

**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program  
Government Networks Committee Meeting  
Original Oyster House, Mobile AL  
November 17, 2016**

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*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; Chris Blankenship, ADCNR Marine Resources Division; Guy Busby, Baldwin County Legislative Delegation; Jeff Collier, Town of Dauphin Island; Marlon Cook, Cook Hydrology, LLC; Randy Davis, Alabama House of Representatives; Valerie Day, Senator Jeff Sessions' Office; Helen Wright and Gail Ambrose, City of Prichard; Charles 'Skip' Gruber, Baldwin County Commission; Kae Hamilton, Town of Perdido Beach; Bill Hightower, Alabama State Senate; Matthew Hinton, City of Spanish Fort; Bob Holk, Town of Magnolia Springs; Scott Hughes, ADEM; Ralph Hellmich, City of Foley; Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County Commission; Eliska Morgan, Alabama Gulf Coast Restore Council; Chris Pringle, Alabama House of Representatives; William Puckett, Alabama Soil & Water Conservation Committee; Newton Cromer, City of Saraland; Harry Shiver, Alabama House of Representatives; Terry Williams, Town of Mount Vernon; Tom Williams, City of Satsuma; Phillip Hinesley, ADCNR; Kendal Hadaway and Ralph Walker, City of Creola.

MBNEP Staff: Roberta Swann, Christian Miller, Bethany Dickey

**Takeaways**

- The next round of NFWF-GEBF funding will begin in February of 2017
- The Congress has re-authorized the NEP for the next five years.
- Currently, WMPs are completed for Fowl River and Bayou La Batre; WMPs are under development in Bon Secour River (under comment period), Dog River, Bayou La Batre/West Fowl River and Weeks Bay; remaining WMPs will commence once Federal RESTORE funding is made available.
- Homeowner education related to landscaping BMPs, and bringing Extension to the table, was identified as a need

Commissioners Merceria Ludgood and Charles 'Skip' Gruber welcomed participants. The meeting was called to order at 7:45 a.m. and Christian Miller moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting, a move to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Gruber, seconded by Randy Davis, and the minutes were approved.

Next on the agenda, Eliska Morgan gave an update on the status of RESTORE & NFWF-GEBF funding. Six new projects have been announced. We will begin looking at pre-proposals of projects in February for the next round of GEBF funding. Eliska would be happy to speak with people individually about project ideas, and to make sure they are entered into the project portal for consideration. This process can be confusing, especially for newly elected officials who haven't participated in this process before. There are

four new members on the Alabama RESTORE council (Merceria Ludgood (Mobile County Commission), Karin Wilson (Fairhope), Chris Elliot (Baldwin County Commission) and Terry Downey (Bayou La Batre)), which will meet for a work session on November 18, 2016.

<http://www.restorealabama.org/>

Christian started the presentation for assessing priorities and barriers for managing coastal environmental resources. We discussed six things that people value most about living in coastal Alabama. In each category there were some survey questions asked and participating members who attended were given clickers to vote with.

Water Quality: Water should be swimmable and the fish safe to eat. Impaired waters impede development, increase costs associated with infrastructure maintenance, and reduce citizen's quality of life. "Impaired" waters come from pathogens, sediments and nutrients/low dissolved oxygen. There are several AGCRC projects for wastewater management and stormwater that can be done within each watershed plan. Examples of projects are: sewer line & drainage upgrades/improvements, lift stations, tertiary & sludge treatment, wetland acquisition/restoration/enhancement, stream restoration/energy dissipation, and litter control.

Here are the survey questions asked for wastewater and stormwater:

- How important are wastewater and water reuse projects in your community? On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (most).
  - 38% Most important
  - 42% Very important
  - 15% Neutral
  - 0% Somewhat
  - 4% Not at all
- Rate how much regulatory hurdles impede wastewater management and reuse in your community. On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot).
  - 17% A lot
  - 38% Somewhat
  - 17% Neutral
  - 29% Very little
  - 0% Not at all
- How important are stormwater projects in your community? On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (most).
  - 33% Most
  - 50% Very
  - 13% Neutral
  - 4% Somewhat
  - 0% Not at all
- Rate how much regulatory hurdles impede stormwater management in your community. On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot).
  - 13% A lot
  - 33% Somewhat

- 25% Neutral
- 21% Very little
- 8% Not at all

Fish and Shorelines: We need habitats that support healthy fisheries and shorelines that support resilient coastal economics & quality of life. According to community input, fish habitats have the greatest impact on our quality of life with 50% of the vote. Following is beach/shorelines/water front access with a little over 20% of the vote. The projects that can be done within each watershed plan are: invasive species management, habitat acquisition, sea turtle nesting habitats, migratory bird habitats, and shoreline stabilization/restoration. Invasive species are non-native species that have a harmful effect on the environment and the species that we care about.

Here are the survey questions asked for fish and shorelines:

- How important is managing fisheries habitat and shoreline conservation/restoration in your community? On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (most).
  - 36% Most
  - 50% Very
  - 5% Neutral
  - 9% Somewhat
  - 0% Not at all
- Rate how much regulatory hurdles impede fisheries habitat and shoreline management in your community. On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot).
  - 41% A lot
  - 18% Somewhat
  - 27% Neutral
  - 5% Very little
  - 9% Not at all

Access/Heritage: Access to our waterways and natural places along with maintaining traditional uses of natural resources greatly impact our economy and quality of life. This includes tourism, fishing & hunting, recreational trails, commercial fishing/aquaculture, forestry/timber harvesting, and working waterfronts. According to community input, recreational fishing, tourism and commercial fishing have the greatest impact on our quality of life with over 20% each of the vote. Project examples are: park improvements, boat ramps, boardwalk/interpretive signage improvements, river trails/blueways, greenways, ecological park development, and environmental education. Newton (City of Saraland) commented that there are so many studies need to be done to get the money to do a project. The costs associated with completing the required studies and administration can make it economically unfeasible to accept funding to undertake these projects.

Here are the survey questions asked for access and heritage:

- How important is access and heritage & culture in your community? On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (most).
  - 65% Most
  - 30% Very

- 4% Neutral
- 0% Somewhat
- 0% Not at all
- Rate the extent that regulatory hurdles impede access and heritage & culture in your community. On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot).
  - 39% A lot
  - 35% Somewhat
  - 17% Very little
  - 9% Neutral
  - 0% Not at all

Resilience: A key component to preserving our economy and quality of life is protecting our coastal communities – both human and ecological – from natural and technological disasters. Project examples are: safe harbors, docks, waterway dredging, emergency response infrastructure, and road improvements/expansion.

Here are the survey questions asked for resilience:

- How important is addressing resilience in your community? On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (most).
  - 35% Most
  - 35% Very
  - 30% Neutral
  - 0% Somewhat
  - 0% Not at all
- Rate the extent that regulatory hurdles impede community resilience. On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot).
  - 30% A lot
  - 26% Somewhat
  - 39% Neutral
  - 4% Very little
  - 0% Not at all

<http://www.cleanwaterfuture.com/>

Floor was opened up for questions: Gail (City of Prichard) commented that they have a big issue with people illegally dumping trash mostly near Three Mile Creek. They need ways to prevent the public from doing it. Newton commented about fertilizer runoff from homeowners and needed education for the homeowners. Skip commented about the flood plain maps; Alabama has not gotten theirs after Hurricane Katrina.

Lastly, Roberta gave an update on the status of watershed planning and implementation on the coast. Roberta showed a watershed map, at the HUC 12 level, detailing which plans were completed, in process, or waiting for funding to become available. It is anticipated that RESTORE funding would be made

available in early 2017 to resume the process. Under recommendations of the PIC, watersheds have been grouped where it makes sense to do which has created economies of scale allowing for subsequent work (sediment studies) to inform the WMP process.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 AM