



Technical Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 4th, 2025

10:00 – 12:00 CST

[Virtual Meeting Recording](#)

Attendees

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Whitney Scheffel | PPBEP |
| Zach Schang | PPBEP |
| Matt Posner | PPBEP |
| Haley Gancel | PPBEP |
| Samantha Pitts | PPBEP |
| Katie Baltzer | TNC AL |
| Darryl Boudreau | NWFWMD |
| Justin Bousquin | EPA Office of Water |
| Joy Brown | NWFL Sentinel Landscape |
| Lizbeth Childs | Atkins |
| Chris Curb | Flood Defenders |
| Kate Dawson | Moffatt & Nichol |
| Jason Evert | JMT |
| Mike Fazio | Santa Rosa County |
| Heather Griffin | ADEM |
| Emma Heffernan | Stantec |
| Bret Hegler | TidalTech |
| Chasidy Hobbs | UWF |
| Tyler Jacobs | Moffatt & Nichol |
| Matt Kelly | Escambia County |
| Chips Kirschenfeld | Escambia County |
| Katie Konchar | TNC Gulf Program |
| Jacqueline Lane | Friends of Perdido Bay |
| Shannon McGlynn | ADEM |
| Chris Verlinde | Santa Rosa County |
| Cody Watson | ADEM |

1. Call to Order

Kate Dawson (Moffatt & Nichol) called the meeting to order at 10:02 on December 4th, 2025.

2. Welcome and Introductions

Kate Dawson (Moffatt & Nichol) asked for new Technical Committee (TC) attendees to introduce themselves. Lizbeth Childs (Atkins), Joy Brown (NWFL Sentinel Landscape), Emma Heffernan (Stantec), and Cody Watson (ADEM) introduced themselves as new or returning members of the Committee. Samantha Pitts was welcomed as PPBEP's new Outreach & Education Program Manager.



3. Approval of July 15th, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Chris Verlinde (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to approve the July 15th, 2025 meeting minutes. Jackie Lane (Friends of Perdido Bay) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Co-Chair Elections

Kate Dawson (Moffatt & Nichol) and Chassidy Hobbs (UWF) were self-nominated for the co-chair positions prior to the meeting. C. Hobbs noted the value of having an Alabama co-chair but offered to serve in the role if an Alabama representative wasn't nominated. There were no additional comments by participants. W. Scheffel asked if there were any other nominations; hearing none, she asked for a motion to approve the nominations. Chris Verlinde (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to elect K. Dawson and C. Hobbs as co-chairs. Chips Kirschenfeld (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Staff Updates

a. Evening for the Estuaries Gala

The Evening for the Estuaries gala held on October 16th in Orange Beach raised over \$24,000 to support outreach, research, and monitoring efforts. W. Scheffel (PPBEP) thanked attendees, sponsors, and donors for their contributions. She also noted that PPBEP is considering rotating future gala locations between Pensacola and Orange Beach.

b. Strategic Plan (2025 – 2030)

M. Posner (PPBEP) presented PPBEP's five-year Strategic Plan. Strategic planning, facilitated by the locally based firm, idgroup, commenced in spring 2025. The strategic planning process included leadership vision development, realigning the organization structure and team roles, developing a team creed, and identifying areas of strategic focus to optimize delivery of the Program's mission through implementation of the CCMP. Developed by the Program team, the Strategic Plan includes five areas of strategic focus —Impact, Culture, Operations, Innovation, and Engagement—and includes objectives and key performance indicators to ensure each goal is effectively implemented. The Strategic Plan ensures the organization is best positioned to sustain and grow in the years ahead.

c. Funding Announcements

i. EPA Gulf Program - Water Quality Monitoring Collaborative (\$750,000)

This award will support expansion of water-quality monitoring throughout the watershed and strengthen collaboration with partner organizations currently conducting monitoring.

ii. DEP Nonpoint Source Pollution Grant – Bay Friendly Living (\$250,000)

S. Pitts and B. Walkinshaw (PPBEP) will lead this effort in partnership with regional partners. The project focuses on messaging and outreach focused on reducing nutrient loading, improving sediment control, and empowering realtors to serve as *Bay Ambassadors*.

iii. NFWF – Final Design Funding for Carpenter Creek Restoration (\$1.3M)

PPBEP received \$1.3M from NFWF for the design of the Carpenter Creek Restoration Project. K. Dawson (Moffatt & Nichol) is serving as the Project Manager. Additional funding was needed to fully support the design phase, and this award closes that gap.



d. Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF) Conference (Richmond, VA)

W. Scheffel, C. Ray, and H. Gancel (PPBEP) attended the 28th Biennial CERF Conference, where PPBEP presented on the Pensacola Bay Oyster Restoration Initiative, the Living Shoreline Assistance Program, and the 2025 State of the Bays report. Staff attended multiple collaborative sessions, posters, and talks. The conference provided valuable networking and collaboration opportunities. The overarching conference theme, *Estuaries: Tradition and Transition*, centered on applying traditional ecological knowledge and research to coastal restoration and management practices.

e. Project Progress and Monitoring updates

i. Pensacola Bay Oyster Restoration Initiative

Z. Schang (PPBEP) provided an update on the Pensacola Bay Oyster Restoration Initiative (ORI). He reviewed the revised project schedule, which was adjusted to accommodate preliminary design development and permitting. Z. Schang highlighted successful recent data collection effort, including the Programs spat survey and larval sampling—that confirmed the bay supports conditions suitable for large-scale oyster restoration. He shared preliminary restoration design templates featuring patch reefs or mounds and emphasized the importance of strategic siting to maximize ecological benefit and project efficiency. The long-term goal is to restore approximately 1,500 acres of oyster reef across East Bay and Escambia Bay, with Phase 1 targeting roughly 100 hectares.

ii. [Living Shoreline Assistance Program \(LSAP\)](#)

Z. Schang (PPBEP) highlighted upcoming intertidal reef restoration projects included in the ORI designed to increase community engagement and support for the LSAP, led by P. Lansky and C. Ray (PPBEP). The program provides enhanced support for selected shoreline projects, including full-service coordination with property owners, detailed technical guidance, and financial reimbursement for eligible installations. Next steps include submitting permit applications for Perdido Bay properties, securing materials, and planning an open house in early spring (January 21st at the Sander Beach-Corinne Jones Resource Center) for Pensacola Bay to raise awareness and encourage broader participation.

iii. [Carpenter Creek Restoration](#)

Z. Schang (PPBEP) provided an update on the Carpenter Creek Restoration Project. He reported that PPBEP has secured a contract with Moffatt & Nichol and divided the creek into six functional process zones to guide design and implementation. He emphasized the importance of engaging property owners through coordinated outreach efforts, including door-knocking and a property owner open house. Z. Schang also noted the development of a Creek Stewardship Committee—modeled after SPAT—to support long-term community involvement. Additional funding will be required to cover the gap between expected and actual project costs. A project website and dedicated email have been created, and the first Creek Stewardship Committee meeting is scheduled for December 18th.

iv. [Microbial Source Tracking \(MST\)](#)

C. Ray (PPBEP) is lead coordinator for the MST project in partnership with Escambia County. Existing MST and related water quality datasets are currently



being compiled and will support Maps on the Table and Walk the Watershed community engagement events planned for 2026.

v. Monitoring Updates

• **Collaborative Science to Assess Restoration Success (C-STARS)**

W. Scheffel (PPBEP) informed the committee that the second year of C-STARS was completed in October. Quarterly monitoring continued at eight sites across Pensacola Bay System, with plans to continue post construction monitoring at the NAS Living Shoreline next year. She also noted the addition of SAV monitoring and mapping at select sites using RTK mapping and quadrat sampling. W. Scheffel noted the acquisition of a new center console aluminum research vessel that will support expanded monitoring activities in 2026!

• **Annual Seagrass Survey (Tier II)**

W. Scheffel (PPBEP) announced that University of Southern Mississippi completed the 4th annual seagrass survey at over 100 sites across Perdido Bay, Big Lagoon, Pensacola Bay, and Santa Rosa Sound. For the second consecutive year, USM has recorded the presence of green/variegated urchins in Santa Rosa Sound.

• **Annual Juvenile Fish Trawling Survey**

In October, University of Southern Mississippi assisted PPBEP with completing the 4th annual trawl survey in lower Perdido Bay, Big Lagoon, lower Pensacola Bay, and Santa Rosa Sound. PPBEP expects to conduct these surveys independently starting in 2026 once the Program's new boat is operational.

• **SAV Mapping – Pensacola and Perdido Bays**

PPBEP is partnering with the University of Southern Mississippi's Geospatial Center to acquire aerial and satellite imagery for updated SAV mapping. The last mapping effort was completed in 2022. Ground-truthing will be completed in collaboration with USM's Coastal Ecology/Seagrass Lab to support benthic habitat map production.

General Discussion and Q/A

- The group discussed specifics of seagrass restoration at Project GreenShores. Z. Schang explained that *Ruppia* or widgeon grass mats were installed between the islands and shoreline in 2005–2007, with natural colonization occurring at Site II.
- Jackie Lane (Friends of Perdido Bay) reported preliminary phytoplankton monitoring results indicating a dominance of blue-green algae, particularly *Microcystis*, which is concerning due to its potential toxicity. J. Lane agreed to share data and reports with PPBEP.

6. Discussion

a. 2026 Priorities

i. CCMP Action Tracker

W. Scheffel (PPBEP) shared that the CCMP tracker survey will be circulated to partners in February/March 2026 for providing feedback on partner led projects that link back to CCMP priorities. A landing page on the PPBEP website is being explored to support transparency, visibility, and access. The tracker is intended to support PPBEP and its partners in annual reporting, funding requests, performance metric tracking, and alignment with the Strategic Plan. Tracker updates will occur annually.



ii. Meetings/Events

- Enhancing Meetings and Engagement – The Committee discussed potential improvements to increase engagement and effectiveness. Suggestions included:
 - Increasing informal event/meeting frequency
 - Incorporating more interactive virtual tools such Miro/Jamboard sessions, and in-person workshops
 - Rotating meeting times and locations to reach different audiences (e.g., work-hour meetings versus after-hours social gatherings)
- Members were encouraged to propose partner presentations for 2026
- Touchpoints for CCMP update in 2027

7. Around the Room/Announcements

- C. Hobbs (UWF) announced that a job posting for the UWF Senior Coordinator of Conservation Development position will be released soon.
- J. Bousquin (EPA Office of Water) provided a professional update on his transition from EPA ORD to EPA OW and shared that he is working on Water Quality Portal data entry and encouraged TC participants to reach out for any assistance they may need related to data needs.

8. Adjourned