



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Business Resources Committee
September 17, 2024, 10:00 am – 11:30 am
Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce**



Minutes

In Attendance

Kendall Dexter, Mobile County Wildlife and Conservation Association
Michael Capella, Mitchell College of Business
Christina Wassenaar, Mitchell College of Business
Frank Smith, BankPlus Wealth Management
John Ruzic, Porchlight LLC
Don Bates, Osprey Initiative
Chandra Wright, Lodge at Gulf State Park
Wiley Blankenship, Coastal Alabama Partnership
Eliska Morgan, Thompson Engineering
Jennifer Denson, Partners for Environmental Progress
John Barton, TC Boiler
Beth Thomas, Alabama Power

Staff

Henry Perkins
Emmie Mayson

The meeting was called to order at 10:08AM. All attendees introduced themselves and their organizations, and the last meeting's minutes were accepted without discussion.

Old Business

Henry Perkins opened the meeting by presenting the final report prepared by Christensen Global titled "Strategic Leadership for a Thriving & Resilient Future in Coastal Alabama". The main focus of this meeting is to encourage BRC members to start thinking about how the private sector can get involved with potential plans with the Mobile Bay NEP, and how it can potentially provide funding to those plans through the EPA. As the Mobile Bay NEP is building their new CCMP, they want to know what issues the public are concerned about. Feedback will be gathered through the survey sent to all attendees.

New Business

The main stressors identified for the CCMP, through the stressor evaluation, watershed management plans, and state of the bay process:

- Sedimentation

- Sources of sedimentation are upstream dams, increases in development, impervious sources, and dredging.
- Threats from sedimentation include increased turbidity
- Waste management
 - Sources of waste are plastic and disposables pollution, agricultural nutrient runoff, and sewage leaks.
 - Key questions to address with regards to waste management: Who needs to be involved? What can the private sector do to get involved? How can the EPA fund the changes you would like to make?
 - Jennifer Denson of PEP noted that the company Nyad from the UK in talks with the state of Alabama for new sustainable sewage treatment options
- Managing Growth
 - Baldwin county is one of the fastest growing counties in the country
 - Key questions to address when discussing managing growth:
 - How do we increase resilience?
 - How do we maintain the high quality of life and environment that we currently enjoy for the new development and citizens?
 - How can we financially benefit from protecting our bay and environment?
- Henry raised the question of how and if the NEP should react to emergencies, and what is appropriate for this committee to do in response.
- Our next meeting will be held at the National Maritime Museum of the Gulf of Mexico on October 24, 2024 at 8:00am.
 - We need at least 10 attendees.

There was an open discussion that captured the following points:

- Henry stressed the value for members in reviewing the interviews from Amy Christensen's Final Report.
 - Appendices contain capital opportunities.
- Dr. Wassenaar that with their involvement in business and psychology, that they would be better suited to more focus groups than just Scientific Advisory
 - Henry responded that tables and groups at October meeting may be shuffled
- John Barton and Don Bates expressed interest in a distribution center near Mobile for biodegradable takeout containers, cups, and utensils so that Mobile restaurants could have more access to sustainable materials.
 - John is looking for a large 3D printer.
 - Don Bates warned the committee of the continued presence of greenwashing of products advertised as biodegradable.
- The committee discussed the current dredging of the channel by the US Corps of Engineers and the intent to sue by Mobile Baykeeper
 - Difference between side casting and strategic thin layer placing
 - Mobile Baykeeper proposes all dredged material be put into the Gulf, but this project would be expensive
 - MBNEP would like for dredged material to be used for beneficial use projects
 - Dredged material used as buttresses to support Fowl River shorelines from boat wake
 - Dredged material from the Theodore channel used to support Deer River
 - Gaillard Island in the Bay was instrumental in saving the local Brown Pelican

population

- Rabbit Creek Rail Spur was addressed. Where is the balance between needing more space for warehousing due to an increase in the shipping industry and needing less impervious space due to the sedimentation threat?
- John Ruzic discussed their work with subsidized housing and non-traditional development. How can they create a relationship with the estuary and our waterways?
 - Proposed plugging in community to the surrounding Three Mile Creek
 - Want to ensure a balance in the community, and not build housing that are divided between socioeconomic class
- Don Bates argues that the current generation is participating in environmental work because of their passion for the environment, not necessarily because of the pay.
 - Should use that momentum to try new possibilities, uses Patagonia's attempt to turn their discarded clothes into diesel as an example of productive trying and failing.

The main takeaways from this meeting were that all members need to complete the survey, members should think about the problems addressed in the meeting and discussion and come prepared with ideas for the October meeting and think about where the junction of business and sustainability in coastal Alabama may be.

Meeting adjourned at 11:04