



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Government Networks Committee Meeting
March 13, 2020
Original Oyster House
3733A Battleship Pkwy
Spanish Fort, AL 36527
8:00 am -9:30 am**

Agenda

Meeting Objectives:

- a) Provide status of NFWF GEBF & RESTORE funding and Watershed Planning
- b) Update Coal Ash project
- c) Assess Committee needs and get input for CCWF/WKRG campaign

1. Welcome & Introductions

Mobile County Commissioner Merceria Ludgood
Baldwin County Commissioner Billie Jo Underwood

2. Review and approval of minutes

3. Old Business

- a. NFWF GEBF/RESTORE update – Chris Blankenship, ADCNR
- b. Watershed Planning Update – Christian Miller, MBNEP

4. New Business

- a. Embrace the Gulf 2020 – Merceria Ludgood
- b. Plant Barry Coal Ash Pond Closure update – Roberta Swann, MBNEP
- c. “Take Back Our Coast” – Roberta Swann, MBNEP
- d. State Revolving Loan Fund – Scott Hughes, ADEM
- e. Round Table Discussion – “How can the GNC best serve your needs?”
- f. Other Business

5. Adjourn



Minutes

In attendance: Joseph Abston, Washington County Commission; Scott Bannon, ADCNR MRD; Chris Blankenship, ADCNR; Marcy Brown, City of Creola; Jeff Collier, Town of Dauphin Island; Terry Downey, City of Bayou La Batre; Skip Gruber, Baldwin County Commission; Ashley Henderson, Alabama SWCC; Kellie Hope, Business Council of Alabama; Scott Hughes, ADEM; Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County Commission; Patti McCurdy; ADCNR-State Lands; Mike McMillian, City of Spanish Fort; Casey Rains, City of Spanish Fort; Rickey Rhodes, SARPC; Chris Plymale, EPA Region 4; Howard Smith, City of Semmes; Dennis Sullivan, City of Chickasaw; Chris Thomas, EPA Region 4; Nicole Taylor, SARPC; Billie Jo Underwood, Baldwin County Commission; John Valentine, DISL; Margie Wilcox, AL House of Representatives; Tom Williams, City of Satsuma

MBNEP Staff: Roberta Swann, Bethany Dickey, Christian Miller, Herndon Graddick

Takeaways

- Watershed management planning is ongoing in Wolf Bay, Western Shore, MTA Delta, Fly Creek, Gulf Frontal watersheds. An update of the D'Olive WMP is ongoing, and additional baseline monitoring is being conducted to feed into the remaining watershed plans.
- NFWF-GEB is funding two off-cycle projects: Lower Fish River Restoration Program and the Dauphin Island Causeway enhancement. RESTORE projects are working through the approval process.
- Legal and Hydrogeologic reviews of the Plant Barry coal ash pond closure have been completed. The technical engineering review and development of the film are ongoing and should be completed by May.
- The State's Revolving Loan Fund provides low-interest loans to municipalities to upgrade wastewater and drinking water infrastructure and to fund green infrastructure and stormwater management projects.

Meeting began at 8:15 am

Merceria welcomed the group and made a motion to accept the minutes from the previous meeting which were approved.

Christian gave an update on Watershed Planning

- Watershed planning is ongoing in:
 - Wolf Bay- draft plan will be out for public comment in April/May. Looking at lots of habitat conservation and stream restoration projects
 - Western Shore (first round of public engagement meetings complete)
 - Gulf Frontal – first round of public engagement complete. Access is a big issue
 - MTA Delta – under contract and just getting underway
 - Fly Creek – Eastern Shore, 22 miles of coastline. Shorelines and stormwater are big issues. Completing contractor procurement, hope to have someone on board in April.

- D'Olive – The plan is 10 years old and is going through an update process.
- Working to get baseline assessments underway where needed to feed into the remaining plans. These are not necessary in some watersheds (Dauphin Island) so that will likely impact the order in which the plans roll out.

Commissioner Blankenship gave an update on oil spill funded projects

- NFWF is announcing two off cycle projects that will be funded. Lower Fish River Restoration project and the Dauphin Island Causeway enhancement (mix of GEBF and NOAA Resilience funds)
- Federal Restore – AL awarded \$29 MM for land acquisition in the Perdido River Watershed 11-12K acres along the Perdido River, including management and access.
- Next funding cycle, FPL3b, underway. Working to prioritize projects, which will be mainly water quality projects (eg septic to sewer and stormwater) to be approved in April 2021.
- Bucket 1 – St Louis St and Bayou La Batre wastewater projects have been funded. Still working on ALDOT projects which are under review.
- Bucket 3 – 15 of 29 projects have been submitted
- NRDA – funded projects: acquisition of West End of Dauphin Island, Perdido River acquisition, bird stewardship project, Gulf State Park Pier, Bayfront Park construction in south Mobile County, Boardwalks and parking access in the Bon Secour Wildlife Refuge.

Next Commissioner Ludgood gave the group an overview of the Embrace the Gulf campaign, which is a project of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance focusing on bringing positive attention to the Gulf region. Mobile County and Baldwin County have both adopted this campaign and she encouraged everyone to check out the website and promotional materials and partner in the effort.

<https://gulfofmexicoalliance.org/embrace/>

Christian gave an update on the status of the review of the Plant Barry coal ash pond closure.

- The review of the hydrogeological and legal components have been completed and a fact sheet has been developed for both which are available.
- The engineering review is currently ongoing and should be wrapped up in early April. Once completed we will host a meeting for the findings of that process with the engineer in charge of developing the review.
- Development of the film is also underway with a plan to have that film released by the end of April/early May.

Next, Herndon gave an overview of the Take Back our Coast project

- Working with WKRK to produce 10-60 second videos
- Pieces are focused around trash and what communities are doing to combat littering.
- Also highlighting local access around Mobile and Baldwin counties.
- These will be positive pieces highlighting the good work communities are doing to mitigate trash and provide access to resources.
- We need to raise additional money in order to fund this project

Scott Hughes gave an update on the State's Revolving Loan Fund

- Funding source for updating wastewater and drinking water infrastructure
- Funds are available to municipalities; so far \$1.5 billion have been spent on the wastewater side and \$500 million on the drinking water side.
- Expected to allocate about \$200 million in 2020
- Submitted projects are ranked and funds are distributed based on which projects best fit the intent and which municipalities are best situated to receive and manage the funds.
- SRF loans are currently financed at 2.2% interest rate, 20 year loans with a \$10K closing fee.
- Proposed legislation to extend the repayment period from 20 to 30 years which would help smaller municipalities be able to participate in the program.
- Money can be used for Green Infrastructure and Stormwater management projects, which may help increase the priority ranking of the project.
- MBNEP's Low Impact Development/Green Infrastructure video can be accessed here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiaVLWgQee0&t=37s>

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 am