

**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Project Implementation Committee Meeting
Thursday, April 5, 2012
ADCNR-Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries Division Meeting Room**

Minutes

Attendees:

Kit Alexander (City of Orange Beach)	Emery Baya (Thompson Engineering)
Mark Berte (ACF)	Casi Callaway (Mobile BayKeeper)
Ashley Campbell (City of Daphne)	John Curry (Hydro-Engineering Solutions, LLC)
Jeff DeQuattro (TNC)	Mike Eubanks (Thompson Engineering)
Carl Ferraro (ADCNR-SLD)	Sandy Gibson (USACOE)
Meg Goecker (NOAA)	Patric Harper (USF&WS)
Bob Harris (AL State Port Authority)	Bob Howard (EPA Region IV)
Jenny Jacobson (USACOE)	Jeff Jordan (ADCNR-SLD)
Teddy King (ADPH)	Kara Lankford (Ocean Conservancy)
Leslie Lassiter (City of Foley)	John Mareska (AMRD)
Cal Markert (Baldwin County)	Larry Parson (USACOE)
Rosemary Ginn Sawyer (City of Mobile)	Randy Shaneyfelt (ADEM)
Malcolm Steeves (MAWSS)	Dr. LaDon Swann (MASGC)
MBNEP Staff: Christian Miller, Roberta Swann, Tom Herder	

1. Call to Order

PIC Chairman Jeff DeQuattro called the meeting to order at 1305.

2. Approval of Minutes

Mr. DeQuattro asked for any corrections or a motion to approve the minutes from the December 14, 2011 meeting. Mark Berte made the motion which was seconded by Carl Ferraro and carried unanimously.

3. ADCNR – State Lands – Carl Ferraro – Early NRDA Restoration update

Carl Ferraro of the Conservation Department, State Lands Division provided an update on the Marsh Island project which has been tentatively selected for early Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) funding. After expressing some frustration with the litigiousness of the whole process, he described the factors underlying marsh loss at the project site as a very limited sediment budget, sea level rise, and wave action. Bob Howard asked if subsidence was also involved, but Mr. Ferraro responded that this phenomenon had not yet been recognized in coastal Alabama. He presented a diagram of the project design, showing breakwater installation on the south side and bagged oyster shell on the north side providing potential habitat for oysters, fish, and other invertebrates along the northern boundary that would serve to contain deposited sediments. Roberta Swann asked about the natural history of the island. Mr. Ferraro responded that it was “kind of uncertain,” but that the project would provide marsh credit to count against degradation of marsh from the Deepwater Horizon oil impacts. Casi Callaway asked Carl if the State was managing this project, and Mr. Ferraro indicated that he was the Project Manager.

Mr. Ferraro explained that other projects will be funded, and that Marsh Island was being funded by the early NRDA provision. Other NRDA funding, as well as Clean Water Act fines, would be available for other projects later. He explained the next steps to the Marsh Island Project – subject to Early Restoration Plan approval, which is pending, would be:

- 1.) Distribution of a Request for Qualifications for design, engineering, permitting and construction, inspection, and monitoring
- 2.) Selection of an engineering and design contractor
- 3.) Development of a plan for design, engineering, and permitting
- 4.) Issuance of a Request for Construction Bids
- 5.) Selection of a construction contractor
- 6.) Begin construction

He projected that the project would take two years from start to finish. Dr. LaDon Swann asked when the next list of proposals would be considered. Mr. Ferraro responded that the process would begin soon, and that others are already involved in consideration. Ms. Callaway noted that the first round of funding entailed \$10 million and asked what was expected for the second round. Meg Goeker responded that it would exceed \$50 million.

State's Restoration Plan and Potential for PIC engagement

This topic was not addressed.

4. U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Mobile Bay Interagency Working Group Meeting (Feb. 9) Recap – Larry Parson

Larry Parson of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers provided a recap of the February 9, 2012 meeting of the Mobile Bay Interagency Working Group held at Five Rivers. He described problems keeping the ship channel clear and using the material beneficially to alleviate the need for remote disposal. He explained that the northern area of the Bay has the greatest dredging needs and that currently the Corps is employing hopper dredges to convey material offshore to approved disposal sites. He reported that the Working Group recommended two implementation activities, one for the short term and one for the long term.

In the short term, recommendations were to fill the Brookley Hole, an old borrow pit in the western Bay that was used in the mid-twentieth century to obtain material to construct runways. This is a particularly deep spot with capacity to hold a lot of material. He noted that it would be easier and cheaper to pipe dredge material directly into the Hole. The Corps' Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) has completed a baseline characterization of the Hole, finding it oxygen levels at depths insufficient to sustain living resources. This situation can be alleviated by using dredged material bring the elevation up. Three alternatives for doing so were considered by the Working Group:

- 1.) Begin filling the Hole to some level of productivity, as revealed by monitoring.
- 2.) Fill Brookley Hole to surrounding grade to provide habitat for SAV, oysters, and other benthic organisms.
- 3.) Fill at least portions of the project location to greater than surrounding grade to create emergent marsh land grading down into other habitat types.

In the long term, recommendations include using pipeline dredges to conduct thin layer disposal of dredged material in-Bay in six to 12" layers, eliminating the need for hopper dredges and remote, out-of-Bay disposal. The Corps is currently waiting on Recertification of Coastal Zone Consistency to approve this technique as a one-time action to alleviate problems with material removal in the upper Bay. He said that in two weeks the Corps will reconvene the Working Group to brainstorm towards recommendations to build emergent disposal sites along with in-Bay thin layer disposal while maintaining the capacity to move offshore for disposal. ERDC will monitor any open water disposal sites.

Bob Howard asked if there was any monitoring history of benthic recovery. Mr. Parson said that some exists from other locations, but what has not been monitored is the physical behavior of the sediments, including the fines. Jenny Jacobsen said that all material is tested and found suitable for open water disposal, so that it must satisfy Bay disposal criteria.

5. Fish River Watershed Study – Cal Markert and John Curry

Baldwin County Engineer Cal Markert and John Curry of Hydro-Engineering Solutions presented details related to the Fish River Watershed Study contracted by the Baldwin County Commission. Mr. Markert explained that the study employed the newest technology available to view land uses and hydrology on a watershed scale to develop (more or less) uniform standards and to understand if development occurs in Baldwin County, what will it affect. He said the computer models provide a tool for answering questions related to changing subdivision regulations that would permit growth in the County while protecting Fish River. He pointed out this modeling demonstrated that some original and accepted ideas were bad, so the project already represents money well spent. He expressed that prevention of impacts and degradation is the only option. Once a threshold is reached, it is too late. He introduced Engineer John Curry, who provided a powerpoint presentation showing findings of the study. The presentation showed:

- An area map of the Fish River Watershed
- Fish River Watershed contours (with and without high resolution gridding)
- Gridded and non-gridded maps showing land uses
- Gridded and non-gridded maps showing soil types
- Rain wave locations
- Rainfall distributions
- 1974 Spectral and 2008 Thematic mapping
- Projections for development
- Hydrographs
- Conceptual pond locations

He then used the presentation to demonstrate findings that included:

- The further in the headwaters the development occurs, the worse the impact on Fish River
- Corn Branch Pond coupled with Fish River Pond C is a beneficial combination for helping reduce peak discharges
- Caney Branch Small Pond, Caney Branch Big Pond, and Picard Branch all caused an increase on Fish River due to timing

- Turkey Branch Pond coupled with Spanish Fort Detention caused a decrease at SR104 but an increase downstream of CR48 due to timing
- Fish River “Pond A” had virtually no impact on the reduction of peak discharges for existing and proposed development
- Fish River “Pond B” provides minimal reduction in increased discharges for proposed development
- Local detention in the upper part (Spanish Fort...etc) of watershed is required to help offset increased discharges due to development in other parts of the watershed
- Development within a half mile of the floodway in the lower part of the basin can be left un-detained
- It may be necessary to design local detention/retention to protect local streams or if there is a local flooding issue downstream of the property

The presentation concluded with a table showing a summary of discharges within the watershed and proposed subdivision regulation improvements.

6. PIC Responsibilities

Jeff DeQuattro noted that the next agenda item involved a review of PIC responsibilities, with a slide that included:

- Identify tasks and citizen input mechanisms to be implemented
- Conduct periodic project status meetings to follow progress
- Cooperatively identify tasks/roles for MBNEP in addressing issues or galvanizing action

Noting that time was becoming limited, he asked participants to consider these responsibilities, and moved them to the Round Table for three minute project updates from PIC members.

7. Rapid Project Updates/Round Table

- Jeff DeQuattro began by reporting on **The Nature Conservancy** activities. With the Alabama Coastal Foundation, Holcim, Inc., U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service and ADCNR, they spent a recent Friday picking up trash and doing invasive species removal at the Cuppersmith Track south of Alabama Port along Highway 193.

On Friday, April 13, the 100/1,000 Restore Coastal Alabama coalition will host a volunteer day at Helen Wood Park centered around landscaping and stormwater management from 0800 to 1130. Following project activities, workers will meet at the River Shack for lunch.

- Mark Berte reported on **Alabama Coastal Foundation (ACF)** activities. He mentioned Estuary Corps, a program designed for middle school kids to become involved in environmental science and marine biology stewardship activities. He noted that this will be a record year for the Bay Buddies program. Coastal Kids Quiz will be held on Friday, April 27. ACF is “spreading out” with activities in Birmingham. Mr. Berte passed out informational fliers advertising the Thursday, April 26 First Annual Coastal Seafood Craze which will take place from 1630 until 1930 at Bienville Square in downtown Mobile.
- Bob Howard said that **EPA Region IV** is involved with climate change and water, the National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan involving ecosystem-based management and coastal and marine spatial planning. He requested any pet project ideas involving climate

change or urban/environmental justice initiatives. EPA's Climate Ready Estuaries Program will provide \$30K-\$50K per project.

- Rosemary Sawyer said that the **City of Mobile** continues to seek funding to implement the projects described by Nick Amberger in the December 14 PIC meeting.
- Casi Callaway of **Mobile BayKeeper (MBK)**, noting that April is Earth Month, said that this year BayKeeper is conducting a "Make a Difference Month," with a daily challenge ranging from the truly challenging to the easy stuff to draw folks into environmentally sustainable behavior and stewardship. She challenged participants to contribute, and to check out the blog at <http://makeadifferencemonth.wordpress.com/>.

Bay Keeper is doing citizen education monitoring workshops with an Environmental Justice Grant related to the Three Mile Creek Watershed and its residents. MBNEP and the City of Mobile are supporting this TMC project.

Ms. Callaway noted that April 22 is Earth Day with activities in Fairhope and Cathedral Square. On April 28 they'll be participating along with MBNEP and other organizations in the Great American Cleanup with activities centered around the Springdale Mall which contributes to the problem of litter in the Dog River Watershed.

- **City of Orange Beach** Engineer Kit Alexander reported that the Highway 161 wetland enhancement project will begin construction in the next two weeks, with engineering designs done and Corps permitting secured. Canal Road Overlay District planning activities are ongoing. She noted that Auburn Speaks 2013 is seeking submissions related to water projects. The link is <http://auburnspeaks.squarespace.com/auburn-speaks-2013-water/>.
- Roberta Swann reported that the **Mobile Bay National Estuary Program** is involved in efforts to revise the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan with the Science Advisory Committee identifying levels of stress from identified stressors to ecosystem services provided by priority habitats. MBNEP is also preparing to develop a comprehensive watershed management plan for the Three Mile Creek watershed with funding from the State of Alabama.
- Cal Markert reported that **Baldwin County** is working with Leslie Lassiter, the Wolf Bay Watershed Watch, and the Dauphin Island Sea Lab on a project funded by CIAP to create areas which can support submerged aquatic vegetation growth.
- Dr. LaDon Swann listed upcoming **Mississippi Alabama Sea Grant Consortium** activities, including \$500K in regional planning for Alabama and Mississippi (starting in June), two large Ecosystem Service Valuation Projects involving oyster reefs, salt marshes, and mangroves, and Climate Community of Practice event April 16-18 with Orange Beach Climate Adaptation Planning.

- Meg Goecker noted that the **NOAA Restoration Center** Community-based Restoration Partnership Grant submission deadline is April 13 and the Fish America Grant submission deadline is April 30.
- Sandy Gibson of the **U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Mobile District Regulatory Division** celebrated the authorization of a Living Shorelines General Permit. She said that the next step is updating the education and outreach efforts and conducting a contracting course to encourage use of sustainable technology for shoreline protection.
- Patric Harper of the **U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service Coastal Programs** reported that some funds are currently spoken for, with a 40% budget cut that was initiated two weeks ago. That flexible program is funding a Big Creek Lake stream restoration (with MAWSS), and is funding or has funded living shorelines projects; Weeks Bay NERR pitcher bog restoration, removal of debris, and habitat restorations; a management plan for the Meadows Tract in Baldwin County, and invasive species removal in Village Point Park.
- Emery Baya of **Thompson Engineering** reports working with partners to kick off implementation of a regenerative step pool storm conveyance on a tributary to Joe's Branch. In addition to a sequence of rock step pools to slow velocity, this technique will provide an organic filter to promote retention and infiltration. The project is funded by a Section 319 grant with match provided by ALDOT. It is currently in the design phase.
- Teddy King of the **Alabama Department of Public Health** in Baldwin County reports "business as usual" as public health is promoted through environmental protection.
- Ashley Campbell of the **City of Daphne** said that the City is involved in a low impact development/green infrastructure project and a demonstration project on a dirt road along Tiawasse Creek. Recommendations for ordinance development are expected. Ms. Campbell brought an attractive D'Olive Watershed sign, one of the signs which will be posted along targeted thoroughfares to promote stewardship and protection of local water bodies and the Bay.
- Leslie Lassiter of the **City of Foley** is involved in a project to restore Wolf Creek with recently received plans under review. She anticipates construction in the next several months. The City is also involved in Fish & Wildlife Service-funded invasive species removal of 500 acres at the Graham Creek Nature Preserve. The City will host an Earth Day Extravaganza and Jog the Bog at the Preserve on April 14.
- Bob Harris of the **Alabama State Port Authority** reported that the Port is working with the Corps on the Beneficial Use of Dredged Material.
- Christian Miller, Facilitator of the **Coastal Alabama Clean Water Partnership** will conduct a Rain Barrel Workshop at Central Presbyterian Church on Dauphin and Ann Streets on April 11 and another on Schillinger Road in May.

- Randy Shaneyfelt of **ADEM** reiterated that the Joe's Branch Project alluded to earlier by Mr. Baya will be the State's most highly funded Section 319 project this year.
- John Mareska of the **Alabama Marine Resources Division** reported receiving a grant to fund seafood testing. He noted that ground has been broken on the Claude Peteet Mariculture Center in Gulf Shores. He also acknowledged AMRD efforts to facilitate the implementation of turtle exclusion devices on skimmer trawls in State waters.
- Tom Herder of the **MBNEP** reported a very successful invasive species removal project to remove *Phragmites* from the margins of the restored marsh at Helen Wood Park that was undertaken with Holcim, Inc. employees on Wednesday, March 28. He also reported that a Community Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 12 at the St. Rose of Lima Parish Hall in Coden to unveil the 100% design plan for the shoreline stabilization/habitat creation project on Mon Louis Island.

8. Announcements and Wrap-up

Ms. Callaway announced that on Tuesday, April 17 at the BayKeeper office, MBK will conduct Muddy Water Watch Training.

9. Next Meeting

Having wrapped up the Round Table reports, Mr. DeQuattro said that a date for the next quarterly PIC meeting would be September 16, but after some discussion, it was reconsidered to keep meeting frequency quarterly. A proposed meeting date will be distributed via email.

10. Adjourn

Mr. DeQuattro asked for a motion to adjourn, which was provided by Ms. Callaway, seconded by Mr. Ferraro, and carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1510.