

**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Project Implementation Committee Meeting
Thursday, February 21, 2013
Tensaw Theater, 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center**

Minutes

Attendees:

L. G. Adams (ADCNR/Weeks Bay NERR)	Sherry Allison (Eco-systems, Inc.)
Van Baggett (Constantine Engineering)	Hayleigh Barlar (Sovereign Consulting)
Emery Baya (Thompson Engineering)	Richard Becker (Bellingrath Gardens)
Jeff Brooks (Sovereign Consulting)	Bill Bunkley (USACOE)
April Callaway	Casi Callaway (Mobile Baykeeper)
Ashley Campbell (City of Daphne)	Stefanie Christensen (Mobile Baykeeper)
Rob Constantine	Evan Cornielle (AL Coastal Foundation)
Richard Craig (Fowl River/Baykeeper)	George Davis (City of Mobile)
Jeff DeQuattro (TNC)	Danny Dillard (City of Daphne)
Joy Earp (USACOE)	Carl Ferraro (ADCNR-State Lands)
Greg Gaudin (Fowl River)	Amy Gohres (ADCNR-State Lands)
Bart Greer (AL Coastal Foundation)	Judy Haner (The Nature Conservancy)
Patric Harper (U. S. F&W Service)	Bob Harris (AL State Port Authority)
Tom Hutchings	Steve Jackson (ES&H)
Don Irby (Restore Council)	Teddy King (ADPH)
Kara Lankford (Ocean Conservancy)	Tommy Lightcap
Dwain Mangold	Ray Mayhall (Fowl River/Baykeeper)
Mike Mullen (KBR)	Ricky Odess (Magnolia Springs/WBWW)
Stephen O'Hearn (Thompson Engineering)	Sharon Olen (Mobile Baykeeper)
Dante Piccini	Max Reed (Blink Colony)
Fred Rowell (Thompson Engineering)	Sam St. John (ACF/Baykeeper)
Tina Sanchez (Mobile County)	Jacque Shayhall
Joe Sirmon (Fowl River)	Randy Shaneyfelt (ADEM)
Mike Shelton (Weeks Bay NERR)	Dr. LaDon Swann (MASGC)
Malcolm Steeves (MAWSS)	Kim Sweet (Dog River Clrwtr Revival)
Barry Tierce	Lee Walters (Goodwin Mills & Cawood)
Harole White (Fowl River)	Howard Whitten
Chandra Wright (MASGC)	Jenni Zimlich (Fowl & Fish Rivers)

Bob Howard (EPA Region IV) – remotely via Webex and conference call
MBNEP Staff: Kelley Barfoot, Christian Miller, Roberta Swann, Tom Herder

1. Call to Order

PIC Chairman Jeff DeQuattro called the meeting to order at 10:10 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes

Mr. DeQuattro asked for any corrections or a motion to approve the minutes from the August 2, 2012 meeting. Carl Ferraro made the motion which was seconded by Patric Harper and carried unanimously.

3. Jeff DeQuattro – Towards developing focus on watersheds targeted for restoration and protection

Mr. DeQuattro reviewed activities having occurred since 2006 towards development of a prioritization framework, including:

- Publication of *The Habitat Atlas – Conserving Alabama’s Coastal Habitats: Acquisition and Restoration Priorities of Mobile and Baldwin Counties* published March, 2006
- In 2008, parcels originally considered due to political potential for acquisition were supplemented with parcels designated “priority” due to factors related to ecology, geography, and land use and incorporated into an online viewer through a partnership between MBNEP, the NOAA Coastal Services Center and The Nature Conservancy.
- Through 2008 and 2009, an online Priority Habitat Mapper was developed by that partnership with input from and guidance by the Coastal Habitats Coordinating Team that comprised resource managers and scientists along the Alabama coast. This user-friendly tool graphically represented various coastal habitat types, including those that met criteria established by the CHCT.
- Charged by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency with revising/updating the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan to guide activities over the next five-year period, the MBNEP set about a series of activities aimed at understanding community values and concerns and determining scientifically which habitats and the ecological services provided by them face the greatest stress from anthropogenic factors. At a recent workshop, experts were convened in six groups based upon what the community values – Access, Fish, Shorelines, Resiliency, Water Quality, and Heritage – to recommend actions related to that value for inclusion in the revised CCMP. An online survey is currently available for input during the comment period that extends through March 1.

As the Management Conference and MBNEP staff work to develop the new CCMP, prioritization of projects has gained greater interest with recent passage of the RESTORE Act, which may direct resources towards Gulf communities impacted by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Incident. Mr. DeQuattro explained that the current PIC prioritization framework development is intended to determine where – i.e., in what coastal area watersheds – focus, attention, and limited resources should be directed to effect the greatest benefit.

4. Marlon Cook, Geological Survey of Alabama

Mr. DeQuattro noted that a practical protocol involves sediment loading analyses or ADEM surveys as precursors to watershed management plans that recommend prioritized project implementation within watersheds on the scale of those described by USGS as 12-digit hydrologic unit codes (or HUCs). Marlon Cook of the Geological Survey of Alabama, scheduled to discuss sediment loading analyses and its value in watershed management planning, was unable to attend the meeting.

5. Dr. Eve Brantley, an Assistant Professor in the College of Agriculture and Agronomy and Soils Department at Auburn University and a Water Resources Extension Specialist for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, provided an entertaining and informative presentation on the importance of watershed management planning as a precursor to project implementation.

Her presentation, “Watershed Planning,” is available for viewing on the MBNEP website at http://www.mobilebaynep.com/what_we_do/pic_prioritization_framework_development.

6. Roberta Swann, MBNEP – Introduction to the CCMP revision process

Ms. Swann summarized the different efforts that have been undertaken towards revising/updating the CCMP:

- Towards determining community attitudes – what coastal Alabamians value and what concern them most – MBNEP undertook a Community Attitudes Assessment in Summer, 2011 with a telephone survey conducted in both coastal counties. Throughout 2012, MBNEP conducted targeted audience presentations, input sessions and public meetings throughout the coastal community. She noted that the primary public concerns were trash and stormwater, while citizen values centered on fisheries and water quality.
- In part to ascertain how best to evaluate Bay health, MBNEP’s Science Advisory Committee queried over 30 different experts from the academic, research, and resource management communities. They were asked to complete a survey which sought evaluations on the impacts of a suite of 13 common stressors on 14 ecosystem services provided by 10 coastal habitat types (that included almost 1,820 individual cells to evaluate). From these evaluations, freshwater wetlands; intertidal marshes and flats; and rivers, streams and associated riparian areas were determined to most stressed.
- The PIC was charged with developing a prioritization framework to determine which coastal watersheds should be targeted for restoration and conservation. A subcommittee, the Prioritization Working Group, was established at the August 2, 2012 meeting to address this charge. They have gathered data and information and represented it graphically using GIS tools. That group’s work will be used in a watershed survey to be conducted at this meeting.
- Towards revising the current CCMP, it was necessary to evaluate the current CCMP and the 104 actions that it recommended. As such a team from Volkert and local experts (Dr. George Crozier, Dr. Rick Wallace, Steve Heath, Randy Roach, Cherie Arceneaux, and John Carlton) were contracted to evaluate the current CCMP. Their conclusions can be found at [http://www.mobilebaynep.com/images/uploads/library/CCMPEvalfinal\(1\).pdf](http://www.mobilebaynep.com/images/uploads/library/CCMPEvalfinal(1).pdf).
- To determine what actions should be included in the revised/updated CCMP, community leaders were recruited to serve on teams based upon the six community values (listed above) and “captained” by leaders in their respective areas of expertise. These teams met at a one-day workshop held in November at the Convention Center and generated over 140 recommended actions that have been included in a draft CCMP. The actions were compiled on a Survey Monkey questionnaire for public evaluation and comment <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PNGJB38>, scheduled to remain open through March 1. The public was encouraged to take draft copies of the CCMP and to go online to add their input to the survey.

Ms. Swann reiterated the six community values and summarized SAC evaluations of habitats, ecosystem services, and stresses. She displayed a map showing 24 Baldwin or Mobile county watersheds (12-digit HUCs), which, by virtue of containing priority habitat patches of at least two of the three most stressed habitats, would be the subject of evaluation and voting. To introduce factors used in prioritization and allow attendees to become familiar with them, she displayed a series of maps showing GIS layers to display different evaluation criteria over a map of the two-county area. Evaluation criteria displayed graphically included:

- Urbanization
- Watersheds for which ADEM surveys, GSA sediment studies, or current or outdated WMPs have been completed
- Impaired (303d-listed) waters, impaired waters for which total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) have been determined, National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits (indicating potential point sources of pollution), and Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) sites (where potentially hazardous materials are stored or released)
- Protected lands, Acquisition priorities, and Outstanding Alabama Waters
- Locations of ADEM long-term monitoring stations.

She then summarized the 12 evaluation criteria represented on the map series as evaluation criteria, including:

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| ♦ Priority Restoration Watersheds | ♦ Priority Conservation Watersheds |
| ♦ Priority Freshwater Wetlands | ♦ Priority Intertidal Marshes and Flats |
| ♦ Priority Areas for Acquisition | ♦ Protected Lands |
| ♦ Outstanding Alabama Waters | ♦ Impaired Waters |
| ♦ TMDL Waters | ♦ Point Source Discharges (NPDES Permits) |
| ♦ Toxic Release Inventory Sites | ♦ % Urbanization |
| ♦ ADEM Surveys | ♦ Watershed Management Plans (old) |
| ♦ GSA Sediment Studies Completed | ♦ Watershed Management Plan (current) |
| ♦ ADEM Long-term Monitoring Stations | |

Wrapping up her summary, Ms. Swann provided instructions to meeting participants. She said: “A watershed in Mobile or Baldwin County is listed on each slide. Please rate the priority of each watershed on a scale of one (lowest) to five (highest) based upon the information provided. Only ONE ranking selection is allowed per watershed.”

Each meeting attendee was provided a digital voting keypad that was used to record the results of each of the 24 watershed evaluations. At this point, she handed the floor back to Jeff DeQuattro to conduct the surveys.

7. Jeff DeQuattro – Presentation of maps and voting to rank HUC-12 watersheds for focus

Mr. DeQuattro sequentially projected maps of 24 watersheds determined to be of sufficient criteria for public evaluation. Starting in southern Mobile County, the sequence of watersheds displayed moved in a counterclockwise manner around the Bay in the following sequence:

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| 1. Grand Bay Swamp | 2. Bayou La Batre River |
| 3. West Fowl River | 4. Fowl River |
| 5. Deer River | 6. Dog River (Upper, Lower, & Halls Mills Creek) |
| 7. Big Creek (Juniper & Hamilton Creeks) | 8. Three Mile Creek |
| 9. Eight Mile Creek | 10. Cedar Creek (Upper & Lower) |
| 11. Tensaw-Apalachee Rivers | 12. Halls Creek |
| 13. Rains Creek | 14. Fish River (Upper & Lower) |
| 15. Upper Blackwater River | 16. Negro Creek |

- 17. Skunk Bayou
- 19. Oyster Bay
- 21. Hammock Creek
- 23. Dauphin Island

- 18. Bon Secour River
- 20. Graham Bayou
- 22. Little Lagoon

Mr. DeQuattro explained that Three Mile Creek, Eight Mile Creek, and the eastern portion of the Tensaw-Apalachee watersheds (D'Olive and Tiawasee Creeks and Joe's Branch) are currently in implementation phases of recently completed WMPs, so efforts and resources will be directed there, so they will not be evaluated by meeting attendees.

Total responses ranged between 56 and 58. The product of number of responses in each of the five response value categories and the number of that category were summed to accumulate a point total for each of the watersheds evaluated. The point total was divided by the total responses to determine a Mean Response Value. Table 1 below shows the response distribution, number of responses, point totals and mean response value for each of the watersheds evaluated. Watersheds are sorted according to mean response value from highest to lowest.

Watershed	1	2	3	4	5	Total Responses	Point Total	Mean Response Value
Fish River	1	0	3	21	31	56	249	4.45
Tensaw Apalachee	1	4	3	17	32	57	246	4.32
Big Creek	1	3	8	12	31	55	234	4.25
Bon Secour	0	1	7	26	22	56	237	4.23
Fowl River	1	4	7	15	30	57	240	4.21
West Fowl River	0	5	8	18	26	57	236	4.14
Dog River	3	4	10	15	26	58	231	3.98
Deer River	1	4	11	21	18	55	216	3.93
Grand Bay Swamp	0	4	8	22	11	45	175	3.89
Graham Bayou	3	7	17	15	13	55	193	3.51
Bayou La Batre River	1	7	22	19	8	57	197	3.46
Oyster Bay	1	6	26	15	9	57	196	3.44
Hammock Creek	3	9	18	11	14	55	189	3.44
Dauphin Island	6	6	18	10	15	55	187	3.40
Little Lagoon	4	11	14	12	12	53	176	3.32
Upper Blackwater	2	8	23	18	5	56	184	3.29
Rains Creek	4	12	19	14	7	56	176	3.14
Halls Creek	9	9	19	11	9	57	173	3.04
Skunk Bayou	6	16	16	13	7	58	173	2.98
Negro Creek	4	17	26	5	2	54	146	2.70
Cedar Creek	9	19	18	9	1	56	142	2.54

Ms. Swann's powerpoint presentation that includes the 24 watersheds mapped for evaluation and the response frequency distribution is available for viewing at <http://>

The meeting was adjourned at 12 noon.