



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program  
Finance Committee Meeting  
Innovation Portal, Bedsole Boardroom  
Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 9:00 AM -10:30 AM**



**Meeting Minutes**

**In-person Attendees**

Lynne Chronister, University of South Alabama  
Chris Lee, J.L. Bedsole Foundation  
Jimmy Lyons, Mobile Port (RET)

Beth Thomas, Alabama Power Company  
Patti McCurdy, ADCNR State Lands  
Roger Rendleman, Baldwin County Commission

**Virtual Attendees**

Jennifer Denson, Partners for Environmental  
Progress  
Dana Foster-Allen, Mobile County Commission

Ralph Hellmich, City of Foley

**MBNEP Staff Present**

Roberta Swann  
Henry Perkins

Cody Aloï  
Bethany Hudson

**Key Takeaways:**

- *Election of a Second Co-Chair*
- *Strategic Planning*
- *Economic Analysis of Program Impacts*

- 1. Introductions/Call to Order:** Patti McCurdy called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM. The group did a quick round of introductions.
- 2. Approval of Minutes:** Patti McCurdy asked for comments or revisions to the September 26, 2023, meeting minutes. Hearing no remarks, Lynne Chronister motioned to approve, and Jimmy Lyons seconded the motion.
- 3. Election of Co-Chair:** After consulting the bylaws for clarification of the election of co-chairs, Patti McCurdy called for a vote on a second Co-Chair. Lynne Chronister nominated Chris Lee, and Jimmy Lyons seconded. Hearing no remarks, Chris Lee was elected Co-Chair of the Finance Committee.
- 4. Directors' Overview:** Roberta Swann delivered a detailed overview of the MBNEP, covering its area of responsibility, structure, the finance committee charge, relationship to Sea Lab, financial structure, partners, bylaws, and EPA reporting requirements. The process of getting to the next CCMP was outlined including the MBNEP as a backbone organization supporting the collective impact of the Management Conference. Patti McCurdy reinforced this notion.
- 5. Old Business:** Swann reviewed Mary Mullins' assessment conducted at the September 26, 2023, Finance Committee meeting. She specifically showcased the differences in management conferences' opinions of the MBNEP's role from 2005 to 2023.

**6. New Business:** Swann presented the Sources of the MBNEPs' funding, the EPA grant structure, and match funding. Lynne Chronister brought up the possibility of utilizing volunteer time as match. Swann stated it was a possibility but is not currently required as the program receives significant non-federal sources of funding through competitively awarded grants. Although not opposed, Swann indicated the labor cost of tracking and documenting volunteer time (something the program did in the early days) was onerous and hoped the program's focus would remain on increasing dollar investments instead. Regarding tracking of NEP match dollars, the program does keep track of all funding it can use for match to ensure it is not being used more than once and to leverage these nonfederal sources to the greatest extent possible. Swann highlighted other sources of MBNEP funding and pending awards.

Dana Foster-Allen inquired how MBNEP funding interrelates with county funding, promoting discussion around the topic. McCurdy, Swann, Lyons, and Foster-Allen discussed topics surrounding different examples of ways the MBNEP works with the county to achieve both party's goals. Swann presented the MBNEP's operating costs and available programming money.

McCurdy expressed concerns with match dollars and operating costs as MBNEP expands and takes on larger projects.

Swann asked the committee about their views related to MBNEP's role going forward in the coastal landscape. Ralph Hellmich brought up frustrations with other cities not participating in the MBNEP and suggested continuing to engage in dialogue with municipalities. Chris Lee suggested the MBNEP is a force multiplier in the coastal community. Swann suggested the Finance Committee needed to look to the private sector in developing a sustainable future for the MBNEP, citing federal dollars were not guaranteed long-term.

Chronister asked for clarification on the Finance Committee's role. McCurdy answered, stating the role is primarily to review the MBNEP's finances as it relates to securing the match dollars for the EPA grant. Beyond that, she saw a role for the Finance Committee where it could advise the program about its organizational growth and sustainability through financial planning.

Hellmich and McCurdy discussed how to work with local municipalities that do not currently participate in the MBNEP. Foster-Allen mentioned that the county can fill the gaps with discretionary funding in certain cases if a need arises in a particular district.

Chris Lee discussed the need to simplify the message and analyze cost avoidance vs. return on investment. Roger Rendleman suggested we show cities that do not participate the cost of not acting. He implied that the messaging should be framed as an environmental endeavor and protection of infrastructure. There was further discussion on how best to engage with the coastal cities of Orange Beach and Gulf Shores.

**7. Other/Announcements/Adjourn:** McCurdy announced scheduling the next committee meeting. Two workplans must be reviewed before being sent to the executive committee for approval. A Doodle poll will be sent out to determine that date/time. The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.