



MINUTES
Technical Committee
Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program

October 7, 2020
10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Zoom Virtual Meeting
[Video Link](#)

Attendees

Jessica Bibza, Chair	NWF
Ken Heck, Vice Chair	Dauphin Island Sea Lab
Matt Posner	PPBEP
Samantha Bolduc	Escambia County
Whitney Scheffel	PPBEP
Logan McDonald	PPBEP
Barbara Albrecht	BFA
Justin Bousquin	USEPA-GEMMD
Jeanette Kelson	Wood
Darryl Boudreau	NWFWMD
Matt Deitch	UF Milton
Eric Schneider	ESA Pensacola
Lisa Harris	Choctawhatchee, Pea, and Yellow Rivers WMA
Haley Gancel	UF/IFAS
Mollie Taylor	GeoSyntec
Shelley Alexander	Santa Rosa County
Justin Bousquin	EPA GEMMD
Matthew Miller	WRA Engineering
Marcy Frick	Tetra Tech
Kate Dawson	Moffat and Nichol
Jackie Lane	Friends of Perdido Bay
Naisy Dolar	Santa Rosa County
Kristin Bennett	Tetra Tech
Beth Fugate	FDEP
Melody Ray-Culp	USFW
Brian Underwood	Choctawhatchee Bay EP
Robert Holbrook	FWS
Christian Wagley	Healthy Gulf
Randy Sears	ECUA
Mark Jackson	City of Pensacola
Renee Collini	NGOM SSC
Tanya Linzy	Santa Rosa County

1. Call to Order

2. Introductions

Chair Jessica Bibza requested that any new attendees introduce themselves. Matt Posner, Interim Director, introduced Mark Jackson from the City of Pensacola.

3. Approval of August 26th, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Cochair Bibza called for a motion and acceptance of meeting minutes. Renee Collini (NGOM SSC) moved to approve the minutes and Robert Holbrook (FWS) seconded. No objections were made and the minutes were approved.

4. Staff Updates

a) **Program Video**

Staff shared a program video that was developed for the Restore America's Estuaries summit and Chair Bibza summarized the presentation.

- i. [Program Video](#)
- ii. [RAE Panel Presentation Recording](#)

b) **Estuary Icon Quiz**

Staff shared that Community Outreach Coordinator, Logan McDonald, created an Estuary Icon Quiz that had high levels of engagement on Facebook. The BuzzFeed website that hosts the quiz was down, but staff will share the link.

c) **Haas Center Survey**

Ms. McDonald informed the committee that the survey had been postponed due to Hurricane Sally. Ms. McDonald stated that staff have a final meeting with the Haas Center this Thursday Oct. 8 to review maps that will assist survey takers. Staff are optimistic that the survey will be completed next week.

d) **NCCA Update**

Ms. Scheffel informed the committee that sampling had to be postponed until June 2021 due to Hurricane Sally.

e) **National Estuaries Week events rescheduled**

Ms. McDonald shared that events planned for National Estuaries Week had been postponed due to Hurricane Sally. The Listening Tour was rescheduled to October 19th at 5:30 PM and the Scavenger Hunt that was originally created by Rick O'Connor (FL Sea Grant) had been postponed due to safety concerns. Staff plan to reschedule the event.

f) **New Staff**

Mr. Posner informed the committee that Emerson Cheney was joining the team as a Volunteer Coordinator for the Trash Free Waters Project.

g) **Executive Director**

Mr. Posner updated the committee regarding the Executive Director position. Donald Killorn accepted the Executive Director position and anticipates starting early December or January, pending the visa process.

h) Chair Bibza asked about the status of the RAE grant proposal and September kick-off event.

Mr. Posner informed the committee that the program had not been invited to submit a full RAE proposal and the kick-off event had been rescheduled as the "Bays are Listening" session.

5. CCMP Developmental Workplan Implementation

a) **Technical Committee Workshop November 19th**

Ms. Scheffel confirmed that a workshop lead by the FL Centers of Excellence project team (Matt Deitch, Jane Caffrey, Haley Gancel, and Amanda Croteau) and PPBEP staff will be held

on November 19th from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm. This will take the place of the November TC Meeting.

6. Presentation

a) Gulf Frontal Watershed Management Plan

Mollie Taylor (GeoSyntec)

Ms. Mollie Taylor highlighted how the plan was being incorporated into Mobile Estuary Program's bigger picture. The plan is focused around six values held by community members and Ms. Taylor highlighted community engagement efforts and partners. Ms. Taylor highlighted critical messages in public engagement that help build momentum for these types of efforts. They have completed most of their community engagement, watershed characterization, watershed conditions, and climate vulnerability assessments. Next steps include identifying the critical issues and areas, regulatory reviews, and management measures. Survey results indicated the top three priorities were water quality, fish and wildlife, and beaches and shorelines. The main categories of critical issues that were identified included inter-governmental coordination, increased development and absence of Green Infrastructure (GI)/Low Impact Development (LID) practices, water quality, ecological and habitat loss, coastal erosion, and limited access. Solutions were chosen through a multi-criteria decision-making matrix. Ms. Taylor shared lessons learned: make a community engagement plan early and modify it if it isn't working, define goals early in process for the steering committee and start succession planning, use the data you have – don't wait for theoretical or future data, and watersheds have issues and concerns outside of watershed boundaries.

Chair Bibza opened the question and answer session and highlighted the importance of in person stakeholder engagement and asked Ms. Taylor how they are working around that during the pandemic. Ms. Taylor stated that they plan to hold a meeting at a large venue with social distancing to allow for in person meetings to continue. Ms. Taylor also recommended creating opportunities that encourage people to talk during virtual meetings. Chair Bibza asked about the duration of their engagement efforts and Ms. Taylor said it had been ongoing for about a year. Ms. Barbara Albrecht (BFA) requested a similar presentation for Carpenter Creek and Eleven Mile Creek projects.

7. Discussion

a) Hurricane Sally

Mr. Posner shared that many projects such as Project Green Shores had functioned as designed and that they could serve as case studies for resilience benefits and encourage Green Infrastructure projects as we rebuild. He shared concerns over a lack of public messaging on water quality following the storm and that the topic will be discussed at the afternoon's policy board meeting alongside a request to channel messaging through the PPBEP. Mr. Posner opened the floor to the committee to hear their concerns and stories from Hurricane Sally. Chair Bibza shared that Darryl Boudreau (NFWWF) had collected drone footage after Hurricane Sally and had agreed to host a workshop to go through the footage. Staff will share the link to the footage Mr. Boudreau collected.

Vice chair Ken Heck asked if anyone was planning habitat assessment studies after the storm. Mr. Posner stated The Nature Conservancy might conduct shoreline assessments but that is the only project that staff are aware of. Ms. Samantha Bolduc (Escambia County) shared that Escambia County completed an analysis based on NOAA satellite imagery for beach mouse habitat. Shelley Alexander (Santa Rosa County) shared that there were damages from storm

surge and shoreline erosion. Flow through decking at one of Santa Rosa County's pier was successful and had zero losses. Mr. Boudreau offered to capture footage of the pier for a case study.

Naisy Dolar (Santa Rosa County) requested more information about the [NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program](#) and asked if anyone had experience with it. Mr. Posner attended a meeting with Woody Speed (Orange Beach) where they discussed potential projects funded from the program. There is usually a pot share component and the solutions that are implemented are not always nature based. Mr. Posner offered to invite a NRCS representative to the next meeting to discuss further. Ms. Dolar was in favor and suggested identifying key projects to have ready would be beneficial. Mr. Posner suggested coming together for [FEMA Bric projects](#) and coordinating efforts for submissions due November 12, 2020. Ms. Renee Collini (NGOM SSC) shared that low-cost wave gauges can be deployed to show what degree of wave energy nature-based projects, such as living shorelines, were able to withstand.

Mr. Holbrook (FWS) stated that work starts quickly to rebuild and that the program might be able to have a storm plan with resources available in the future. Ms. Collini said existing efforts are focused around people rather than habitats, and that resources to put in people's hands would be helpful. Mr. Holbrook identified that some people don't have internet resources after a storm. Ms. Alexander reminded the committee that permits only allow individuals to build back infrastructure like it was before the storm. Mr. Holbrook suggested that the program could work with local planning and permitting organizations to make a difference in the future.

Mr. Miller asked if impact assessments from the barges, including seagrasses and shorelines, were being completed. Ms. Beth Fugate (DEP) shared that most locations where the barges were located had primarily sandy bottoms, except Project Green Shores. The city of Pensacola is overseeing removal at Project Green Shores and primary concerns were over property damages if another storm were to occur.

Justin Bousquin (USEPA GEM) stated that he believes that Santa Rose county is on a 3-year re-evaluation cycle for FEMA's Community Rating System (CRS) and it would be good to revisit with them to see if they had actions planned that would help with their ratings.

b) Legislative Appropriations

Mr. Posner informed the committee that the awarded legislative appropriations functions as DEP grant agreement and that staff were developing a grant agreement work plan with DEP. Due to COVID and storm impacts, Governor DeSantis is holding back 6% of all projects, leaving the new appropriations at \$470,000 unless funding is released. Mr. Posner reviewed the Grant Work Plan components including education and outreach, monitoring efforts, and the Mini Grant Program. The draft Mini Grant Program was reviewed, and it will be presented at the afternoon's policy board meeting for approval, pending final DEP approval. Awards range from \$5,000 to \$50,000 and eligibility is limited to local government or non-state entities (educational institutions and 501(c)(3)s). Projects must be completed by June 1, 2021. Staff hope to begin solicitation on October 12, 2020 and close the application period on November 6, 2020. Grant categories include water quality, habitat restoration, fish and wildlife conservation, resilience, invasive species, citizen science, and aquatic trash/marine debris.

Mr. Posner reviewed the selection criteria and process and asked committee members to share the solicitation after it is announced. Chair Bibza inquired about reporting requirements for legislative appropriations. Mr. Posner stated that staff are responsible for submitting a full report, but a report on each mini grant project will also be required. Chair Bibza asked how it will be advertised. Mr. Posner stated that staff will share the mini grant program through the program's website, social media, press releases, and the e-mail distribution list.

Mr. Miller asked if a similar program could be considered for Alabama. Mr. Posner highlighted staff partnership efforts with ADCNR and ADEM to identify additional funding opportunities.

8. Information Items

- a) Staff have been working on several grant opportunities with partners.
 - NOAA Restore Actionable Science Program
 - Planning Future Shoreline Trends in Perdido Bay System (TNC)
 - Evaluation of rapid assessment methodology for shoreline restoration after hurricanes (TNC)
 - Informing small-scale living shorelines for a large impact (MSU)
 - Building resilience to climate change stressors into seagrass bed management plans in GOM (University of New Orleans)
 - NOAA ESLR – Effects of SLR (TNC AL)
 - EPA Farmer to Farmer (Santa Rosa County, AACD)
 - Restore America's Estuaries – Sedimentation in Perdido Watershed (UF Milton)
 - Not invited to submit full proposal
- b) FL/AL Transportation Planning Organization is soliciting [public input](#) on their 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan

9. Around the Room/Announcements/Public Comment

- a) Matt Deitch shared his excitement for the November Technical Committee Workshop that is being held in conjunction with the Centers of Excellence work on stressors.
- b) Brian Underwood (CBEC) announced the final coalition Board of Directors meeting is next Thursday October 15 at 9:30 am and Technical Advisory Committee meeting is October 22nd at 1:30 pm.
- c) Sentinel Site Cooperative – Ms. Collini shared that SSC program funding is coming to an end, but the effort to work on flood resilience and climate change resilience will continue through MS-AL Sea Grant.
- d) Barbara Albrecht inquired if the Business Partnership Meeting had met yet. Mr. Posner shared that the initial meeting had been postponed with Hurricane Sally, but staff expect to hold a meeting this fall.
- e) Chair Bibza reminded the committee that the policy board meeting was being held this afternoon at 1:30 pm.

10. Next Meeting – workshop in lieu of a November meeting scheduled for November 19th from 8:30 am-12:30 pm

11. Adjourn

