



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program  
Executive Committee Meeting  
Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, Spanish Fort, AL  
November 2, 2012**

**In attendance:**

Darrellyn Bender, Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce; John Bowie, GOMP; Casi Callaway, Mobile Baykeeper; Mike Dardeau, DISL; Jennifer Denson, PEP; Jeff DeQuattro, The Nature Conservancy; Commissioner Charles Gruber, Baldwin County Commission; Gunter Guy, ADCNR; Patty Howell, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce; Commissioner Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County Commission; Jimmy Lyons, Alabama State Port Authority; Eliska Morgan, Office of Representative Jo Bonner; Patti Powell, ADCNR-SLD; Ben Scaggs, GOMP; Ed Struthers, Fowl River Civic Association; Dr. LaDon Swann, MASGC/AUMERC; Dr. John Valentine, DISL. Remotely: Bob Howard, Region IV EPA; Dr. Rusty Wright, Auburn University

Staff present: Roberta Swann, Christian Miller, Kelley Barfoot, Kristen O'Keefe; Tom Herder

**1. Call to order:** After around-the-table self-introductions, Ben Scaggs called the meeting to order at 1014.

**2. Approval of minutes:** Mr. Scaggs asked if there were any comments or revisions to the minutes of the August 10 Executive Committee meeting. Hearing none, he called for a motion to approve the minutes. Casi Callaway made the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Gruber and carried unanimously.

**3. Financial Report: Roberta Swann**

Ms. Swann provided an overview of the budget reflecting expenditures through October 1.

Ms. Swann stated there was an Assessment and Monitoring amount of \$20K, and \$12.8K of that will be allocated for a Bon Secour sediment study to be performed through a partnership between ADCNR and the GSA. Ms. Swann has spoken with Marlon Cook of GSA. Ms. Swann has talked with Mr. Cook about the Three Mile Creek Watershed Planning Process, but with no real sediment issues associated with TMC, he discussed some issues related to surface water.

Ms. Swann noted that total Biological Integrity funds are reserved for Ashley McDonald, a DISL graduate student, to fund her in her graduate research project involving post-implementation monitoring of restoration projects.

With regard to funding for the D'Olive Watershed, Ms. Swann reported that \$25,000 was allocated to support outreach related to the Joe's Branch restoration project that involves construction of a step pool conveyance system demonstration project.

Mr. Scaggs asked for any questions before a call to approve the budget, and Ms. Callaway asked if the \$71,215 for Watershed Partnership would be allocated for additional partnership for Three Mile Creek or reserved for overage. Ms. Swann stated that projects funded through the initial RFQ for municipalities and counties to develop partnership opportunities have not been completed. Projects such as the Wolf Creek stream restoration and projects in Orange Beach would need to be completed before the NEP begins another RFQ is released.

After asking for a clarification of budget protocols, Mr. Scaggs called for a motion to approve of the budget. Commissioner Ludgood moved to approve the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Lyons, and approved unanimously.

#### **Mon Louis Island Living Shorelines Budget Adjustment**

Ms. Swann discussed the Mon Louis Island Living Shorelines project and reported that J&W Marine Enterprises provided the low bid of \$127,756. With unanticipated costs for engineering design, continuing engineering oversight, and geotechnical analysis, a deficit of \$12,562 is outstanding on the budget, and Ms. Swann asked that the EC authorize reallocation of that amount towards this project. Ms. Callaway provided a motion, seconded by Ed Struthers, unanimously approved by the EC.

#### **4. Committee Reports**

##### **Science Advisory Committee (SAC): Mike Dardeau**

Mr. Dardeau reported that the SAC was scheduled to meet with the EPA Headquarters Healthy Watersheds Initiative (HWI) team and Cadmus on Monday, October 29, but the meeting was cancelled due to Hurricane Sandy.

He explained that Ashley McDonald's work involves sampling and working up data at three restoration sites to measure the pre- and post-implementation differences in ecosystem service provision. These data will be helpful in identifying indicators for the Biological Conditions Gradient to aid in tracking progress in the watershed.

##### **Project Implementation Committee (PIC): Jeff DeQuattro**

Mr. DeQuattro reported that the August 2 meeting focused on the development of criteria to determine priority areas and activities in the face of CCMP revision and RESTORE Act passage. A small working group was established, and they have met five to six times with goals of using SAC findings and assessments of most stressed habitat types and to collect data for prioritization guidance.

Since August, working group members charged with data collection have delivered robust data sets for GIS mapping development by Brian West and Kelley Barfoot of the MBNEP. These maps, near completion, will be used to focus prioritization efforts. Included on the maps are all projects identified for RESTORE Act funding, and Mr. DeQuattro told EC members to ensure that all projects are represented. If they are not, he recommended that Tom Herder of the MBNEP be contacted to add projects to the list.

The next step is to reconvene the PIC for a "rollout" of the maps for further prioritization work.

##### **Community Action Committee (CAC): Casi Callaway**

Ms. Callaway noted that the CAC is focusing on one major product: a stormwater marketing campaign. She reported that key watershed, grassroots, and municipal and county stakeholders

have been pulled together to work with a public relations firm to brainstorm and ascertain community perspective to educate various organizations about educating their specific audiences.

A first set of taglines and a messaging platform are currently under review. A next meeting is planned for November 30. The CAC is considering using focus groups to ensure campaign effectiveness. The goal is to make the campaign uniform and still accessible to all audiences

Mr. DeQuattro asked about campaign timelines, and Ms. Callaway responded that they would like to have a public service announcement airing before the next rainy season (April 2013) plus a website that can be broadly branded for different organizations and audiences. She indicated that the target of March/April 2013 for a major public rollout was “on track.”

Commissioner Gruber explained county-specific differences in the education levels for the two counties, with Baldwin County having experienced the Stormwater Coalition campaign and referendum in 2010. The conversation turned to whether two separate campaigns should be conducted. Ms. Callaway expressed the thought that more education is necessary to effect personal behavior modifications before anyone is asked to “write checks.” In response to a query by Ms. Swann, Commissioner Ludgood responded that if the messages could be separated, some of the “baggage” associated with the Baldwin County campaign could be avoided. Dr. Swann commented on experiences related to social marketing campaigns, where solutions related to behavior changes rather than service charges or “rain taxes” could be inclusive and broad. Some discussion ensued regarding the nature of a campaign – educational or social marketing – and whether the connection and regional nature of campaigns in the two counties can be maintained. The value of education relating to stormwater issues was broadly recognized, and Ms. Swann suggested incorporating HWI data to compare watersheds facing different levels of urbanization.

**Government Networks Committee (GNC): Charles Gruber**

Commissioner Gruber felt that new ground was broken with the August Government Networks Committee meeting. He said that the GNC would move further towards getting elected officials and governments to understand the value of MBNEP.

**Business Resources Committee (BRC): Darrelyn Bender**

Ms. Swann explained that this Committee was a new iteration of the former Community Resources Committee. Ms. Bender reported that a mission statement and three goals were developed by this new committee and that she would share them to the EC via email. The group that met consisted of the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce, the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, the State Port Authority, PEP, and Eliska Morgan.

Ms. Bender said that the group is looking to see who is missing “from the table” so that we can bring them in. One goal is to get businesses to tell the stories that demonstrate successes or offer opportunities for improved stewardship.

**Old Business: Roberta Swann**

D’Olive Creek Watershed/Joes Branch Restoration. Ms. Swann reported that two bids were received for the project – Southern Excavating LLC and Northern State Environmental. Southern Excavating provided the low bid, was contracted, and, with all permits and contracts in place, received a notice to proceed. Site preparation and wetlands clean out are currently in progress. She noted that David Smart and Southern Excavating are committed to leaving as many trees as possible. The construction period is 75 days. Planting will be undertaken during the dormant period of early spring.

This project represents the fruits of collaboration between GSA, ALDOT, ADEM and ADCNR. It provides a template for implementation protocol that starts with Sediment studies by GSA, followed by development of a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan, and culminating in project implementation.

Another achievement related to this project is the formation of an Intergovernmental Task Force which, in addition to oversight of physical implementation activities, is working on consistency in subdivision regulations between different jurisdictions.

Mr. Scaggs asked if pre- and post-construction education efforts were undertaken to make goals and accomplishments related to this project clear to the public. Ms. Swann responded that this will be done. She noted that no public access is available to this particular site, but that retention areas will be set up across Highway 31 with a public demonstration project at nearby Alligator Alley. She reported that Estuary Corps is also addressing this issue. Ms. Bender added that a couple of "great newspaper articles" have already appeared.

Eight Mile Creek Watershed/Reading Park Stream Restoration. Ms. Swann reported that construction activity to restore a degraded stream at Prichard's Jackson Reading Park was completed on Thursday, November 1. This tributary was identified in the Eight Mile Creek Watershed Management Plan as sensitive and valuable

Deer River Watershed/Mon Louis Island Shoreline. After three years of hard work, a living shorelines project designed interactively by South Coast Engineers and the six shoreline property owners living along a 670-foot stretch of erosion degraded shoreline is about to be implemented. J&W Marine Enterprises submitted a low bid of \$127K for construction of the project. A Corps of Engineers Permit has been issued and State approval is pending. A contract will be developed early next week, and construction is anticipated to be completed by the end of the year.

ADCNR-State Lands Director Patti Powell said that the project is a good way to demonstrate the benefits of such projects.

Concurrently, Coastal Alabama Living Shorelines Policies, Rules, and Model Ordinance Manual by Dr. Chris Boyd of Mississippi State University and MASGC Legal Center is currently under review. This document will support future efforts to promote living shorelines as an alternative to hard armoring.

Three Mile Creek Watershed Transformation Planning. Ms. Swann stated that an RFQ had been issued and the deadline is scheduled for November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012. At this moment, fifteen firms have shown interest and interviews will be held November 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. The start date for planning is scheduled for December, 2012.

Thirteen members have been identified for a selection committee to conduct the interview process. The committee includes members from the State, cities, counties, Prichard, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MAWSS, and the Mobile Infirmary. Commissioner Ludgood inquired as to why USA Medical Center had not been included in the selection committee. Ms. Swann asked if she could supply a contact for USA Medical Center to invite a member into the process and Commissioner Ludgood agreed.

Ms. Swann expressed that the city was onboard and enthusiastic about utilizing Community Block Grant Development funds for the planning project. The planning would be looking at the impacts of climate change as well. Ms. Callaway confirmed that Mobile Baykeeper is working

with other firms to conduct outreach and has an Environmental Justice grant from the EPA to connect human health with the health of the environment.

New CCMP. Ms. Swann informed the committee that the MBNEP is in the process of creating six teams to develop strategies for the next CCMP. Each team comprises of a captain and a team of 15 to 20 experts related to one of the six assets that people value about living in coastal Alabama. These six assets are Access and Open Spaces, Beaches and Shorelines, Fish, Heritage and Culture, Environmental Health and Resiliency, and Water Quality.

The team captains are:

- **Access and Open Spaces** – Mr. Phillip Hinesley, ADCNR and Ms. Colette Boehm, Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Tourism.
- **Beaches and Shorelines** – Dr. Scott Douglass, University of South Alabama
- **Fish** – Dr. Sean Powers, University of South Alabama and Mr. Kevin Anson, ADCNR
- **Heritage and Culture** – Dr. Greg Waselkov, University of South Alabama
- **Environmental Health/Resiliency** – Dr. LaDon Swann, MASGC and Dr. Tracie Sempier, MASGC
- **Water Quality** – Dr. John Lehrter, EPA and Mr. Scott Brown, ADEM

The MBNEP is currently developing homework packets to distribute to the team members mid-November. The teams will convene on Thursday, November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012 for the CCMP Priority Development Summit to establish a strategy for the next CCMP.

The CCMP Unveiling Reception will be held on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012. The event will be a two hour wine and cheese reception that targets government officials and business leaders though out Mobile and Baldwin counties. An introduction will be given by Congressman Joe Bonner, followed by a keynote speech by Mr. Andy Andrews. During the reception, six stations representing each value will be set up around the building, manned by the team captains to discuss their specific value with the guests.

The new CCMP will be released for public comment next January. Ms. Swann wants to involve other leaders in the effort of educating the public about the new CCMP so that they understand it is not just a MBNEP strategy, but it impacts the entire community.

### **New Business**

Ms. Swann reported that the MBNEP Newsletter is scheduled to be released within the next two weeks. Ms. Debbie Foster was hired to write the newsletter and she is doing a great job.

Dr. Swann stated that the strategic plan for MASGC has been finalized. Currently, MASGC is interested in addressing problems that can be solved with research. Proposals for research from the committee are welcomed and can be recommended from now until December.

Mr. Scaggs reported that the Gulf of Mexico program RFP process did not have a strong enough measure between goals and accomplishments and it was decided to take a time for review. In December, there will be a series of webinars to encourage dialogue in order to reimagine the RFP process, specifically addressing goals, measures, and outcomes. Once necessary revisions have been made, the RFP process will be released.

Mr. Scaggs is also the GOMP representative to the RESTORE Act. He stated that they are getting organized and plan to have a meeting in Mobile on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012. GOMP has been asked to

provide input regarding the structure of the meeting. The predominate concern revolves around financing the restoration projects and it is unclear if the Department of Treasury will fund projects case by case or use a different method. Though the RESTORE Act provides limited clarity, its intention is a state-centered piece of legislation. Reactively, it is best to let the state do what they need to do to limit the frustration of the public regarding excessive time. The federal government is concerned that regulatory hurdles could further delay the RESTORE Act's funded implementation. Ms. Callaway asked if project selection criteria had been released. Mr. Scaggs responded no, stating that the plan will need to take into account varying state concerns and priorities and the chair needs consensus from other federal partners. The best we can do is support the EPA and not get in the way of their efforts.

Ms. Callaway asked if the ecosystem task force was moving forward with the in the creation of a citizen's advisory committee. Mr. Scaggs reported no, the task force is sun setting. The agency has provided a list to the RESTORE council and it is considering using the list to gage public input.

Ms. Swann announced that Bays and Bayous would be held in Biloxi, Mississippi on November 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and encouraged the committee to register. Dr. Swann stated that the support of the sponsors have been critical, considering the expectation of nearly 400 participants.

Mr. Scaggs called for any questions or comments.

Motion to adjourn meeting was called at 11:35 a.m. by Ms. Swann. Seconded by Mr. Lyons, the motion carried unanimously.