

**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Government Networks Committee Meeting
Original Oyster House, Mobile AL
October 31, 2014**



The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Government Networks Committee was established to bring State agencies and regional government administrators together with local officials of Mobile and Baldwin counties to more effectively communicate local needs/understand State agency functions and priorities. The goal of this committee is to articulate innovative ways to improve communications and management of our coastal environment.

In attendance:

Joseph Abston, Washington County Commission; James Adams, Mayor City of Mount Vernon; Scott Brown, Alabama Department of Environmental Management; Dan Bond, City of Gulf Shores; Guy Busby, Baldwin County Legislative Delegation; Jeff Collier, Mayor Town of Dauphin Island; Marlon Cook, Geological Survey of Alabama; Tucker Dorsey, Baldwin County Commission; Troy Ephriam, Mayor City of Prichard; Joe Faust, Alabama House of Representatives; Charles 'Skip' Gruber, Baldwin County Commission; Dan Hanson, Homeowners Hurricane Insurance Initiative; Dane Haygood, Mayor City of Daphne; Bill Hightower, Alabama State Senate; Scott Hughes, Alabama Department of Environmental Management; Diane Irby, City of Mobile; Tim Kant, Mayor City of Fairhope; Michelle Kurtz, Homeowners Hurricane Insurance Initiative; Matthew Lambert, City of Saraland; Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County Commission; Eliska Morgan, Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council; Patti Powell, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; Lannie Smith, City of Orange Beach; Margie Wilcox, Alabama House of Representatives;

MBNEP Staff: Roberta Swann, Kelley Barfoot, Rick Frederick, Christian Miller, Linda Sierke

Commissioners Merceria Ludgood and Charles 'Skip' Gruber welcomed participants. Speakers included Patti Powell, Eliska Morgan, Michelle Kurtz, Dan Hanson, and Christian Miller. The meeting was called to order at 7:51 a.m. by Commissioner Gruber, who welcomed the group to the meeting. Commissioner Ludgood moved to accept the minutes from the previous meeting, which was seconded by Mayor Adams. Those present then proceeded to introduce themselves.

Ms. Patti Powell and Ms. Eliska Morgan gave an overview and update regarding the Restore Act. Ms. Powell stated the Restore Act proceeds are designated for restoration activities. There is a difference between the Alabama Gulf Coast Restore Council and the Federal Council. Both are dependent upon the state treasury and are working with the treasury to help understand the required regulations. The regulations are effective not final. The Federal Council has completed a Comprehensive Plan with outlined goals for the proceeds and they are limited to projects that will benefit the entire ecosystem. The money that is available now is from the TransOcean fine. There will be no more money available until a settlement with BP is reached. At the end of November you will be able to submit projects to the council for review. She encouraged the group to sign-up for the Restore Council's Newsletter to stay up to date on the latest efforts, www.AlabamaCoastalRestoration.org. Once the projects are reviewed the project list will

be available for public comment. Ms. Morgan stated the Alabama Restore Council has been working closely with the treasury and receiving training to be in compliance once the BP funds are available. The next step is to evaluate the submitted projects. The last payment from the TransOcean fine is for \$56 million dollars and will be available in March of 2015.

Ms. Michelle Kurtz and Mr. Dan Hanson with Homeowners Hurricane Insurance Initiative (HHII) gave a presentation regarding the breakdown of the current policy premiums and described the efforts taking place by the HHII group. (*see attached presentation*) Mr. Hanson described The Coastal Re-Insurance Band that would geographically stretch 70 miles from the coastline inland from Texas to Maine. The purpose of the proposed band would be to collect the hurricane premiums currently paid within the boundary to cover the costs of wind damages that resulted from named storms that hit within the band boundary. He stated if this was to be approved by the governmental body the hurricane insurance premiums could potentially be cut in half. This would result in our homeowners insurance becoming affordable, require no tax money, protect the private insurance companies from catastrophic events and bring companies back to the coast. Ms. Kurtz described the Clarity Law Act and the data that is currently be analyzed. (*see attached presentation*) She gave a breakdown of the claims-dollar-per-policy for all 67 counties in Alabama and showed where Mobile and Baldwin County were within that range. She asked the group for support of the HHII group's effort and proposed solution.

Mr. Christian Miller gave a presentation regarding the Clean Water Future Campaign. He stated the campaign was recently adopted by the City of Daphne, The City of Fairhope and the City of Bayou La Batre. It is a free campaign that can be customized to fit within each group's municipality/organization. The campaign toolkit contains PSA's, logos, customizable Ads for print or digital and it can also count toward the MS4 outreach and education component required by some municipalities.

Mr. Miller went over the goals for the next steps of the Government Networks Committee. The goals are to:

- Establish long-term capability of local governments to manage and maintain coastal environmental resources.
- Minimize impacts and amount of contaminated stormwater runoff entering coastal waterways.
- Advocate for the protection and restoration of Gulf-fronting beaches, dunes, and shorelines as a first line of defense in protecting and increase resilience of coastal communities and economies and habitats that provide valuable ecosystem services.

Mr. Miller presented the objectives for each goal. (*see attached presentation*) He stated there will be a short survey/questionnaire sent out to the group regarding the past year's progress including when is the best time to meet and location.

Ms. Ludgood stated the group's next focus would be to look deeper into the watershed as a whole and to strategically move our efforts north. Mr. Gruber stated it is important for everyone to continue to be active members and their participation is what makes things happen.

Mr. Miller reminded the group of the upcoming Annual Meeting taking place on Wednesday December 17th from 7:30-9:00 a.m. at the Battle House Hotel. He stated formal invitations will be mailed out soon.

Ms. Kurtz asked Ms. Roberta Swann if she could request that the Government Networks Committee pass a resolution of support that will request Governor Bentley to approve and support the Clarity Law's data. Ms. Swann answered yes. Ms. Ludgood interjected and stated it would be more appropriate for the request to come from the NEP's executive committee. Ms. Swann agreed, but stated the executive committee would want the support of the Government Networks Committee first before approving a resolution. Mayor Troy Ephriam stated to Ms. Kurtz that he enjoyed her presentation and that he would recommend taking her information and have others within their office review it and then vote to support the resolution. He believed it would get more attraction if it had more community involvement and support. Ms. Margie Wilcox stated that she has been personally affected. She lost her home to Hurricane Katrina and she strongly believes that something needs to be done to change the insurance rates. She made a motion to vote to move forward with the support of HHII and the resolution. Mayor Ephriam second. Mayor Kent asked that we include in the resolution a portion of the collected premium be set aside for environmental mitigation. Ms. Swann suggested the vote be tabled and to send out a drafted resolution for edits/comments and then conduct an online vote through a survey. Mayor Ephriam agreed and asked for Ms. Kurtz presentation to be included in the email with the drafted resolution for review. Mr. Tucker Dorsey interjected by stating he cannot vote on something that he does not fully understand. He applauded Ms. Kurtz and the work of the HHII group, but stated he has a fundamental problem with a portion of the premiums collected being designated for environmental mitigation and does not believe that homeowners insurance should pay for that. Mr. Hanson responded to Mr. Dorsey's comments by stating environmental mitigation is important because it helps to reduce the risks of impacts and therefore reduces the claim amount. Ms. Kurtz suggested that Mr. Dorsey conduct research on homeowners' insurance and environmental mitigation. She stated mitigation projects have been paid for by homeowners insurance for years.

Ms. Swann made a motion to amend the vote and charge the MBNEP with drafting a resolution. The MBNEP will modify the HHII group's current resolution to reflect the comments from the GNC members. The draft will then be sent out to the group for edits/comments and she will then ask the GNC to approve the resolution for the executive committee to send to the governor's office. Ms. Ludgood suggested that a timeline be created for completion and requested a final resolution to be approved by December 17, 2014. Mr. Joe Faust asked to speak briefly and stated Mobile and Baldwin Counties are currently sending \$58 million dollars out of the two counties in insurance premiums. We need to keep that money at home, within our state. Mayor Haygood asked Mr. Hanson to explain the \$58 million dollar figure. Mr. Hanson stated the \$58 million dollars is the excess dollar amount collected by insurance companies. It is used to purchase re-insurance policies off shore or from other countries. It is a policy to protect the insurance companies. He gave an example that if an insurance company has to pay out a claim they will

only pay a certain percentage and then the re-insurance (offshore or other countries) will pay out the remaining amount. Mayor Haygood asked for an economic impact study to be completed on the re-insurance program.

Ms. Ludgood wrapped up the meeting by reviewing with the group the motion on the floor was to adopt the work of the HHI group, for the MBNEP to draft a resolution that would be sent out to the GNC members present and not for edits/comments, the executive committee would then approve the resolution and submit to the governor's office.

Ms. Ludgood made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 9:08 a.m.