



## Mobile Bay National Estuary Program

### Business Resources Committee Meeting

International Trade Center

May 23rd, 2017

The Business Resources Committee of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) met on Tuesday, May 23rd, 2017 at the International Trade Center in Mobile, AL. The meeting was attended by: Co-chairs Jennifer Denson, Partners for Environmental Progress and Darrelyn Dunmore, Strategic Wealth Specialists; Jack Conger, Stirling Properties; Don Bates, Thompson Engineering; Brian Carson, Hargrove Engineers; Patty Howell, Mobile Chamber; Colette Boehm, Colette Boehm Freelance; Eliska Morgan, Al. Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources; Ben Stimpson, Canfor Lumber; Renie Kennemar, Thompson Engineering; Beth Thomas, Alabama Power; Dr. Raymond Macguire, Singing River Hospital; Judy Haner, The Nature Conservancy; Chandra Wright, Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Tourism; MBNEP staff- Rick Frederick and Roberta Swann.

**Mission of the BRC: To advocate for streamlined regulations and balanced business practices that are in the best interest of the region's economic and environmental resources.**

#### *Meeting Summary:*

- *Committee updated on MBNEP projects- Restoration project on Mon Louis Island in the Fowl River Watershed, Coastal Alabama Conservation Corps, Water Rangers Data and Pollution Reporting App, and Create a Clean Water Future campaign*
- *Update on Litter Gitter Small Stream Litter Trap*
- *Recycling efforts added to the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup*
- *AfricaTown Business Community Panel*
- *Support for the National Estuary Program*
- *Habitat Restoration Plan survey*

1). **WELCOME AND UPDATES:** Co-chairs Jennifer Denson and Darrelyn Dunmore opened the meeting with a welcome and introductions, including first-time attendees Jack Conger and Raymond

Macguire. After introductions, Rick Frederick gave an overview of several projects/activities funded by or involving the Mobile Bay NEP.

Highlighted projects taking place in the watersheds:

- Water Rangers- A web-based smartphone app created to empower citizen scientist. BRC members were encouraged to download the app and become water quality monitors, as well as document any happenings taking place in our environment, i.e. a rare bird or plant, manatee sighting, pollution issues like trash dumps, tar balls, or sewage overflows. This quality data network will allow us to cast a larger net to better understand trends and conditions in coastal Alabama watersheds.
- The Alabama Conservation and Resiliency Corps- A report was given on the progress the corps has made in eradicating invasive species in the lower Three Mile Creek area, such as popcorn trees, privet, and elephant ears. The 10 young adults from the area are being funded by a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant that was secured in partnership between MBNEP, MLKjr Ave. Redevelopment Corp., and Student Conservation Assoc. 2 team leaders from SCA continue to oversee this 6-month pilot project. The corps has also participated in marsh plantings in the Fowl River Watershed and D'Olive Creek Watershed, as well as delivered presentations to local classrooms, educating grade school students on watersheds and their experiences in environmental stewardship. With this session concluding at the end of July, partners are investigating ways to make this a sustainable program going forward.
- The northern tip of Mon Louis Island restoration project (funded by oil spill money through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation) has reached completion. The tip restoration was completed in early May 2017 once final grading/excavating and plantings occurred. The Thompson Engineering designed project, overseen by the MBNEP, was one of the first BP funded projects in the State of Alabama.

Rick Frederick updated the committee on the *Create a Clean Water Future* campaign- 1). Several new members, especially in the northern part of the state, have recently become partners. 2). The new 'Rack Card' for members to distribute to local businesses was made available at the meeting. 3). The new Alabama Oyster Shell Recycling Program was recognized as a CCWF partner and an example of how this type program can promote the campaign. The committee was encouraged to visit the website, join the campaign, and provide suggested tips and companies that can be referenced on the site.

<http://www.cleanwaterfuture.com/>

2). **LITTER GITTER:** Don Bates with Thompson Engineering provided an overview and reminded committee members of the November 2016 cleanup of the Maple Street tributary, one of the most litter-impacted streamways in Mobile County. After a very successful amphibious cleanup, Don installed a “Litter Gitter” small stream litter trap at this location and has since monitored the site and collected the trash. A second phase of this cleanup occurred on March 24, 2017 and proved the “Litter Gitter” is working, as much less trash was collected and limited “new” trash was found downstream. This site is proving to be a showcase for small stream litter collection, and has garnered attention from Mayor Stimpson and other leaders in the community.

As a result of the pilot site on Maple St., the City of Mobile has approved and identified 3 locations to install additional Litter Gitters in the Three Mile Creek watershed. Partners for Environmental Progress (PEP) and the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program have collaborated to sponsor these first 3 “Litter Gitters” for 90 days. Don Bates formed Osprey Initiative, LLC to oversee and maintain the traps. Once Corp of Engineer permits are obtained, the litter traps will be installed with an installation goal of mid- June. Additional interest shown in other watersheds could soon lead to deployment of the litter traps in other small streams on both sides of the bay. As the program is developed and fine-tuned, sponsorships, grants, municipal funds, etc. for additional sites will be sought.

\*Don also announced to the committee that an exciting addition to the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup will be an effort to incorporate recycling opportunities for trash collected during the cleanup event, which will be held on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Thompson Engineering, the Weeks Bay Foundation, and Alabama Coastal Cleanup will partner with TerraCycle Company to provide plastics recycling at many of the over 30 cleanup zones around the bay.

3). **AFRICATOWN:** Ben Stimpson provided information on recent efforts surrounding the revitalization of the Africatown community, located 3 miles north of Mobile. This area, one of the most historic neighborhoods in Alabama, is where the last documented slave ship from Africa, the Clotilda, landed in the U.S. in 1860. After years of clashes between the community and industry, the creation of the non-profit Africatown Business Community Panel has brought community leaders together with industrial representatives such as Kimberly Clark and the Alabama State Port Authority, and seemingly has everyone moving in same direction. As a result, the first ever Africatown 5K/1 mile Fun Run on the Cochran Bridge will take place on June 24<sup>th</sup> with proceeds going to the urban gardens program and a possible farmer’s market. Loftier goals include construction of a history museum highlighting the Clotilda, to be located next to the historic cemetery, the final resting place of many of the original slaves. A full article on the partnerships, how to get involved, and the 5K appeared on Al.com and was posted online May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

4). **NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM SUPPORT:** Jennifer Denson and Darrelyn Dunmore encouraged BRC members to support the National Estuary Program by contacting Washington D.C. legislators.

In the wake of the recent proposed Federal Budget for FY 2018, a letter supporting and highlighting accomplishments of the National Estuary Program was provided to committee members, along with addresses of Alabama legislators and other influential officials. Members were asked to send the letter (or their own version) to ensure the Mobile Bay NEP and the other 27 NEPs remain in place and receive federal funding to continue their mission to protect America's valuable estuaries. Jennifer and Darrelyn asks all BRC members to contact them for additional information.

5). **HABITAT RESTORATION PLAN SURVEY:** Judy Haner with The Nature Conservancy conducted a survey using a powerpoint and clickers to gauge BRC member's perspective on what functions the habitats serve in relation to the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) values- Access, Beaches and Shorelines, Fish, Heritage/Culture, Resiliency, Water Quality. The results from this survey, which will also be conducted at all committee meetings within Management Conference, will help design the project prioritization app in the Alabama Watershed Network.

6). **Closing-** Rick Frederick asked all members of the BRC to continue to share MBNEP news and information through their networks and social media outlets, and encouraged members to invite others to the next BRC meeting.