



**Board of Directors  
Meeting Minutes**

August 28, 2024, at 1:30 p.m. CT  
Escambia County Commission Chambers  
221 Palafox Place, Pensacola, FL 32502

[Meeting Recording](#)

**Members Present**

Mike Kohler, Chair	Escambia County
Colten Wright, Vice Chair	Santa Rosa County
Cherry Fitch	City of Gulf Breeze
Jared Moore	City of Pensacola
Mike Norberg	Okaloosa County
Woody Speed	City of Orange Beach

**Members Absent**

Vernon Compton	City of Milton
Kerry Smith	Santa Rosa County

**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
Dillon Draughn	Baskerville-Donovan, Inc.
Beth Gaillot	Escambia County Natural Resources
Nicole Grinnan	University of West Florida (UWF)
Jeanette Kelson	WSP
Ryan Kirby	Escambia County Natural Resources
Chips Kirschenfeld	Escambia County Natural Resources
Paul Looney	WRA
Rick O'Connor	FL Sea Grant
Marcus Schroth	Escambia County Natural Resources / UWF
Mike Thomlin	Florida Public Archaeology Network
Christian Wagley	Healthy Gulf

**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. Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### 4. Approval of July 24, 2024, Board Minutes

Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to approve the July 24, 2024, meeting minutes. Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### 5. Action Items

#### a. Approval of FY 2024-25 PPBEP Community Grant Program Project Proposals

Discussion was held regarding past awardees not meeting deliverables and the Board requested an update on policies to address incomplete deliverables. Staff shared that the Community Grant Agreement has been updated to further reflect that failure to complete deliverables on schedule results in non-payment for the work that was incomplete, and a Corrective Action Plan can be issued to the grantee. Staff already have the ability to, and have implemented, holding back funds for incomplete work. Additionally, staff will continue to hold an onboarding webinar with the grantee and financial staff to go over the Community Grant Program process and expectations. The Board asked for clarification on whether it is an issue for Florida State Appropriation funds to be awarded to two applicants that are Alabama entities. Staff clarified this is not an issue as organizations outside of Florida are eligible to receive funds as long as the proposed work occurs primarily in Florida with the Program's watershed boundaries.

Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) made a motion to accept the Community Grant Review Committee's recommended project slate for the FY 2024-25 PPBEP Community Grant Program, in the amount of \$200,000, and authorize the Executive Director to execute grant agreements with each grantee. Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### b. Ratifying Approval of a Contract with Jacobs Engineering Group Inc., in the amount of \$1,227,492, for P2324-01 Pensacola Bay System Oyster Restoration Initiative Design and Permitting Services

Discussion was held on additional services and how potential engagement in additional services would affect funding. Staff clarified that money will not have to be given back if the additional services are not engaged, and if additional services were engaged, staff would bring a change order with accompanying funding source to the Board for approval.

Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to ratify approval of a contract with Jacobs Engineering Group Inc., in the amount of \$1,227,492 for P2324-01 Pensacola Bay System Oyster Restoration Initiative Design and Permitting Services. Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.



**6. Board/Agency Updates**

- a. Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) shared a new job posting from Okaloosa County for a Coastal Resource Coordinator.
- b. Multiple board members expressed schedule conflicts with the September 18<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting, staff will coordinate a new date with board members after the meeting.

\*The September 18<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting was rescheduled for September 24<sup>th</sup> at the City of Pensacola Council Chambers (222 W Main St, Pensacola, FL 32502).

**7. Public Comment**

None

**8. Adjourned**



## PPBEP 2024-2025 Community Grant Selection Committee Recommended Projects

Project Name	Applicant	Requested	Proposed Award
Coastal rivers as unrecognized winter fish habitat: quantifying oligohaline habitat use in Pensacola and Perdido Bays	Dauphin Island Sea Lab - Martin	\$48,348.00	\$48,348.00
<p><b>Summary:</b> Fisheries monitoring programs are essential for establishing fish community baselines in dynamic estuarine environments like Pensacola and Perdido Bays (PPB). Seasonal sampling has become increasingly vital as climate change alters local fish communities. For instance, increased catches of Common Snook, a tropical sportfish, in Perdido Bay have led Alabama agencies to establish size/creel limits for this species. Shorter, milder winters necessitate enhanced cold-season (late fall to early spring) monitoring to detect such changes in species phenology and early detection of novel species, especially for Snook that use coastal rivers as thermal refugia. We propose to augment state agency monitoring by conducting electrofishing surveys, environmental DNA, and habitat surveys in the river systems feeding into the PPB from October 2024 to March 2025. Our goal is to establish an updated baseline for overwintering freshwater and estuarine fish species and enhance novel species detection. Our objectives are to: 1) determine overwintering fish communities; 2) identify spatial differences in these communities; and 3) evaluate habitat associations (marsh edge, submerged vegetation, unvegetated bottom). For Common Snook, we will also 4) collect biological data and apply external dart tags for recapture information. Finally, 5) we will engage in community outreach that will enhance local knowledge about these species through surveys, events, and targeted engagement. This project aims to provide management agencies with critical data to detect changes in local fish communities and manage native fisheries through enhanced cold-season monitoring and novel species detection.</p>			



Project Name	Applicant	Requested	Proposed Award
A Comparison of Fish and Decapod Communities in Natural vs. Impacted Tidal Creeks of Santa Rosa Sound	Northwest Florida State College	\$47,423.00	\$47,423.00
<p><b>Summary:</b> Tidal tributaries, including small tidal creeks and tidal ponds, serve as critical habitats to numerous marine fish and invertebrate species. This includes many important forage species and the juveniles of many commercially and recreationally important species such as Red Drum, Spotted Seatrout, Blue Crab, and penaeid shrimp. There is a general lack of either short term or long term assessment and monitoring of juvenile fish and decapod species in the Pensacola Bay system including Santa Rosa Sound. Initial sampling of a subset of tidal creeks draining into Santa Rosa Sound over the past year demonstrated that many of these creeks support large fish populations that included juveniles of both recreational sportfish and commercially targeted decapods. That study focused mainly on relatively intact and minimally impacted creeks. However, many of the creeks along the sound have been highly impacted (seawall shorelines, little/no emergent vegetation, dredged/channelized, etc.). Previous studies have noted that highly impacted tidal tributaries often have lower fish abundances and/or fish communities that are quite different (more pelagic schooling species, more large/adult sportfish, fewer marsh residents, fewer juvenile sportfish) than more natural creeks. This study will compare the fish and decapod communities in a subset of both relatively natural and highly impacted tidal creeks (4 each) over the granting period. Bimonthly sampling with mid-size bag seines will allow both small juveniles and larger subadults/adults to be collected. This data may provide vital information to justify the preservation and restoration tidal creeks in the Santa Rosa Sound system (and surrounding areas).</p>			

Project Name	Applicant	Requested	Proposed Award
Heritage Roots: A Native Plant Garden Celebrating Culture and Ecology in Northwest Florida	University of West Florida - Grinnan	\$44,691.19	\$44,691.19
<p><b>Summary:</b> The "Heritage Roots: A Native Plant Garden Celebrating Cultural and Ecological Diversity" project at the UWF Archaeology Institute aims to create an enriching educational space that showcases native plants of the Pensacola and Perdido Bays watershed and highlights their cultural significance. Spanning 0.2 acres, this ethnobotanical garden will feature native flora used by the many cultures that have called Northwest Florida home, with interpretive signage in both English and the Mvskoke language. The garden will complement the existing free and publicly accessible Archaeology Institute Museum space, highlighting UWF's work at archaeological sites on land and underwater in the local area.</p>			



Our garden will serve as a living classroom, promoting awareness of the ecological importance of native plants while celebrating the region's cultural heritage. With support from key partners, the project team will identify and select appropriate native plant species as well as provide contextual information about the traditional uses of these plants by various indigenous and other local communities.

Key elements include interpretive signs, mulched pathways, an arbor, and benches. The educational signage will offer insights into the historical significance and contemporary relevance of the garden's flora, highlighting how the local watershed supports critical ecosystem services. By integrating natural and cultural history, the "Heritage Roots" garden will foster community engagement, support environmental education, and serve as a contemplative space for all visitors to UWF.

Project Name	Applicant	Requested	Proposed Award
Evaluating the effectiveness of Living Shorelines for fisheries habitat in Pensacola Bay, Florida	Dauphin Island Sea Lab - Baker	\$34,063.00	\$33,037.81
<p><b>Summary:</b> Living shorelines are promoted for their potential to enhance fish habitat, yet empirical evidence remains limited. This study quantifies fish habitat benefits of high-profile public restorations in Pensacola and Gulf Breeze, Florida, expanding upon a previous year of underwater video surveys. By comparing fish communities within restored, bare, and hardened shoreline areas, we aim to identify habitat preferences and quantify fish density increases. Recognizing the influence of seasonal and annual factors on fish populations, multi-year monitoring is essential to isolate restoration effects. A public-facing website will be updated to add new findings, including interactive maps and data visualizations. This project seeks to inform future living shoreline designs, foster public support, and contribute to the growing body of knowledge on coastal restoration.</p>			

Project Name	Applicant	Requested	Proposed Award
The Panhandle Terrapin Project: Education and Monitoring of Diamondback Terrapins	Escambia County	\$16,500.00	\$16,500.00
<p><b>Summary:</b> Escambia County is requesting \$16,500 to expand program capacity for the Florida Panhandle Terrapin Project in partnership with USGS and Florida Sea Grant offices in Escambia, Santa Rosa, and Okaloosa counties. Grant funds will be used to fill critical data gaps and expand education and outreach efforts for this little-known species.</p> <p>The Panhandle Terrapin Project is for the monitoring and conservation efforts of the diamondback terrapin. This project consists of monitoring efforts to determine subspecies identification, terrapin movement, nesting locations, and relative abundance. Upon award,</p>			



**PENSACOLA  
& PERDIDO BAYS  
ESTUARY PROGRAM**

the monitoring efforts will be expanded through purchasing of sample supplies, tagging equipment, and more. In addition to monitoring efforts for species conservation, the expansion of education and outreach is needed for the general public to learn about this widely unknown species in our estuaries.

The Panhandle Terrapin Project operates through community science. The monitoring efforts are completed through volunteers trained to identify nesting beaches, collect samples, etc.

Project Name	Applicant	Requested	Proposed Award
A Walk in the Watershed	Pensacola MESS Hall	\$16,159.00	\$10,000.00
<p><b>Summary:</b> The Pensacola MESS Hall will engage elementary school learners through an interactive show at their school followed by hands-on activities in the library and art classes. The show will highlight the life of the estuary and the features of different environments of the estuary. The hands-on activities will be loaned to the host school for two weeks providing an extended opportunity for all of the classes to explore the stations. During visits to approximately 20 schools, we anticipate that we will engage 8,000 to 10,000 students.</p> <p>Learners will acquire new understanding and appreciation for the diversity of life in estuary environments. The activities will incorporate math, engineering, and science but also highlight how these fields connect with social sciences. Students will learn the importance of habitat restoration and how their decisions can impact the environment.</p> <p>To ensure that the program meets teachers' needs, the lessons will be aligned with state standards. By providing the activities for extended exploration in the school media center and art rooms, schools will be better able to schedule time for all students to access the activities, allow the entire school to explore, and give the teachers an opportunity to engage their students in a more controlled environment.</p> <p><b>Partial funding to support the development and implementation of the show and activities but with reduction to the number of schools.</b></p>			