



**Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes**

July 24, 2024, at 1:30 p.m. CT

Santa Rosa County Board of County Commissioners Council Chambers

6495 Caroline St, Milton, FL 32570

Audio Recording Available Upon Request

Members Present

Mike Kohler, Chair	Escambia County
Colten Wright, Vice Chair	Santa Rosa County
Vernon Compton	City of Milton
Cherry Fitch	City of Gulf Breeze
Mike Norberg	Okaloosa County
Kerry Smith	Santa Rosa County
Woody Speed	City of Orange Beach

Members Absent

Jared Moore	City of Pensacola
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Interested Parties Present

Matt Posner	PPBEP
Whitney Scheffel	PPBEP
Logan McDonald	PPBEP
Haley Gancel	PPBEP
Bailey Walkinshaw	PPBEP
Paige Lansky	PPBEP
Mary Jane Bass	Beggs & Lane
Glenn Conrad	Community Member
Thomas Derbes	FL Sea Grant
Naisy Dolar	Santa Rosa County
Dillon Draughn	Baskerville-Donovan, Inc.
Elizabeth Major	League of Women Voters Pensacola Bay Area (LWVP)
Lynn Mott	Community Member
Paul Owens	1000 Friends of Florida
Christian Wagley	Healthy Gulf
Jeff Helms	Moffatt and Nichol

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call (Matt Posner, Executive Director)

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

4. Approval of May 15, 2024, Board Minutes

Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) made a motion to approve the May 15, 2024, meeting minutes. Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Presentation

- a. Escambia and Santa Rosa 2040 Land Use Report – *Paul Owens, 1000 Friends of Florida* Community grant awardee 1000 Friends of Florida presented on their project, Escambia and Santa Rosa 2040 Land Use Report. The report discusses potential ways local governments can accommodate the increase in new residents that are expected in each county by 2040 and ways to mitigate the environmental consequences of increased residents, such as urban growth boundaries and encouraging higher density development.

6. Staff Updates

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

- i. **Personnel**

Staff are working on short listing Finance Manager applicants and plan on holding interviews in August. The Project Coordinator position has been filled and has an expected start date in September.

- ii. **Procurement**

1. **Pensacola Bay System Oyster Restoration Initiative**

Staff are in contract negotiations with Jacobs Engineering for the Pensacola Bay System Oyster Restoration Design and anticipate having the contract finalized within the next month.

2. **Bronson Field/Lillian Swamp**

The Bronson Field/Lillian Swamp project is part of the NOAA Transformation Habitat grant with The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The solicitation was led by TNC, and staff have provided support by assisting with the interviews. Moffat & Nichol were unanimously selected and TNC is finalizing the contract.

3. **Upcoming Solicitations for the Program**

Staff are meeting with partners from DEP to review a recently completed DEP program, which will help inform the scope of work for the Sediment Load Assessment RFQ solicitation as part of the NOAA Pensacola Bay Transformational Habitat Grant. Staff are also in the final stages of executing an agreement with FDEP for the Carpenter Creek restoration design and anticipate bringing the agreement to the September Board of Directors Meeting with the intention of releasing the RFQ this fall.



iii. **Grants**

1. **NOAA Regional Resilience Challenge**

While the grant proposals that the Program submitted directly and served as partners on did not receive funding, regional NOAA leadership passed along positive remarks regarding the proposal to staff. Discussion was held on the potential geographic spread of the awarded proposals; however, it is unknown as the information is not yet available. Staff expressed that the Gulf of Mexico region received significant funding during the previous NOAA Transformational Habitat opportunity which could have impacted the funding potential for the region for this grant. Staff will provide updates as more information becomes available pertaining to the proposals funded.

2. **National Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)**

Restoration Plan 3 has been finalized, which includes over \$50 million in projects for our region. Of the \$50 million of NRDA funding coming to the region, the Program will receive a portion as a direct award for microbial source tracking in nine sub-watersheds and will work with Escambia County, Santa Rosa County, City of Pensacola, Emerald Coast Utilities Authority and other partners.

iv. **Legislative**

1. **State Appropriation**

Staff reported that the Florida Governor signed the budget last month including full \$750,000 appropriation for the Program; the agreement will come before the Board of Directors in the September meeting.

2. **Northwest Florida (NWFL) Watershed Regional Partnership**

Staff introduced the NWFL Watershed Regional Partnership as a new funding program that can help fund priorities of the CCMP, if adopted.

3. **National Estuary Program (NEP) Designation**

Staff thanked Senator Rubio and Senator Scott for helping get the bill for NEP designation passed unanimously in the U.S. Senate this past spring. Staff are working with local representatives to find a path forward to bring the bill to vote in the U.S. House of Representatives before congress breaks at the end of the calendar year.

v. **NOAA Co-Production Workshop**

Staff attended a NOAA-facilitated co-production workshop in St. Petersburg, FL in May with the workshop and associated travel costs fully funded by NOAA. The goal of the workshop was to encourage participants to focus on producing actionable and useful science by bringing researchers, resource managers, and



end users together.

vi. Pensacola Bay Oyster Company Staff Visit

Staff visited the Pensacola Bay Oyster Company's new location on Garcon Point after relocating from the Port of Pensacola. Staff highlighted hatchery managers Christine and Robert Griffith as strong local partners that are in support of upcoming oyster restoration efforts.

vii. Evening for the Estuaries

The second annual Evening for the Estuaries Gala will be held on Thursday, October 17th at the Coastal Arts Center of Orange Beach. The fundraising gala supports a multitude of the Program's initiatives, including the Jessica Bibba Manatee Outreach Internship. Staff encouraged board members to secure two donation items for the gala's silent auction and to share the gala invites with friends and family. The final deadline to obtain silent auction items is October 3rd and staff set a goal to raise \$30,000 and hope to exceed it.

viii. Oyster Shell Recycling Program and Living Shoreline Cost Share Program Updates *(Paige Lansky, Assistant Project Coordinator)*

Staff introduced Paige Lansky, the Program's new Assistant Project Coordinator. Staff provided a brief background on the Oyster Shell Recycling Program and an update on the restaurants that will be starting in the fall before expanding the program in 2025. Staff are working on developing standard operating procedures for the Living Shoreline Assistance Program (LSAP), meanwhile the workplan has already been sent out to partners for review. Staff anticipate the LSAP starting in mid-fall and have already received interest from community members. Staff will continue to share updates with the Board as the program is developed.

ix. Compound Flood Model and Adaptation Plan *(Paige Lansky, Assistant Project Coordinator)*

Staff held the first steering committee meeting for the Compound Flood Model and Adaptation Plan, a regional adaptation plan funded through DEP Florida Resiliency Grant. The steering committee is made up of community members and local representatives, and they will provide feedback on the Compound Flood Model and Adaptation Plan development.

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

i. C-STARS Monitoring

Staff participated in the second quarter of living shoreline monitoring for ten sites across the Pensacola Bay system in June. Some of the monitoring efforts include seining, oyster, and vegetation surveys, as well as setting minnow traps. The third quarter for sampling will start next week. St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program (SASJBEP) staff developed a two-page update for



the property owners and will seek their feedback on other useful ways that the information can be displayed.

ii. FWC Marine and Estuarine Sub-Section

NOAA provided positive feedback on the Program's Letter of Intent (LOI) and staff were strongly encouraged to submit full proposal, making the Program one of eight applicants that were invited back for a full proposal. Staff are working with FWC, SASJBEP, and University of South Alabama to build the full proposal, which is due August 22nd. The grant is for five years of funding with a potential non-competitive five-year renewal.

iii. Society of Wetland Scientists Conference South Atlantic Chapter (*Haley Gancel, Environmental Scientist*)

Staff attended the Society of Wetland Scientists Conference South Atlantic Chapter that was held on Pensacola Beach in June. The conference was attended by wetland scientists, students, and professionals. Staff presented on National Wetland Condition Assessment and the Oyster Restoration Initiative, as well as serving on a panhandle estuary programs panel.

iv. Perdido Watershed Initiative Seagrass Transplant

Staff assisted partners with transplanting an acre of seagrass to prevent seagrass loss from the dredging that will take place later this fall to help buildup the northwestern side of Robinson's Island. Staff and partners moved one acre of seagrass to create two new acres of habitat utilizing 40 10x10m plots and over 3,200 seagrass sods. The transplant effort took over seven consecutive days with partners from Dauphin Island Sea Lab, TNC, and other organizations. Staff will provide the Board with updates on the post monitoring of the transplanted grass.

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

i. Summer Seagrass Sleuths

Staff originally planned to hold one Summer Seagrass Sleuth per month but incorporated additional dates due to the popularity of the program and high demand. Staff provided a brief overview of the past programs held in Gulf Breeze and in Orange Beach. TNC joined Program staff at Bird Island to help seine and share their upcoming seagrass transplant efforts. The Bird Island program was featured by WKRG, highlighting the Summer Seagrass Sleuths program and TNC's upcoming restoration project. Staff are working with TNC on outreach material for their seagrass transplanting project.

ii. Panhandle Manatee

Kyna Finley (Panhandle Manatee Intern) has been hard at work assisting with local summer camps, including the summer adventure camp with the City of Pensacola. Manatee interns and ambassadors had a strong presence at boat



ramps during the Blue Angels Air Show. Next year, staff plan to increase strategic outreach PSAs for boating before our largest boating holidays (Fourth of July and Blue Angels Weekend).

iii. Trash Trivia and Trash Free Waters Film Premiere

Trivia night will be held on August 27th at Odd Colony Brewing Co. in downtown Pensacola, and staff will also premiere the recently finished Trash Tree Waters short film. Nate Schweigert, the featured artist and writer in the short film, will perform a live poem reading.

iv. Website Updates

Project updates are now live on the Program's website under the "What We Do" tab. The updates include summaries, pictures, and data reports for applicable projects.

v. New Volunteer Management Software

Staff launched a new volunteer portal to help streamline volunteer management and are working on getting all the volunteers into the new system. The new infrastructure will help staff with volunteer management as the Program's volunteer base continues to grow as more opportunities become available.

vi. Community Grant Updates

Staff provided a brief update on all the FY24-25 Community Grant projects. Awardees will give more detailed presentations on their work at the 4th annual Community Grant Symposium on September 26th at the Bayview Community Center.

7. Action Items

a. Approval of Subaward Agreement No. NOAA23-04 to Franklin's Promise Coalition, in the amount of \$349,956.23, in Support of the Pensacola Bay Living Shoreline Assistance Program

Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to ratify approval of Subaward Agreement No. NOAA23-04 to Franklin's Promise Coalition, in the amount of \$349,956.23, in support of the Pensacola Bay Living Shoreline Assistance Program. Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Approval of Subaward Agreement No. NOAA23-07 to Franklin's Promise Coalition, in the amount of \$318,235.18, in Support of the Perdido Bay Living Shoreline Assistance Program

Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) made a motion to ratify approval of Subaward Agreement No. NOAA23-07 to Franklin's Promise Coalition, in the amount of \$318,235.18, in support of the Perdido Bay Living Shoreline Assistance Program. Vernon Compton (City of Milton) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.



- c. **Ratifying Approval of Subaward Agreement No. NOAA23-08 to Franklin’s Promise Coalition, in the amount of \$186,237.40, in Support of the Gulf of Mexico Oyster Shell Recycling Network**
Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) made a motion to ratify approval of Subaward Agreement No. NOAA23-08 to Franklin’s Promise Coalition, in the amount of \$186,237.40, in support of the Gulf of Mexico Oyster Shell Recycling Network. Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- d. **Approval of a Subaward Agreement between the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program and Escambia County, FL, in the amount of \$687,280.28, for the Compound Flood Model and Adaptation Plan Project**
Amended the action item from “subaward agreement” to “subcontract agreement”.
Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) made a motion to approve, and authorize the Executive Director to sign, a Subcontract Agreement between the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program and Escambia County, FL, in the amount of \$687,280.28, for the Compound Flood Model and Adaptation Plan Project. Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- e. **Approval of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program and Escambia County, FL for Access and Operation of the Shell Recycling Lot at the Pensacola State College Warrington Campus**
Discussion was held on responsibility of turning the shell. Escambia County will provide the support for turning the shell on a regular frequency that is yet to be determined but will be no more than monthly and no less than quarterly.
Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) made a motion to approve, and authorize the Executive Director to sign, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program and Escambia County, FL for Access and Operation of the Shell Recycling Lot at the Pensacola State College Warrington Campus. Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- f. **Approval of FY23-24 Third Quarter Financial Report**
The Finance Subcommittee unanimously approved it the FY23-24 Third Quarter Financial Report prior to the Board meeting.
Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) made a motion to approve the FY23-24 Third Quarter Financial Report. Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- g. **Approval of Proposed FY24-25 Operating Budget**
Staff provided background on the Proposed FY24-25 Operating Budget, highlighting that the difference from the initial budget proposed in May is a net \$2,000 increase for a utility trailer



funded through the Oyster Shell Recycling Program Grant from NOAA. The final budget will come before the Board and Finance Subcommittee in September. The Finance Subcommittee unanimously approved the proposed FY24-25 Operating Budget before this Board meeting.

Vernon Compton (City of Milton) made a motion to approve the proposed FY24-25 Operating Budget. Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Committee Updates

- a. Oyster Subcommittee (*Thomas Derbes, FL Sea Grant / Oyster Subcommittee Co-Chairman / Education and Outreach Co-Chairman*)
Thomas Derbes (FL Sea Grant) has been keeping subcommittee members up to date by talking weekly with members, and subcommittee meetings will pick back up once the Pensacola Bay Oyster Restoration Initiative design meetings kick off this fall.
- b. Education and Outreach Committee (*Thomas Derbes, FL Sea Grant / Oyster Subcommittee Co-Chairman / Education and Outreach Co-Chairman*)
Staff and Committee Co-Chairs will meet to discuss restructuring the Education and Outreach Committee meetings to be more informational and engaging for committee members. The next committee meeting is scheduled for August 8th.
*This meeting was rescheduled to August 29th after the Board meeting

9. Board/Agency Updates

- a. Thomas Derbes (FL Sea Grant) shared a brief update on two FL Sea Grant programs. The Great Scallop Search has received over 100 scallop reports, with most being spotted in Big Lagoon. Eyes on Seagrass is reporting more sightings of manatee grass in the area.
- b. Thomas Derbes also shared a few upcoming events:
 - i. Tasty Invaders will be held in September and highlight eating invasive species such as lionfish and iguanas.
 - ii. Florida Freaky Seafood Fest will showcase fish that people are less inclined to eat due to appearance.
 - iii. Tilapia extermination will take place in Bayou Chico headwaters to help prevent the spread of Tilapia in Bayou Chico.

10. Public Comment

Christian Wagley (Healthy Gulf) provided commentary on the 1000 Friends of Florida presentation from Paul Owens. Christian served on the local advisory committee for the 1000 Friends of Florida project and commented that the report from the project provides a good foundation on how Escambia and Santa Rosa County can accommodate the increase of residents that are expected to move to the region by 2040. He emphasized that the quality of development matters, and that communities need to have access to amenities when building at higher densities, and that local government land development codes can help shape the development.

11. Adjourned