019 to early 2020 with around 1,800 linear feet to stabilize. MBNEP continues to work on litter abatement with Osprey Initiative through the GOMP grant, with 9 Litter Gitters installed and one to go. Working with a consultant on a Ditch the Disposables campaign, and using EPA's ETAP program, we will hopefully be able to implement alternative packaging with the area's businesses.

##### **Government Networks Committee**

Commissioner Ludgood gave the update on the June 7 GNC meeting. Commissioner Billie Jo Underwood was voted in as the new Baldwin County co-chair for the committee. Tammy Herrington gave a legislation update. Representative Wilcox's litter bill, House Bill 500, passed and will be a huge help in the war against litter. MBNEP will do a few one-pager updates to circulate to the municipalities (and communities) to provide resources on how to implement the litter bill.

#### **Community Action Committee**

Dr. Mimi Fearn gave the CAC update from their May 8 meeting. Members discussed other opportunities that are more than just water quality monitoring, with guest speakers from Master Environmental Educators Program and the Northern Gulf of Mexico Sentinel Site Cooperative. The CAC is still developing its Citizen's Guide to Hazardous Waste. The Alabama Water Watch meeting will be located in Mobile on June 22. Water monitors are branching out and using CoCoRaHS rain gauges. MBNEP continues to reimburse groups for monitoring supplies.

#### **Business Resources Committee**

No update due to staff changes

#### **Community Resources Committee**

Casi Callaway gave the update on the June 4 meeting. The CRC feels like MBNEP is a community convener and that all the committees should find a way to work together for the implementation of the CCMP. The committee also discussed the opportunities for educating the community on trash, the litter bill, the ban on the ban, etc. Ms. Callaway says she looks forward to a Management Conference wide coordination meeting on trash.

#### 5. Other / Announcements

- **Watershed Planning**- Christian Miller gave an update on watershed planning. We have received the draft of the Wolf Bay WMP. The Western Shore WMP (Goodwyn Mills Cawood) is in the watershed characterization phase. Geosyntec has been chosen for the Little Lagoon/Perdido WMP. We are moving quicker towards the Delta WMP and Don Blancher will be the project manager. MBNEP is working with Emery Baya to develop a scope for the D'Olive WMP update. Fly Creek will be next. We already have the baseline data assessment from Marlon Cook & Vittor. The West Fowl River WMP is getting final adjustments after comments and will be complete soon. We have received the final product of the Cultural Resource Assessment.
- **Project Database**- Our project database is about 90% complete now, so we will be able to show our new reports by our next meeting in September.
- **Coal Ash Pond Closure**- The MBNEP has been asked by several elected officials about the possibility of MBNEP weighing in on the issue of Barry Steam plant's coal ash pond closure. MBNEP's response was that although we would not take a position on one side or the other, we would be willing to act as a convener of all stakeholders with an interest in protecting our estuarine resources. To this extent, MBNEP offered to amass scientifically accurate information related to the coal ash pond closure that captures the pros and cons of the alternatives put forth in the regulations. In response to the request, MBNEP invited Scott Story, the ADEM lead over the CCR rule to educate the GNC about the issue and the regulations and the Status of Alabama Power's closure plan as well as an overall timeline of events. The GNC had an extensive discussion about ensuring the public be educated about both options. This led to a request by the GNC for the NEP to be an information resource to the members to provide scientifically accurate and balanced information on the topic. We will send out the GNC minutes with that excerpt.

There was general agreement among Executive Committee members that NEP amass scientifically accurate information on the coal ash pond closure issue and help to distill for elected officials and their constituencies, looking to elected officials to provide what they need. As conveners bringing both side to the table to talk out the issue and for all to better understand the different perspectives.

Casi Callaway stated that Mobile Baykeeper has spent \$50,000 toward studying the issue and there is a disagreement between AL Power and Mobile Baykeeper as to what is the appropriate action to take. She cautioned the MBNEP that Alabama Power and ADEM seem to be aligned on the issue and welcomed the opportunity for NEP to convene all sides so that all have a clear understanding of the risks associated with each option.

Judy Haner, speaking for herself and not as a representative of TNC, stated that she did go on the Barry tour and thinks this issue is a challenge because, 50 years ago, when the decision was made to mix coal ash with water and put in ponds, the intent was related to safety. Now we know differently and need to be able to understand the risks and potential unintended consequences of either option, not just one. She too, agreed the MBNEP was the appropriate entity to bring all sides to the table to better understand the risks associated with the pending decision.

Commissioner Blankenship requested that as a part of the information campaign, MBNEP make sure to explain the EPA rule so that all understand how we got to where we are now with respect to the issue.

- Commissioner Blankenship introduced Keri Coumanis to the group for those who have not met her yet.

The meeting adjourned at 11:19 a.m.