



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Executive Committee Meeting  
June 16, 2023  
10:00 am-12:00 pm**

**Hybrid Meeting:  
International Trade Center, Killian Room  
[Zoom Virtual](#)**

**AGENDA**

Meeting Objectives

- a) Approve Reprogramming of Funds to Close out Existing EPA Grant
- b) Approve Workplan for 2023-2024

1. Introductions/Call to Order/Welcome
2. Approval of Minutes- March 31, 2023
3. Committee Reports-
  - a) Finance
  - b) Science Advisory
  - c) Project Implementation
  - d) Government Networks
  - e) Community Action
  - f) Business Resources
4. Director's Report
  - a) Presentation of Status of Activities
    - i. Status of Bylaws
5. Old Business
  - a) Co-Chair Re-election process
6. New Business
7. Other/Announcements/Adjourn

**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Executive Committee Meeting**  
**International Trade Center, Killian Room/Zoom Virtual**  
**Friday, June 16, 2023, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

**In-person Attendees:**

Scott Bannon, ADCNR Marine Resources  
Chris Blankenship, ADCNR  
Leslie Gahagan, City of Foley  
Judy Haner, The Nature Conservancy  
Patric Harper, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Amy Hunter, ADCNR RESTORE

Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County Commission  
Justin McDonald, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Eliska Morgan, Thompson Engineering  
William Puckett, Alabama Soil & Water Conservation  
Committee  
John Valentine, Dauphin Island Sea Lab

**Virtual Attendees:**

Jennifer Denson, Partners for Environmental  
Progress  
Fred Leslie, ADEM  
Ben Malone, USDA NRCS  
Catherine Reaves, Alabama State Port Authority  
(proxy for John Driscoll)

Elizabeth Roney, Congressman Jerry Carl's Office  
LaDon Swann, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant  
Consortium  
Beth Thomas, Alabama Power Company  
Chris Thomas, U.S. EPA Region 4

**MBNEP Staff Present:** *Shemika Brown, Bethany Hudson, Jason Kudulis, Marti Messick, Christian Miller, Blair Morrison, Henry Perkins, Vanessa Romero, and Roberta Swann*

***The purpose of the Executive Committee is to provide general guidance, direction, and support for the Program. Develop policies on issues and funding; review/approve work plans and budgets; evaluate the performance of the Director; and set financial goals for non-federal share.***

**Key Takeaways:**

- *Reprogramming of funds to close out existing five-year EPA Grant (APPROVED)*
- *Fiscal Year 2024 EPA Grant/Workplan (APPROVED)*
- *Committee Co-chair re-elections*
- *Bylaws*

1. **Introductions/Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 10:03 am. The group did a quick round of introductions. Chris Thomas acknowledged the sudden passing of EPA Region 4's Chris Plymale. He was a great supporter of MBNEP and proud of the work accomplished with all our partners. He will be greatly missed.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Commissioner Chris Blankenship asked for comments or revisions to the minutes from the March 31, 2023 meeting. Hearing no remarks, Judy Haner made a motion to approve, and Commissioner Merceria Ludgood seconded the motion.
3. **Committee Reports (MBNEP Management Conference Co-Chairs)**

**Finance Committee**

Jennifer Denson reported on the June 12 Finance Committee meeting. The meeting focused on our EPA budget approvals as follows:

- **Fiscal Year 2024 Match Projections:** The \$850,000 EPA funding requires 100% in matched dollars, which come from State, local governments, and other grant funds available for match. Our State and local budget is \$507,000 for the fiscal year 2024, which includes \$100,000 from the State of Alabama, \$90,000 from ADCNR, \$75,000 from both Baldwin and Mobile counties, and ten municipalities in the

two counties. The projections are solid, but we must continue communicating our value to these municipalities to solidify partnerships with some of the newer requests.

- Reprogramming of funds to close out the current five-year EPA Grant: To close out our existing EPA five-year grant, we've requested a no-cost extension for two years to complete the *State of Alabama's Estuaries and Coasts* and new Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) publications. We have a little over \$280,000 to spend which will consist of:
  - Working with a Science in Residence Team and the SAC to publish a report on the State of Alabama's Estuaries and Coast to communicate status and trends of environmental conditions;
  - Completing a baseline study for the Eight Mile Creek Watershed;
  - Publishing an outreach piece to educate property owners about the dos and don'ts of invasive species management;
  - Supporting defaults on small business loans to oyster farmers capitalized with private funding;
  - Producing a hydrologic modeling of scenarios to determine impacts of proposed developments for local governments;
  - Purchasing kits and chemicals for water monitors and partnering with Mobile Baykeeper to expand Volunteer monitoring in Mobile County;
  - Hosting one event to educate private sector about opportunities to advance sustainable growth along the Alabama coast;
  - Producing a semi-annual *Alabama Current Connection* newsletter in partnership with ADCNR;
  - Developing a series of short videos highlighting past 10 years of accomplishments in implementing the CCMP; and
  - Refreshing, refining, and expanding the reach of the Clean Water Future website and its resources.

The Finance Committee voted in favor of requesting that the Executive Committee approve these reprograms. Commissioner Ludgood made a motion to approve followed with a second by Dr. Puckett. The motion passed with no objections.

- Fiscal Year 2024 EPA Budget: Our \$850,000 EPA Grant funds for the fiscal year 2024 are budgeted for the following:
  - Continued work on *The State of Alabama's Estuaries and Coast*;
  - Install one ADA Accessibility Mat at a location to be determined;
  - Continued hydrologic modeling of scenarios to determine impacts of proposed developments;
  - Purchasing kits and chemicals for water monitors and partnering with Mobile Baykeeper to expand Volunteer monitoring in Mobile County;
  - Producing a semi-annual *Alabama Current Connection* newsletter in partnership with ADCNR;
  - Roadway educational and project signage;
  - Continued development of a series of short videos highlighting past 10 years of accomplishments in implementing the CCMP;
  - Refreshing, refining, and expanding the reach of the Clean Water Future website and its resources;
  - Provide sponsorship for events which raise awareness about environmental issues;
  - Produce outreach materials to distribute at special events to raise the general public's awareness about environmental issues; and
  - MBNEP management and administration costs.

The Finance Committee voted in favor of requesting that the Executive Committee approve the fiscal year 2024 budget for the new five-year EPA grant. Eliska Morgan made a motion to approve followed with a second by Commissioner Ludgood. The motion passed with no objections.

### **Science Advisory Committee**

Dr. Amy Hunter reported on the June 9 SAC meeting. The Science in Residence team candidate (ESA and Barry A. Vittor & Associates) gave a presentation on the *State of Alabama's Estuaries and Coast* publication. There was discussion on the SAC's involvement with the publication, as well as an upcoming off-cycle

workshop meeting to discuss format, datasets, indicators, working group teams, and project schedule which has not been scheduled yet.

### **Project Implementation Committee**

Judy Haner reported on the June 15 PIC meeting. The group took part in a survey with Mentimeter to gather input on the watershed plan assessment and opportunities moving forward with implementation of plans. Both will be integral to development of the next CCMP. Other presentations included an update on Point Aux Pines Living Shoreline Monitoring, an overview of the forthcoming RESTORE-funded Little Lagoon Restoration, and draft management measures of the Western Perdido WMP.

Jason Kudulis continued with an update on restoration projects:

- **D'Olive**
  - Pine Run- on hold pending new ownership
  - Tour on June 22 for Executive Committee members
- **Lower Fish River**
  - Marlow- warranty and maintenance
  - Magnolia River Watershed- landowner access continues
- **Fowl River**
  - 100% design and final permit review
- **Three Mile Creek**
  - 12-Mile Creek restoration- in warranty
  - Apple snail treatment continues
  - City of Mobile construction Phase I began in March and Phase II began in May
  - Remaining funds from RESTORE will be used on terrestrial invasives control
- **Deer River**
  - Re-bid for construction later this month

Christian Miller then gave a quick update on the status of Watershed Management Plans since the last meeting:

- **Mobile Tensaw-Apalachee Delta**- out for public comment
- **Eastern Shore**- out for public comment
- **Dauphin Island**- complete
- **Western Perdido (Palmetto/Bridge Creeks)**- wrapping up
- **Western Delta**- in progress (August 2023)
- **Eastern Delta**- in progress (August 2023)
- **Grand Bay**- on deck
- **Eight Mile Creek**- on deck

Each plan recommends multiple projects for implementation, which are prioritized by the top issues that need to be addressed based on the local input during the WMP process. We have an extensive project database that includes all the projects recommended in each plan. Commissioner Ludgood mentioned using the list of project priorities when funding opportunities arise. Comments were made about showing which projects have been addressed within the project database to leverage opportunities better.

### **Government Networks Committee**

Christian Miller reported on the June 16 GNC meeting. The committee heard presentations about Baldwin County's Materials Recycling Facility and recycling program and an overview of Resilience Planning efforts in the City of Mobile.

### **Community Action Committee**

Leslie Gahagan reported on the June 14 CAC meeting. The Auburn University Shellfish Laboratory hosted the CAC and provided information about its ongoing research and outreach in shellfish ecology and production to the citizens of Alabama, the region, and the nation.

#### **Business Resources Committee**

Eliska Morgan reported on the June 6 BRC meeting. The *Create a Clean Water Future* campaign was expanded in a CCMP process to create an umbrella branding for local governments and businesses to use for environmentally minded projects. There was an attempt made to solicit membership, but no formal process was ever implemented. The group as a whole saw value in continuing the campaign and branding.

#### **4. Director's Report**

Status of Bylaws: The Bylaws Committee has met a couple of times and is working through the bylaws methodically, which is taking a little bit longer than expected. They have gone through every article and compared the other 27 NEP's Bylaws and committee processes. We will ask the co-chairs to finish out their 5-year terms through September 2023 while the committee completes the bylaws rewrite.

#### **5. Old Business**

#### **6. New Business**

#### **7. Other/Announcements/Adjourn**

With a motion to adjourn from Leslie Gahagan, which was seconded by Eliska Morgan, the meeting adjourned at 10:59 pm.