



**Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes**

September 24, 2025, at 1:30 p.m. CT
Escambia County Commission Chambers
221 Palafox Place, Pensacola, FL 32502

[Meeting Recording](#)

Members Present

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

Members Absent

Tim Burr	City of Gulf Breeze
Mike Norberg	Okaloosa County

Interested Parties Present

Matt Posner	PPBEP
Whitney Scheffel	PPBEP
Bailey Walkinshaw	PPBEP
Mary Jane Bass	Phelps Dunbar
Darryl Boudreau	NWFWMD
Chips Kirschenfeld	Escambia County
Paul Looney	WRA
Noel Robinson	NWFWMD

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 Perdido Islands Restoration Project presentation (6b) and water quality discussion (9b) were moved to the November 2025 Board Meeting.

With no objection, the Board accepted the agenda as presented with the postponement of 6b and 9b to the November 2025 Board Meeting.

5. Approval of July 30, 2025 and August 27, 2025, Board Minutes

Commissioner Mike Kohler (Escambia County) made a motion to approve the July 30, 2025 and August 27, 2025, meeting minutes. Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Presentations

a. Northwest Florida Water Management District’s Watersheds Partnership Program (Darryl Boudreau, NFWFMD)

A brief presentation was given on the Northwest Florida Watersheds Partnership Program.

b. Perdido Islands Restoration Project

This presentation was moved to the November 2025 Board Meeting.

7. Staff Updates

a. Director’s Updates (Matt Posner, Executive Director)

i. National Estuary Program (NEP) Enrollment Update

Staff visited Washington D.C. with Chairman Wright to meet with congressional representatives and leadership from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Staff reported support from congressional representatives and EPA leadership. Staff reminded board members that the Program received designation in December 2024 but are waiting for formal enrollment into the National Estuary Program by the EPA Administrator.

1. NEP Reauthorization – H.R. 3962

The NEP Reauthorization – H.R. 3962 moved through the House of Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. The Program was already included in the reauthorization, but staff reported that one of the Program’s partners, the Mississippi Sound Estuary Program (MSEP) was added in. Staff expressed support for moving through the NEP designation process with MSEP.

ii. NWFL Legislative Delegation

Staff attended the NWFL Legislative Delegation held in Milton, FL to represent the Program and give the Program’s appreciation to Representative Andrade for his continued support of the Program’s legislative budget requests.

iii. Outreach and Education Program Manager

The Outreach and Education Program Manager position has closed, and 60 applications were received. Staff are currently reviewing the applications.



iv. Strategic Plan

Staff are continuing to work with idgroup on strategic planning. Staff have developed and refined primary objectives and are now working on building out action plans. During the November 2025 Board Meeting, there will be a presentation on the overall strategic plan concept and engagement with board members on organizational direction for the next five years.

v. Vessel Update

Staff reported that the Program's boat has been built and is ready to be picked up in Louisiana. Staff are continuing to work with Yamaha Rightwaters to secure an engine donation, which will likely be in January due to Yamaha's budgeting process. Posner Marine will be donating the engine installation services.

vi. Evening for the Estuaries Gala

The 3rd Annual Evening for the Estuaries Gala is October 16th at 6pm and will be held at the Coastal Arts Center of Orange Beach. Staff encouraged board members to help push gala ticket sales and that all the funds raised will go back to programming opportunities.

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

i. Monitoring Underway

Staff are preparing for multiple monitoring events over the next several weeks, including seagrass and trawling surveys with the Gulf Coast Research Lab, continued spat and larval monitoring for the Pensacola Bay Oyster Restoration Initiative, the fourth quarter of living shorelines monitoring for C-STARS, and continued site visits and assessments for the Living Shoreline Assistance Program.

ii. Carpenter Creek Restoration

Staff are working on property owner engagement for the Carpenter Creek Restoration Project through door-knocking and securing property access agreements for data collection. An upcoming open house to discuss the project is scheduled for Tuesday, October 7th from 5-8pm at Bayview Community Center.

iii. Living Shoreline Assistance Program

Staff have been working on site assessments, landowner meetings, and project designs for the Living Shoreline Assistance Program. Staff anticipate applying for permits for projects submitted in October, delivering reports to homeowners, and project implementation in 2026.

c. Outreach Update (*Bailey Walkinshaw, Community Outreach Assistant*)

i. Perdido Islands Volunteer Planting



Staff partnered with The Nature Conservancy in Alabama, the City of Orange Beach, and Moffatt & Nichol on a volunteer planting day for the lower Perdido islands restoration project. Approximately 2,500 native plants were planted on Robinson Island by 28 volunteers.

ii. National Oyster Day Celebration at Red Fish Blue Fish

Over 51 attendees attended a National Oyster Day Celebration thrown by the Program, Red Fish Blue Fish (RFBF), and OysterCorps, where participants could build vertical oyster gardens while partaking in an oyster special provided by RFBF. Dune Defenders and FL Sea Grant provided educational tabling, and the celebration closed with a showing of The Humble Oyster.

iii. National Estuaries Week

Staff shared a preview of upcoming events for National Estuaries Week, including a vertical oyster garden building event, the Program's annual Community Grant Symposium, a lunch and learn focused on water quality, and staff tabling at Pensacola Seafood Festival.

8. Action Items

a. Approval of Quarterly Financial Statements

Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) made a motion to approve the FY24-25 Third Quarter Financial Statements. Vernon Compton (City of Milton) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Approval of FY25-26 Operating Budget

With no objection, the Board accepted the action item as presented unanimously.

c. Renewal of PPBEP Office Lease with Empire Partners, LLC

Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to approve renewal of PPBEP's office lease with Empire Partners, LLC for an additional one-year term. Commissioner Mike Kohler (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

d. Authorization of the Executive Director to Negotiate a Contract with Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson, Inc. (JMT) for RFQ P2425-02 Sediment Reduction Prioritization Action Plan

Vernon Compton (City of Milton) made a motion to authorize the Executive Director to negotiate a contract with Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson, Inc. (JMT) for RFQ P2425-02 Sediment Reduction Prioritization Action Plan, and authorize the Executive Director to execute the contract, subject to legal review and approval, and ratification at the November 2025 Board Meeting. Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

e. Approval of an Agreement with Escambia County, FL, in the amount of \$487,527.40, for the Microbial Source Tracking NRDA Project

Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) made a motion to approve, and authorize the



Executive Director to sign, an agreement with Escambia County, FL, in the amount of \$487,527.40, for the Microbial Source Tracking NRDA Project. Commissioner Mike Kohler (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- f. **Approval of an Agreement with Escambia County, FL, in the amount of \$49,329, for the NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Project**
With no objection, the Board accepted the action item as presented unanimously.

9. Discussion

a. Legislative Priorities

Staff attended the Escambia and Santa Rosa County delegation meetings and are preparing legislative priorities. Staff listed the following priorities:

i. **PPBEP Legislative Budget Request: \$1-\$1.5 million**

1. Oyster Restoration Initiative
2. Carpenter Creek Restoration
3. Community Grant Program
4. Monitoring Program
5. Community Outreach and Education

ii. **Northwest Florida Water Management District Watersheds Partnerships Program**

Staff recommended supporting the Northwest Florida Water Management District Watersheds Partnership Program, which was covered in the presentation given during this meeting. Staff have worked with the Northwest Florida Water Management District on this effort.

iii. **Escambia County's Carpenter Creek Acquisition Legislative Budget Request**

Staff recommended supporting Escambia County's Carpenter Creek Acquisition Legislative Budget Request, which would support the Program's planned restoration efforts for Carpenter Creek.

iv. **Board direction of PPBEP'S involvement in environmental policy legislation**

Discussion was held on the role of the Program when discussing environmental policy legislation and if advocacy should be permissible. There was agreement that the Program should continue this discussion and consider developing a board-level policy that can provide guidance on navigating environmental policy legislation on a case-by-case basis.

b. Water Quality

This discussion item was moved to the November 2025 Board Meeting.

10. Committee Updates

None



11. Board Updates

- a. Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) shared that the City of Orange Beach, as part of the living shoreline cost share program, has been working to get their greenhouse under construction and that they are anticipating it to be built out in the next couple of weeks.
- b. The Lower Perdido Islands ribbon cutting will take place on Friday, September 26th at 11am at Cobalt to celebrate the restoration project. While the presentation was dropped for this board meeting, there is potential to take a trip to see the project on November 12th before the board meeting.
- c. Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) encouraged board members to stop by the Program's table at the Pensacola Seafood Festival to show public support for the Program and staff.

12. Public Comment

- a. Darryl Boudreau (NFWFMD) shared that the meeting pertaining to the Northwest Florida Water Management District Watersheds Partnership Program will be on October 15th from 6-8pm at the Santa Rosa County Auditorium.
- b. Commissioner Mike Kohler (Escambia County) asked staff about how to donate items for the Evening for the Estuaries silent auction, and staff requested potential donors to contact Matt, Whitney, or Bailey for donating items.

13. Adjourned