



Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

March 26, 2025, at 1:30 p.m. CT
Escambia County BOCC Chambers
221 Palafox Place, Pensacola, FL 32502

[Meeting Recording](#)

Members Present

Mike Kohler, Chair	Escambia County
Colten Wright, Vice Chair	Santa Rosa County
Vernon Compton	City of Milton
Ashlee Hofberger	Escambia County
Jared Moore	City of Pensacola
Mike Norberg	Okaloosa County
Kerry Smith	Santa Rosa County
Woody Speed	City of Orange Beach

Members Absent

Tim Burr	City of Gulf Breeze
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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
Zach Schang	PPBEP
Kaylee Beasley	PPBEP
Mary Jane Bass	Beggs & Lane
Doug Broxson	Former Florida District 1 Senator
Kate Dawson	Moffatt & Nichol
Thomas Derbes	FL Sea Grant
Cherry Fitch	Former Mayor of Gulf Breeze
Heather Griffin	ADEM-NPS Unit
Paul Looney	WRA
Shannon McGlynn	ADEM-NPS Unit

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call (*Matt Posner, Executive Director*)

Staff called the roll. A quorum was present.



3. Public Comment

None

4. Approval of Board Agenda

The agenda was changed to move up the recognition of service up after Item 4. Staff updated the Board on an item modification for Item 9.K.: the total changed to \$92,900, reflecting the vessel value change from \$63,600 to \$64,100 due to additional cleats and anchor storage.

Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to approve the agenda. Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Recognition of Service

On behalf of the Board, Commissioner Mike Kohler (Escambia County) thanked former Senator Doug Broxson and former Mayor Cherry Fitch for their service to the Program. Former Senator Doug Broxson advocated for funding environmental projects in Northwest Florida, including appropriations for the Program's Community Grant Program. Staff expressed gratitude to former Senator Doug Broxson for his dedication to our region.

Former Mayor Cherry Fitch served as the City of Gulf Breeze's representative on the PPBEP Board of Directors, where she supported the Program's endeavors from securing high-impact auction item donations to volunteering with the Program's Seagrass Sleuth events. Staff expressed their appreciation to former Mayor Cherry Fitch for her support and look forward to her continued involvement in other capacities.

6. Approval of November 13, 2024, Board Minutes

Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) made a motion to approve the November 13, 2024, meeting minutes. Vernon Compton (City of Milton) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Election of 2025 Chairman and Vice Chairman

Commissioner Ashlee Hofberger (Escambia County) made a motion to recommend Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) as Chairman. Vernon Compton (City of Milton) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to recommend Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) as Vice Chairman. Commissioner Kerry Smith (Santa Rosa County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Staff Updates

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

i. Recognizing Whitney Scheffel's 5-Year Anniversary with PPBEP

Staff acknowledged Whitney Scheffel, the Program's Senior Scientist, for her hard work and dedication to the Program over the last five years.



ii. Introduction of New Staff Member

Staff welcomed the newest team member, Kaylee Beasley, as the 2025 Manatee Outreach Intern.

iii. National Estuary Program (NEP) Designation

The NEP Designation bill was passed by congress and signed into law by President Biden in December 2024. Staff are working to have NEP appropriations allocated for fiscal year 2026.

iv. 2024 Annual Impact Report

Staff issued the Program's first Annual Impact Report which covers fiscal year 2024. The Board expressed an interest in receiving additional hard and digital copies of the 2024 Annual Impact Report to share.

v. 2025 Annual Planning Meeting and Staff End of Year Potluck

In December 2024, staff held a multiple-day long planning session for 2025 initiatives and celebrated at the end of the planning week with an end of year potluck.

vi. Events, Legislative Updates, and Appointments

1. Between December 2024 and January 2025, staff attended various oyster and aquaculture-related engagements, including an oyster tonging trip with a historic wild harvester.
2. Staff attended the Perdido Islands groundbreaking in February.
3. Staff participated in a Bronson Field Restoration site visit with Charette from The Nature Conservancy and Moffatt & Nichol.
4. Staff met with Wes Brooks, Chief Resilience Officer, to discuss regional resilience in Northwest Florida.
5. Staff held a Natural Resources Leadership Institute visit last week which focused on oyster restoration.
6. The Program's Legislative Budget Request through the Water Management District Watershed Partnership Program and Policy is in the draft U.S. House of Representatives budget.
7. Staff was appointed to the Santa Rosa County Land Development Code Task Force and to the University of West Florida's Earth and Environmental Advisory Board.

vii. Carpenter Creek Restoration



The Request for Qualifications selection is complete, and staff are in contract negotiations.

viii. Upcoming Request for Qualifications

The Sediment and Audit RFQs will be posted in coming weeks.

ix. PPBEP Annual Management Conference Meeting

This year's Management Conference Meeting is set for Wednesday, April 16th at Sanders Beach Community Center in Pensacola, Florida. Chief Dan "Sky Horse" Helms will be the keynote speaker.

x. Community Grant Program Changes

Staff will bring forward recommended changes to the Community Grant Program to the Board in May.

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

i. EPA Gulf of Mexico Program Understanding Water Quality Through Monitoring Activities

The Program and its partners were tentatively awarded a \$750,000 grant to fund the development of a Water Quality Monitoring collaborative across the Pensacola and Perdido Bay watersheds. This grant will enable the Program to implement specific monitoring actions that were developed during the February 2024 Comprehensive Monitoring Workshop based on data needs of the Program's stakeholders.

ii. Pensacola Bay Oyster Restoration Initiative

Staff provided an overview of the 2025-2026 project schedule, including an update on tasks and upcoming community engagements.

1. Oyster Restoration Design Workshop

Staff held an Oyster Restoration Design Workshop over two half days; approximately 60 participants were in attendance from various backgrounds including wild harvesters, aquaculture, state and federal agencies, academic institutions, community, local government, and private industry. The goal of the workshop was to co-develop conceptual designs for restoring Pensacola Bay's declining oyster populations. The project team will be synthesizing the outputs from the workshop and looking at overlapping reef placement and design among the groups.

2. Oyster Spat and Larval Monitoring

Staff and partners will be conducting oyster spat and larval monitoring from May through October to gather more information on the abundance of oysters in the Pensacola Bay system.



iii. **Microbial Source Tracking**

Staff are partnering with Escambia County to conduct microbial source tracking study in nine sub-basins across Perdido and Pensacola watersheds. Staff have been working on a project work plan, gathering quotes from laboratories for sample processing and analysis, and compiling and synthesizing data. Staff will be meeting with Escambia County partners on April 1st to discuss next steps.

iv. **State of the Bays Report**

Staff are compiling and synthesizing datasets for the 2025 State of the Bays report, which will be launching this spring with a preview of the report at the PPBEP Management Conference Meeting on April 16, 2025. Staff are adding a new fisheries indicator that will feature datasets from Alabama Department of Conservation Marine Resource Division, FWC, and Dauphin Island Sea Lab.

v. **Living Shoreline Assistance Program** (*Paige Lansky, Coastal Restoration Coordinator*)

Staff finalized the development of the Program's Living Shoreline Assistance Program (LSAP) and launched the program in February, with an official public media launch in mid-March. Applications for LSAP are currently being accepted for Perdido Bay watershed and will be accepting applications for Pensacola Bay watershed in August 2025. Staff finalized a program logo and mailers, which were sent to waterfront property owners in Alabama's priority areas. Staff also launched a webpage, created a user-friendly Living Shorelines Homeowners guide, and developed general educational materials about living shorelines. Outreach efforts included a presentation to the Western Perdido Bay Watershed Action Committee, tabling at the Orange Bead Seafood Festival, engaging with contractors at Mississippi State University's Marine Contractor Course, and distributing flyers to promote an open house in Perdido Beach. Staff have already received and began processing 18 applications and will be carrying out site assessments in the next few weeks and working with partners to develop designs.

Upcoming Open Houses and Webinars:

- April 4th —Virtual Informational Webinar
- May 1st —Perdido Key Community Center, Perdido Key, FL

vi. **Oyster Shell Recycling Program** (*Paige Lansky, Coastal Restoration Coordinator*)

Staff reported over 75 tons of oyster shell have been collected since launching the recycling program in August 2024. Felix Restaurant on Pensacola Beach has exited the program due to closure, however, staff are exploring new partnerships with another restaurant in downtown Pensacola. Staff held a recent cleanup at the shell lot with partner OysterCorps, which revealed



significant trash, prompting the need to remind participating restaurants to only dispose of shells and to revisit the process agreement. Interest in the oyster shell recycling program continues to grow, therefore staff are carefully considering future expansion based on equipment and capacity.

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

i. **Extensive Media Coverage**

Staff reported extensive media coverage on several Program initiatives.

ii. **Events**

Staff held and attended various events:

1. Community Grant Symposium
2. Mountain Film Fest
3. Creek Fest
4. Restoration Rambles: Lower Perdido islands
5. Restoration Rambles: Gulf State Park
6. Foiling Week Vertical Oyster Garden Building
7. The World is Your Oyster Dinner
8. Northwest Florida Seafood Heritage Series: Mullet
9. Mardi Gras Bead Cleanup
10. Restoration Rambles: Jones Swamp

- iii. The Program reached its \$30,000 fundraising goal after the gala with a Giving Tuesday campaign.

iv. **Community Grant Program** (*Bailey Walkinshaw, Community Outreach Assistant*)

Staff launched a Voluntary Pre-Application for 2025-2026 Community Grant Program. The intent of the pre-application is to provide interested applicants the opportunity to receive feedback ahead of the full application period in July. The pre-application is not required and does not guarantee funding or selection. An information webinar on the new pre-application process was held virtually on March 10th.

9. **Action Items**

a. **Approval of Appointments to the Finance Subcommittee**

Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to appoint Commissioner Kerry Smith (Santa Rosa County) and Vernon Compton (City of Milton) to the Finance Subcommittee. Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. **Approval of Quarterly Financial Statements**

Vernon Compton (City of Milton) made a motion to approve the FY23-24 Fourth Quarter and FY24-25 First Quarter Financial Statements. Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola)



seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Affirm 2025 Bank Signature Authority

Commissioner Mike Kohler (Escambia County) made a motion to affirm calendar year 2025 signature authority for the Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Executive Director for Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program's Hancock Whitney Bank accounts. Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

d. Approval of Issuing a Purchase Order to idgroup, in the amount of \$14,500, for the PPBEP Strategic Plan

Commissioner Mike Kohler (Escambia County) made a motion to approve and authorize the Executive Director to execute a purchase order with idgroup, in the amount of \$14,500, to complete the PPBEP Strategic Plan. Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

e. Approval of a Letter of Appreciation Regarding National Estuary Program Designation

Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to approve transmitting a letter of appreciation to Senator Rubio, Senator Scott, Congressman Dunn, and Congressman Bean for their leadership in passing Senate Bill 50, the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuaries of National Significance Act. Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

f. Approval of a Letter to Congress Regarding National Estuary Program Funding

Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to approve transmitting a letter to the Alabama and Florida Congressional Delegation urging them to preserve funding for the National Estuary Program, with the inclusion of funding for PPBEP, in the Fiscal Year 2026 budget. Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

g. Approval of a Letter to the Florida Legislature Regarding PPBEP's Legislative Budget Request

Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to approve transmitting a letter to the Northwest Florida Legislative Delegation, and the House and Senate Appropriation Committee Chairs, urging them to support PPBEP's Legislative Budget Request. Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

h. Approval of Repealing and Replacing a Subcontract Agreement PPBEP and Escambia County, FL, in the amount of \$668,755.99, for the Compound Flood Model and Adaptation Plan Project

Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) made a motion to approve repealing and replacing, and authorizing the Executive Director to sign, a Subcontract Agreement between the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program and Escambia County, FL, in the amount of \$668,755.99, for the Compound Flood Model and Adaptation Plan Project. Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.



- i. **Approval of Repealing and Replacing a Services Agreement with Florida State University, in the amount of \$475,000, to complete the Compound Flood Modeling Project**
Woody Speed (City of Gulf Breeze) made a motion to approve repealing and replacing, and authorize the Executive Director to sign, the Services Agreement with Florida State University, in the amount of \$475,000, to complete compound flood modeling associated with the FDEP Resilient Florida Planning Grant. Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- j. **Authorization of the Executive Director to Negotiate a Contract with Moffatt & Nichol, Inc. for P2425-01 Carpenter Creek Restoration Design and Permitting Services**
Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) made a motion to authorize the Executive Director to negotiate a contract with Moffatt & Nichol, Inc. for P2425-01 Carpenter Creek Restoration Design and Permitting Services, and authorize the Executive Director to execute the contract, subject to legal review and approval, and ratification at the May 2025 Board Meeting. Commissioner Ashlee Hofberger (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- k. **Approval of a Purchase Order with Hanko Boats, not to exceed \$92,900, for a 2025 24 Foot Center Console V Bottom Workboat**
Staff updated the Board that the total changed to from \$92,400 to \$92,900, reflecting the vessel value change from \$63,600 to \$64,100 due to additional cleats and anchor storage.

Woody Speed (City of Gulf Breeze) made a motion to approve, and authorize the Executive Director to sign, a Purchase Order with Hanko Boats, not to exceed \$92,900, for a 2025 24-foot center console V bottom workboat, with the option to purchase a 200 Suzuki outboard engine and McClain aluminum trailer. Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- l. **Approval of Florida Department of Environmental Protection Grant Agreement No. 25RRE02, in the amount of \$5,570, for the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program Resilience Project**
Commissioner Ashlee Hofberger (Escambia County) made a motion to approve, and authorize the Executive Director to sign, Florida Department of Environmental Protection Grant Agreement No. 25RRE02, in the amount of \$5,570, for the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program Resilience Project. Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

10. Committee Updates

- a. **Technical Committee** (*Kate Dawson, Moffatt & Nichol*)
Kate Dawson (Moffatt & Nichol) gave an overview of the most recent Technical Committee meeting, including a guest presentation on the Gulf Monitoring Network where committee members had an opportunity to review dashboard and provide feedback. The Technical



Committee Co-Chairs had an opportunity to provide feedback on the Community Grant Program changes before distribution.

b. Oyster Sub-Committee (*Thomas Derbes, FL Sea Grant*)

Three of the sub-committee members attended Oyster South, an oyster farming convention that was held in St. Augustine, Florida and had over 350 people in attendance. There is a potential that the convention will come to Pensacola in 2028.

c. Education and Outreach Committee (*Thomas Derbes, FL Sea Grant*)

Thomas Derbes (FL Sea Grant) introduced Shannon McGlynn (ADEM) as the new committee Co-Chair. During the last committee meeting, there was a guest presentation on CoCoRaHS and committee members had the opportunity to provide feedback on bay-friendly living booklet priorities.

11. Board Updates

a. Vernon Compton (City of Milton) recognized several local initiatives:

- i.** The Trust for Public Land completed a preservation project of 2,500 acres River with FDEP and other partners along the upper Shoal that will be designated as a state park.
- ii.** Innerarity Island Preservation Foundation in partnership with Conservation Florida secured 100 acres on the Innerarity Point.
- iii.** Through a collaborative partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, The Longleaf Alliance, Landowner Resource Management Service, and the Department of Defense, 50 salamanders were captively reared and released on private land. The agreement allows for the reintroduction of the salamander without placing a regulatory risk on the landowner. Resource Management Service, LLC is committed to long-term managing their conservation easement as a longleaf forest.

b. Commissioner Mike Kohler (Escambia County) thanked those on the Board that took on leadership assignments and welcomed Commissioner Ashlee Hofberger as the new Escambia County Commissioner for District 4.

12. Public Comment

None

13. Adjourned