

Oyster Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes

February 17th, 2022, 10:00 – 12:00 CT

Virtual Meeting | [Zoom Recording](#)

Participants

Co-Chair Beth Fugate	DEP
C-Chair Chris Verlinde	UF/IFAS Sea Grant
Whitney Scheffel	PPBEP
Matt Posner	PPBEP
Logan McDonald	PPBEP
Madi Ross	PPBEP
Haley Gancel	PPBEP
Emerson Cheney	PPBEP
Amanda Croteau	UWF
Anne Birch	TNC
Barbara Albrecht	BFA/UWF
Brandon Smith	Grayson Bay Oyster Co.
Chips Kirschenfeld	Escambia County
Christian Wagley	Healthy Gulf
Darryl Boudreau	NFWFMD
Erin Reschke	EPA
Greg Johnson	Auburn University
Heather Hyde	Jacobs Engineering
Jane Caffrey	UWF
Jill Fleiger	FDACS
Josh Neese	The Florida Oyster Trading Company
Katie Konchar	FWC
Laura Geselbracht	TNC
Lisa Smith	EPA
Mark Jackson	City of Pensacola
Mark Nicholas	Escambia County
Matthew Davis	FWC
Mike Norberg	Okaloosa County
Portia Sapp	FDACS
Ronnie Baker	USA/DISL
Ryann Rossi	EPA
Sam Bolduc	Escambia County
Shana Alford	Avalon Aquaculture
Shawn Brown	Visit Pensacola
Tanya Linzy	Santa Rosa County



1. **Call to Order**
2. **Welcome and Introductions**
3. **Approval of August 24th, 2021 Meeting Minutes**
 - a. Co-Chair Chris Verlinde (UF/IFAS) made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from August 24th, 2021. Anne Birch (TNC) seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved unanimously.
4. **Partner Presentations**
 - a. Matthew Davis (FWC) – Florida Trustee Implementation Group (TIG) Oyster Project
 - i. This project aims to fill oyster data gaps across 6 estuaries along the Gulf Coast including Pensacola Bay, St. Andrews Bay, Suwannee Sound, Crystal River, Tampa Bay, and Charlotte Harbor.
 - ii. Phases of the project include data compilation, oyster mapping, field assessments and monitoring, and development of a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) model
 - iii. Monitoring will include monthly recruitment (spat), subtidal oyster surveys, monthly sedimentation, and disease monitoring (dermo).
 - iv. Discussion and Q/A followed on project timeline, site selection and spatial coverage, elevation of sediment traps, modifications to HSI/HSM models.
 - b. Ronnie Baker (USA/DISL) – Fish video surveys of remnant and existing oyster reefs in East, Blackwater, and Escambia Bays
 - i. This project (funded by Community Grant Program) has focused on surveying fish communities across existing oyster reefs in East and Blackwater Bays.
 - ii. Project goals include describing fish communities, testing success of underwater video, guiding restoration prioritization, and providing baseline for future monitoring efforts.
 - iii. R. Baker discussed the various methods used for sampling fish communities (nets, trawls), advantages of using video, the GoPro camera set up, and the process used for analyzing videos for fish/invertebrate presence/absence and density estimates.
 - iv. See the recording for the videos shared during the presentation.
 - v. Discussion and Q/A followed on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), 360 cameras, and otolith/gut content analyses to assist in identifying fish species in videos, reef soundscapes to assess health, and the potential for identifying sources of sedimentation in Blackwater and Escambia Bays.
 - c. Jill Fleiger (FDACS) – Water quality and shellfish harvesting area classification in Pensacola Bay
 - i. J. Fleiger provided an update on the current water quality trends (e.g., fecal coliforms) in Escambia and East Bays preventing areas from being re-opened for harvest.
 - ii. An overview map of sampling stations and proposed boundaries indicated updated prohibited areas and conditionally approved areas.



- iii. Discussion and Q/A followed regarding extending prohibited area in East Bay and the collaboration between FDACS and the aquaculture community.

5. Staff Updates

- a. Funding
 - i. NOAA B-WET Proposal
 - Logan McDonald (PPBEP) notified the committee that the Program will be submitting a proposal for the 2022 NOAA B-WET Program.
 - The proposed project will include teacher professional development in Year 1 and Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWESS) for students in Year 2 that are focused on Pensacola Bay oysters.
 - ii. Florida State Appropriation
- b. EscaRosa OysterCorps reef prism workshop
 - i. The Community Grant Program funded EscaRosa OysterCorps crew participated in a reef prism building workshop with the PROS team in December. [Read more](#)

6. Upcoming Events

- a. SAVE THE DATE: Orange Beach Seafood Festival
 - Saturday February 19th (10:00 AM – 4:00 PM CT)
- b. SAVE THE DATE: Business Partnership Kickoff Meeting (*in-person*)
 - Thursday, February 24th (5:30 PM – 7:00 PM CT)
@ Perfect Plain Brewing, Garden Street, Pensacola
- c. SAVE THE DATE: Oyster mapping “Lunch and Learn” webinar
 - Monday February 28th (11:00 AM – 12:00 PM CT)
 - [Lunch and Learn Recording](#)
- d. SAVE THE DATE: Management Conference Meeting (*in-person*)
 - Wednesday, April 13th (11:00 AM – 4:00 PM CT)
@ Sanders Beach-Corrine Jones Resource Center, Pensacola
 - Join us after for a sunset social on the Pensacola Bay ferry from 6:30 PM- 8:30 PM CT
- e. SAVE THE DATE(S): CCMP Rollout Engagements (*in-person*)
 - May 10th, 12th, 22nd, and 24th
 - Each CCMP public engagement will focus on a CCMP goal
 - The engagements will be held in different locations throughout the watershed
- f. SAVE THE DATE: Oyster Sub-committee Vision Mapping Workshop
 - June 15th (*tentative*), time TBD
 - a. W. Scheffel offered a tentative date and time for the workshop. Discussion was held on details involving the vision map process.
- g. SAVE THE DATE: Oyster Sub-Committee Meeting (*virtual*)
 - August 18th (10:00 AM- 12:00 PM)
- h. SAVE THE DATE(S): State of the Bays Fundraiser Gala
 - August 25th, 26th, or 27th (TBD)
 - PPBEP staff requested input on date options. Committee participants did not express a preference for any date.



7. Discussion

- a. New PPBEP office space
 - i. The Estuary Program has moved across the street to the Seville Tower, 226 S. Palafox Place, Pensacola.
- b. Oyster Restoration Draft Project Concept (*Leads: PPBEP, TNC, FWC*)
 - i. Stakeholder engagements
 - ii. Creation of vision map for Pensacola Bay System
 - W. Scheffel discussed the tentative meeting date and time (June 15th, 5:30 – 6:45 PM CT) for the Sub-Committee's next standard meeting.
 - Contact [W. Scheffel](#) with any comments, questions, or concerns.

8. Around the Room/Announcements

- a. Heather Hyde updated the committee on the East Bay Oyster Restoration Project. Reefs 17-21 are under construction, while Reefs 9-15 have been approved for construction. She informed the Sub-Committee participants that life has already established itself on the reefs. Sheepshead, crabs, stingrays, and birds have been spotted on or near the new reefs.
- b. Co-Chair Beth Fugate updated the committee on Project GreenShores Site 2. Plants are scheduled to go in the week of Feb. 21st. The new breakwaters and marsh mounds have been constructed.
- c. Co-Chair Chris Verlinde notified the committee that the Plastic-free Restoration of Oyster Shorelines (PROS) working group has been working with the Choctawhatchee Basic Alliance (CBA) to build and deploy new oyster prisms at Lisa Jackson Park. The date set for deployment is March 1st.
 - i. Contact Rachel Gwen (CBA) for more information.

9. Next Meeting

- a. **The next Oyster Sub-Committee meeting will be substituted for the Program's Management Conference Meeting in April.**