



Board of Directors Meeting

November 8, 2023, at 1:30 p.m. CT

Gulf Breeze Council Chambers

1070 Shoreline Drive, Gulf Breeze, FL 32561

[Meeting Recording](#)

Members Present

Woody Speed, Chair	City of Orange Beach
Robert Bender	Escambia County
Vernon Compton	City of Milton
Cherry Fitch	City of Gulf Breeze
Mike Kohler	Escambia County
Jared Moore	City of Pensacola
Mike Norberg	Okaloosa County
Kerry Smith	Santa Rosa County

Members Absent

Colten Wright, Vice Chair	Santa Rosa County
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Interested Parties Present

Matt Posner	PPBEP
Whitney Scheffel	PPBEP
Logan McDonald	PPBEP
Haley Gancel	PPBEP
Molly McDaniel	PPBEP
Bailey Walkinshaw	PPBEP
Mary Jane Bass	Beggs & Lane
Darryl Boudreau	NFWFMD
Chips Kirschenfeld	Escambia County
Paul Looney	WRA
Bill Wein	Community Member

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

Matt Posner (Executive Director) called the roll. A quorum was present.

3. Approval of Board Agenda

Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) made a motion to approve the agenda. Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Approval of August 30, 2023, Board Minutes

Commissioner Kerry Smith (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to approve the minutes. Vernon



Compton (City of Milton) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Staff Updates

a. Executive Director's Update (*Matt Posner, Executive Director*)

i. Bailey Walkinshaw

Bailey Walkinshaw was introduced to the Board of Directors as the new Community Outreach Assistant.

ii. PPBEP Organizational Transition

The organization transition is fully complete, and M. Posner thanked Escambia County for hosting the Program since establishment in 2018.

iii. Hiring

The Operations Manager and the Assistant Project Coordinator positions are set to close next week. There was discussion about extending the application deadline for the Operations Manager position.

iv. Grant Updates

PPBEP was invited to submit a full proposal for the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Regional Resilience Challenge, the Letter of Intent included a nearly \$50 million ask for nine projects across the watersheds. The full proposal is due in February 2024. Over 800 letters of intent were submitted to the NOAA Regional Resilience Challenge, of which 120 were invited back for full proposals.

v. EPA and RESTORE Council Visit

Staff provided a close out update to Mary Walker, the Executive Director of RESTORE Council, and Marc Wyatt, Director of EPA Gulf of Mexico Division, on the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP), State of the Bays Report Card, numerous recent grants, education and outreach initiatives, and monitoring programs and partnerships that are underway. M. Posner brought Mary Walker and Marc Wyatt on a tour of several different projects with our project partners—Escambia County, City of Pensacola, City of Gulf Breeze, and Santa Rosa County. M. Posner thanked Chairman Speed, Commissioner Bender, Commissioner Smith, Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties, City of Pensacola and the City of Gulf Breeze, and all the staff for a successful visit. RESTORE Council discussed holding their next meeting in March 2024 at Pensacola Beach and setting up another project tour with the other four gulf state representatives.

vi. Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) Living Shoreline Workshop in Galveston

Staff presented the CCMP amongst other estuary programs at the RAE Living Shoreline Workshop in Galveston, TX. The workshop provided a beneficial



networking opportunity for sharing best practices and challenges with living shoreline practitioners from across the country. Staff will be able to apply these lessons learned to our Living Shoreline Cost Share Program that will kick off next year.

vii. Legislative Delegation Meeting

M. Posner attended the Escambia County Legislative Delegation Meeting and passed along appreciation on behalf of the Board of Directors to the entire delegation, especially Senator Broxson, for their support of the Estuary Program. Staff is working with the Delegation to obtain support for dedicated, recurring funding for the Program.

viii. Evening for the Estuaries

The Evening for the Estuaries Gala had more than 70 attendees, brought in over \$31,000 between sponsors, ticket sales, and silent auction items, and raised \$21,330 in net proceeds after event expenses. M. Posner thanked the City of Orange Beach and their Coastal Arts Center team, as well as Board Members Chairman Speed, Vernon Compton, and Commissioner Kohler for attending the Gala. M. Posner thanked the staff for their efforts and recognized the following individuals and organizations that contributed to the event: Tanya Gallagher and her band; Grayson Bay Oyster Co; Volunteers Troy, Julie, and Jordan; silent auction item donors and all attendees; and the event sponsors—Atlas Oyster House, International Paper, Moffat & Nichol, Intracoastal Outfitters, Saunders Yacht Works, Water Resources Associates, WSP, Anfield Consulting, and The Nature Conservancy Florida and Alabama Chapters.

b. Technical Update (*Whitney Scheffel, Senior Scientist*)

i. Seagrass Monitoring

Staff accompanied the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Lab for seagrass monitoring in the Pensacola and Perdido Bays. An emphasis was placed on historical data availability while selecting sites in Perdido Bay. Quadrat samples were used to determine seagrass cover percentage, macroalgae growth, epiphyte density, and canopy height. Water quality parameters and light availability were recorded as well. PPBEP aims to continue to fund these seagrass surveys annually.

ii. Fish Trawling Survey

Staff accompanied the Dauphin Island Sea Lab for trawling surveys in the Santa Rosa Sound and highlighted a few of the 31 different species that were caught during the survey, including the Emerald Parrot Fish which was also spotted in Big Lagoon State Park. Staff intend to make the trawling survey an annual effort due to the importance of juvenile fish populations as an indicator of



seagrass health.

iii. Oyster Sub-Committee Meeting

The Oyster Sub-Committee met on October 26th and reviewed water quality monitoring results at Grayson Bay Oyster Company's Farm, discussed the Pensacola Bay Oyster Restoration Initiative (PBORI) and potential stipends, held sub-committee elections, and received updates from local oyster farmers. The PBORI is moving towards implementation and staff anticipate issuing a request for proposals for the full design of the oyster restoration project. The Pensacola Bay Oyster Company shared that they are moving operations from the Port of Pensacola to Garcon Point Peninsula, however they will continue operating both facilities until the transition is complete. Staff expressed the value of working with local oyster farmers and previous oyster harvesters in the design and process meetings and discussed an interest in stipends to help maintain the farmers' and harvesters' involvement. The newly elected co-chairs for the subcommittee are Chris Verlinde from Santa Rosa County and Thomas Derbes, the Florida Sea Grant Extension Agent for Santa Rosa County.

iv. Mattie M. Kelly Environmental Institute Annual Symposium

Staff were invited by Community Grant recipient Dr. Geoff Smith to give a presentation related to the Santa Rosa Sound at the Mattie M. Kelly Environmental Institute Annual Symposium. Program partners, such as the University of West Florida, Northwest Florida State College, Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance, and the Santa Rosa County Extension Office were in attendance. Staff presented on seagrass mapping and monitoring in the Santa Rosa Sound and provided an update on the juvenile fish communities from the recent fish trawling survey.

c. Outreach Update (*Logan McDonald, Community Outreach Coordinator*)

i. Pensacola Seafood Festival

Staff attended the Pensacola Seafood Festival, an annual event that PPBEP has attended for the past three years. There was strong community interest in the Estuary Program and a sponsor was obtained for the Panhandle Manatee Slow Ride.

ii. Navy Federal Gives Back Day

Staff hosted Navy Federal for their annual Navy Federal Gives Back Day by leading oyster stringer building for oyster spat monitoring, and demonstrated seining to help connect the volunteers to what is living in our waterways.

iii. Full Moon Halloween Paddle

Staff partnered with the City of Pensacola Parks and Recreation department to host a successful Full Moon guided paddle tour at Bayou Texar.



- iv. **Gulf Partnership Excursion**
Staff provided a guided beach walk along Navarre Beach for attendees of the Gulf Partnership Conference in lieu of a kayak tour due to weather conditions.
- v. **NOAA B-WET**
Staff recently assisted Pensacola High School with a field trip to Pensacola Bay at the Pensacola Country Club and demonstrated seining, how to measure salinity, determine Secchi depth, and explained how their oyster spat monitoring trees will be deployed. Due to the holidays, staff anticipate the remaining field trips will occur in the new year.
- vi. **Washington High School Marine Science Academy**
Staff provided a seining demonstration at Bayview Park and Bayou Texar for Washington High School Marine Science Academy.
- vii. **Trivia Night**
Staff hosted trivia on local habitats at Coastal County on November 7th and had 15 teams participate – a record number of teams.
- viii. **Panhandle Manatee Slow Ride**
Staff invited the Board to attend the Jessica Bibza Panhandle Manatee Slow Ride, a fundraiser hosted by PPBEP and Bike Pensacola to support local manatee outreach while continuing Jessica’s legacy. The event is scheduled for November 18th at Admiral Mason Park at 3pm. A \$25 donation is suggested to support the Panhandle Manatee Internship Program.

6. Action Items

- a. **Ratifying Approval of Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program’s Insurance Policies**
Discussion was held on PPBEP insurance policies. Per authorization at the September 2023 Board Meeting, the Chairman has executed the Worker’s Comp and General and Professional Liability insurance policies. Discussion was held deductible and premium options for the Directors and Officers policy. A \$10,000 deductible for Directors and Officers coverage, inclusive of crime and cyber, offered the lowest annual premium at \$4,963.
Commissioner Robert Bender (Escambia County) made a motion to ratify approval of Worker’s Comp and General and Professional Liability, and approve property, EPLI, and Directors and Officers, Crime, and Cyber Coverage with a \$10,000 deductible. Vernon Compton (City of Milton) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- b. **Approval of the Revised Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program Employee Handbook**
M. Posner presented the proposed revisions to the Employee Handbook for Board consideration. Those proposed changes include a revised and consistent definition to the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) section, a change to cap the max Paid Time Off (PTO) payout



at 80 hours, and a proposed max PTO annual rollover of 120 hours. Discussion was held on the PTO annual rollover policy and comparison to other entities. Discussion was held on capping the annual rollover to 80 hours. The Board discussed capping the annual PTO rollover to 100 hours.

Commissioner Robert Bender (Escambia County) made a motion to approve the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program Employee Handbook, with revision of Section 2.4.B.1.a to cap annual PTO roll-over at 100 hours. Commissioner Mike Kohler (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Robert Bender (Escambia County) made a motion to approve Executive Director Matthew J. Posner's 135 hours of PTO roll-over as of 10/1/2023 in conjunction with Escambia County's pay out of 80 hours of PTO at the Executive Director salary rate as of 9/30/2023. Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- c. **Approval of the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program Conflict of Interest Policy**
Mary Jane Bass (Beggs & Lane; PPBEP Legal Counsel) provided context for the Conflict of Interest Policy, that included slight modifications to the procedural language to ensure the policy was compliant with state laws. It is both good practice to have a Conflict of Interest Policy in-place and is necessary to proceed with the 501(c)3 designation application.
Vernon Compton (City of Milton) made a motion to approve the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program Conflict of Interest Policy and authorize the Chairman to sign Resolution R2023-03. Commissioner Robert Bender (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- d. **Approval of the 2024 Holiday Schedule**
Commissioner Mike Kohler (Escambia County) made a motion to approve agenda action items D-F. Commissioner Robert Bender (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- e. **Approval of the 2024 Board Meeting Schedule**
Commissioner Mike Kohler (Escambia County) made a motion to approve agenda action items D-F. Commissioner Robert Bender (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- f. **Approval of the 2024 Travel Schedule**
Commissioner Mike Kohler (Escambia County) made a motion to approve agenda action items D-F. Commissioner Robert Bender (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- g. **Approval of Change Order #1 to Beggs & Lane's Legal Services Contract for FY22-23**



Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) made a motion to approve Change Order #1 to Beggs & Lane’s Legal Services Contract for FY22-23, in the amount of \$5,470. Commissioner Robert Bender (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- h. Approval of a Subaward Agreement with Florida State University – St. Andrew & St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program, in the amount of \$324,321, for the Florida RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Living Shorelines Effectiveness Monitoring Project**
Commissioner Kerry Smith (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to approve, and authorize the Chairman to sign a Subaward Agreement with Florida State University – St. Andrew & St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program, in the amount of \$324,321, for the Florida RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Living Shorelines Effectiveness Monitoring Project. Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- i. Approval of Florida Department of Environmental Protection Grant Agreement No. OWP02 Amendment 6, in the Amount of \$926,000**
Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) made a motion to approve, and authorize the Chairman to sign Florida Department of Environmental Protection Grant Agreement No. OWP02 Amendment 6, in the amount of \$926,000, for the FY23-24 Legislative Appropriation. Vernon Compton (City of Milton) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- j. Approval of a Purchase Order with Step One Automotive Ford Crestview, in the Amount of \$47,026, for a 2024 Ford F-150 4x4 Super Cab**
Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) made a motion to approve, and authorize the Executive Director to sign a Purchase Order with Step One Automotive Ford Crestview, in the amount of \$47,026, for a 2024 Ford F-150 4x4 Super Cab. Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- k. Approval of Subaward Agreement No. NOAA23-01 to Santa Rosa County, in the amount of \$1,650,000, in Support of the Pensacola Bay Oyster Restoration Initiative**
Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) made a motion to approve, and authorize the Executive Director to sign Subaward Agreement No. NOAA23-01 to Santa Rosa County, in the amount of \$1,650,000, in Support of the Pensacola Bay Oyster Restoration Initiative. Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- l. Approval of Subaward Agreement No. NOAA23-02 to The Nature Conservancy, in the amount of \$351,417, in Support of the Pensacola Bay Oyster Restoration Initiative**
Vernon Compton (City of Milton) made a motion to approve, and authorize the Executive Director to sign Subaward Agreement No. NOAA23-02 to The Nature Conservancy, in the amount of \$351,417, in Support of the Pensacola Bay Oyster Restoration Initiative. Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.



- m. **Approval of Subaward Agreement No. NOAA23-05 to Troy University, in the amount of \$200,150, in Support of the Perdido Watershed Habitat and Community Resilience Initiative**
Commissioner Mike Kohler (Escambia County) made a motion to approve and authorize the Executive Director to sign Subaward Agreement No. NOAA23-05 to Troy University, in the amount of \$200,150, in Support of the Perdido Watershed Habitat and Community Resilience Initiative. Commissioner Robert Bender (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- n. **Approval of an Agreement with Santa Rosa County Regarding the Trash Free Waters Program at Pond Creek**
Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) made a motion to approve, and authorize the Chairman to sign an Agreement with Santa Rosa County to assume ownership and responsibility of the litter boom at Mayo Park in Santa Rosa County, and to provide \$30,000 from the EPA Trash Free Waters grant for litter prevention at the Creek. Commissioner Mike Kohler (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- o. **Approval of an Agreement with Keep Pensacola Beautiful Regarding the Trash Free Waters Program at Carpenter Creek**
Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) made a motion to approve, and authorize the Chairman to sign an Agreement with Keep Pensacola Beautiful to assume ownership and responsibility of the litter boom at Carpenter Creek within the City of Pensacola. Commissioner Robert Bender (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Discussion Items

- a. Executive Director's Annual Evaluation
Chairman Speed spoke positively regarding the Executive Director's annual performance. Future goals included extending the Program's presence further north and west into the watershed in Alabama. M. Posner thanked the Board for the opportunity to continue serving as Executive Director. M. Posner noted following the last Board Meeting, the Escambia County Clerk's Office processed the four percent cost of living increase for FY22-23 that was previously approved by the Board in December 2022 and was adopted as an across-the-board increase for all County employees for FY22-23, during the time PPBEP was hosted by the County. M. Posner asked the Board if the Board wished to reduce his annual salary adopted in his contract considering the recent cost of living back payment. The Board discussed and agreed to maintain the salary adopted at the September 2023 Board Meeting.

- b. Florida Retirement System (FRS) Update
Discussion was held on enrolling PPBEP employees in the FRS and the Florida Division of Retirement's verdict that PPBEP is not deemed as an eligible entity. Due to PPBEP serving as an instrumentality of government, Legal Counsel and the Executive Director believe PPBEP to



be an eligible entity. PPBEP has filed a petition for an informal hearing with the Florida Department of Management Services to reconsider and is expecting to hear back regarding the petition by November 30th. Staff will update the Board on any developments.

8. Committee Updates

a. Technical Committee

The next meeting will be held on November 20th, and the Oyster Sub-Committee update was given in staff updates.

b. Education and Outreach Committee

The next meeting will be in December.

c. Environmental Justice Committee

The next meeting will be determined after the 1st of the New Year.

9. Board/Agency Updates

Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) shared that the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program released their CCMP draft for review.

10. Public Comment

None

11. Adjourned