

**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Executive Committee Meeting**  
**Original Oyster House Banquet Hall, Spanish Fort, AL**  
**Friday, March 22, 2019 10:00 am-12:00 pm**

**Attendees:**

Scott Bannon, ADCNR Marine Resources

Chris Blankenship, ADCNR

Bob Chappelle, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce

Jennifer Denson, Partners for Environmental  
Progress

Darrellyn Dunmore, Strategic Wealth Specialists

Natalie Ellington, EPA Region 4

Mimi Fearn, Dog River Clearwater Revival

Leslie Gahagan, City of Foley

Patric Harper, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Amy Hunter, ADCNR

Jimmy Lyons, Alabama State Port Authority

Tina Miller-Way, Dauphin Island Sea Lab

Joyce Nicholas, USDA-NRCS Mobile

Ashley Henderson for William Puckett, Alabama Soil  
and Water Conservation Committee

Beth Thomas, Alabama Power

LaDon Swann, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant

Chris Thomas, EPA Region 4

John Valentine, Dauphin Island Sea Lab

**MBNEP Staff Present:** *Roberta Swann, Tom Herder, Christian Miller, Rick Frederick, Kelley Barfoot, Tiffany England, Jason Kudulis, Paul Lammers, Jackie Wilson, Madison Blanchard, and Bethany Dickey*

1. **Introductions/Call to Order:** Commissioner Chris Blankenship called meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Commissioner Blankenship asked for comments or revisions to the minutes from the September 28, 2018 meeting. Jimmy Lyons made a motion to approve and Beth Thomas seconded the motion.
3. **Director's Report**
  - a) **Budget vs. Actual:** Ms. Swann gave her Director's report with our BVA. The summary report from the 5-year CCMP showed the budgets by focus area: Estuary Status and Trends, Ecosystem Restoration and Protection, Technical Assistance and Capacity Building, Education and Public Involvement, and Program Delivery/Admin. The majority (68%) of funds were budgeted to the ERP area. Ms. Swann compared award amount vs. funds expended for all our external grant awards for the last 5 years. AEMA, ADEM, ADCNR, EPA and EPA-GOMA are some of our largest grant awards, and Ms. Swann discussed the main projects that were funded by each award. NFWF is larger than all of these combined with over \$20,000,000 awarded. Our EPA grant for FY 2018 will end June 30, 2019, and the money left in these projects must be spent. There has been discussion in the past about how best to report out the BVA and what amount of detail should be shown. Dr. Swann asked what our reporting requirements already are. We send quarterly reports to EPA based on each Workplan Activity. The Dauphin Island Sea Lab is audited annually, which includes all NEP monies. Other than those, we don't have a policy in place for reporting. The recommendation from the committee was to provide an overview of spending- it is not necessary to show every activity.
  - b) **CCMP Update Process:** Our draft CCMP was released for public comment on February 4, 2019. We've received approximately 30 comments so far, so we'll be extending the deadline to April 15<sup>th</sup> to provide additional time for EPA Region 4 and Headquarters to comment. We anticipate the Executive Committee will approve at the next meeting. Some comments we've received address the issue of climate change, aging dam infrastructure, disaster resilience planning, and promotion of oyster growing off piers. Dr. Swann suggested to add oyster gardening as well. Dr. Fearn and Patric Harper discussed including "address aging dam infrastructure" in watershed planning. We will get approval from the Executive Committee at our May meeting, then to EPA for approval. (Note: Due to staff changes, the Committee will be asked to approve at its September meeting).
  - c) **Key Accomplishments:** *Flight of the Frigate Bird* aired on PBS November 4, 2018. We will send out the YouTube link to members. The Cultural Resource Assessment for Priority Water Bottoms is now complete. A short video about dune conservation produced for the Town of Dauphin Island was released February 28, 2019. MBNEP helped Dog River Clearwater Revival write a grant to the Gulf of Mexico Program for the

development of a Comprehensive Trash Abatement Program for Dog River Watershed. As a part of this grant PEP will be doing a Truck Bed Trashcan Competition, Mobile Baykeeper will be doing their SWAMP program, and MBNEP will be using the hydrologic modeling that we did with NFWF to strategically identify highest contributing outfalls for Litter Gitter placement.

An RFQ for the Western Shore Watershed Management Plan was due March 8, 2019. We received 7 proposals and five teams have been picked for interviews.

Bays and Bayous 2018 is in the books! The results from the survey showed that participants liked the shorter presentations, the keynote speakers were well received, there were a total of 447 registrations (101 students/346 professionals), 432 attendees, 13 states represented, and \$65,000 raised in sponsorships.

Our Outreach Plan is in development. We need to do a better job coordinating our outreach activities, and hone in on what our message is. We are trying hard to differentiate ourselves from other organizations.

We just had a semi-annual ANEP meeting in D.C. The NEPs are asking Congress to appropriate \$26.5 million across the National Estuary Programs. We are seeking a re-authorization of \$750,000 per program and a \$4,000,000 grant program.

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

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

Amy Hunter gave an update on the March 15<sup>th</sup> SAC meeting. The group reviewed the draft Ecosystem Status and Trends (EST) section of the CCMP update, which took up most of their meeting time. The Fowl River Marsh Study has been completed and the final report is due for a March 31<sup>st</sup> delivery.

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

Patric Harper gave an update on the March 18<sup>th</sup> PIC meeting. EPA's Gulf Ecology Division gave a presentation on their new H2O Tool, which monetizes and integrates ecosystem services into strategic planning at the watershed level. Paul Lammers gave us an update on D'Olive Watershed projects that included project metrics such as: construction beginning date, substantial completion date, stream length, and erosion reduction tons per year. Mr. Lammers also showed some great drone footage of project D4-D6, which is in construction again to fix a section of the stream. He also showed us footage of projects DAF-1, Golf Course Tributary, and Melanie Loop; all stream restorations at substantial completion.

Roberta Swann gave an update on Watershed Management Plans. The West Fowl River WMP is out for comment; the Wolf Bay WMP is under development (Volkert); the Western Shore WMP is waiting on contractor selection; the Little Lagoon/Perdido will be the next WMP, followed by the D'Olive WMP update. We brought together engineering firms to do one last prioritization of watershed planning and sediment studies. We need sediment studies for the Mobile-Tensaw Apalachee and Fly Creek. Our goal is to have sediment studies on place for all watersheds prior to the start of a watershed management plan.

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

Ms. Swann gave an update on the March 22<sup>nd</sup> GNC meeting. Representative Margie Wilcox presented her Litter Control Bill to the group and asked for comments/recommendations. This would be a state-wide regulation. Matt Anderson from the City of Mobile made a comment during the GNC meeting about empowering municipal officers with the ability to write tickets. The GNC discussed how to proceed with election of new co-chairs. There was some discussion about whether chairs should be County Commissioners, State Legislators, or open to anyone. The general consensus was to keep it to the two counties. Commissioner Ludgood has agreed to serve another term. MBNEP will reach out to Baldwin County to recruit a new representative.

### **Community Action Committee**

Leslie Gahagan reported on the March 13<sup>th</sup> CAC meeting. Members are developing a citizen's resource guide to hazardous waste disposal, showing where and how to dispose of hazardous materials such as paint, tires, combustibles, etc. CAC members are going to discuss with their groups the need of documenting their local areas' heritage and culture. The group agreed to expand the citizen science program to include invasive species and rainfall monitoring. Members would snap a picture of an invasive species, upload to the Water Rangers app, and Water Rangers would be able to map where these invasive species are throughout the two coastal counties.

### **Business Resources Committee**

Jennifer Denson reported on the BRC's March 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. Rick Frederick does canoe trips and tours in the Three Mile Creek area, and we will be doing this more in other watersheds. MBNEP has a new project of installing rain barrels at homes in the Toulmins Spring area, partnering with Alabama Power and Soterra. Beth Thomas with Alabama Power spoke about getting involved with this project and that there are many other stewardship project options. Ms. Denson gave a report on Litter Gitters and the growth it is experiencing. Don Bates, President of Osprey Initiative, has retired from Thompson Engineering to focus on Litter Gitters full time. As of end of February, 2,300 pounds of trash has been collected from the Litter Gitters in Mobile and Baldwin County. Don is using EPA's Escaped Trash Assessment Program (ETAP) to discover where the majority of the trash is coming from, then the BRC will reach out to these businesses about using more environmentally safe products and incentivizing changing from offering single use items.

### **Community Resources Committee**

Dr. Tina Miller-Way reported on the March 14<sup>th</sup> CRC meeting. The committee is working on their goals for the CCMP update. Members are completing a workplan engagement form to capture initiatives already being undertaken.

## **5. Other / Announcements**

- Discussion- Integrity of the Management Conference. Should committees be open? An example- if a non-profit were to attend another committee's meeting, some might not feel they can speak freely. Each committee is meant to be filled with like-minded stakeholders, NEP wants to maintain committee structure as defined in the CCMP.
- A question was posed about whether or not NEP staff could be on community boards- some require funding from their members. We need to come up with a policy of limits for situations like this.
- MBNEP is working on a new online project database to track project progress. This database will provide great utility in reporting on project as well as program progress.
- EPA and USACE's Waters of the U.S. Act revision comment period ends April 15. MBNEP will not comment.

Commissioner Blankenship asked for a motion to adjourn. Darrelyn Dunmore made the motion and Jennifer Denson seconded. The meeting adjourned at 11:56 a.m.