



Policy Board Meeting Minutes

May 17, 2023, at 1:30 p.m. CT

Santa Rosa County Chambers

6495 Caroline St., Milton, FL 32570

[Meeting Recording](#)

Members Present

Woody Speed, Chair	City of Orange Beach
Colten Wright, Vice Chair	Santa Rosa County
Robert Bender	Escambia County
Mike Kohler	Escambia County
Kerry Smith	Santa Rosa County
Jared Moore	City of Pensacola
Benjamin Boutwell	Town of Century
Mike Norberg	Okaloosa County
Cherry Fitch	City of Gulf Breeze

Members Absent

Vernon Compton	City of Milton
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Interested Parties Present

Matt Posner	PPBEP
Whitney Scheffel	PPBEP
Logan McDonald	PPBEP
Haley Gancel	PPBEP
Madi Ross	PPBEP
Molly McDaniel	PPBEP
Grover Robinson	PPBEP
Mary Jane Bass	Beggs & Lane
Darryl Boudreau	NWFWMD
Brandon Brosnaham	Santa Rosa County
Thomas Derbes	Florida Sea Grant
Naisy Dolar	Santa Rosa County
Ryan Kirby	Escambia County
Paul Looney	WRA
Rick O'Connor	Florida Sea Grant
Ted Reese	ESA
Lawrence Specker	AL.com



1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

Matt Posner (Director, PPBEP) called the roll. A quorum was present.

3. Approval of Board Agenda

Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) made a motion to approve the agenda. Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Approval of April 5, 2023, Policy Board Minutes

Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) made a motion to approve the April 5, 2023, Policy Board minutes. Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Action Items

a. Approval of Waiving the Sixty-Day Termination Notice for Baldwin County's Membership

Considering approval of PPBEP's first amended and restated Interlocal Agreement, Baldwin County staff brought forward a recommendation to the Commission to terminate the County's membership in the PPBEP Interlocal Agreement citing challenges working across jurisdictional boundaries related to the MBNEP and PPBEP respective study areas. The Commission, as prescribed in Section 4.2 of the Interlocal Agreement, approved issuing a sixty-day notice of termination and included a provision waiving the sixty-day notice, if approved by the PPBEP Policy Board, to not impact the timeline associated with PPBEP's organizational transition. General discussion followed regarding PPBEP's commitment to utilizing the watershed-based approach and collaborating with all partners to advance ecosystem restoration, water quality improvement, and monitoring.

Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to waive the sixty-day termination notice for Baldwin County's membership. Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Approval of the Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program Articles of Incorporation

Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to approve the Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program Articles of Incorporation. Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Approval of the Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program Bylaws

Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) made a motion to approve the Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program Bylaws. Mayor Benjamin Boutwell (Town of Century) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.



d. **Approval of the Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program Consent Resolution**

Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) made a motion to approve the Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program Consent Resolution. Councilperson Jared Moore (City of Pensacola) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

e. **Approval of the 2023-2027 Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy**

As part of the EPA Cooperative Agreement to establish the Estuary Program, the development of a Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy was necessary to demonstrate to the EPA the monitoring priorities of the Estuary Program. Staff has prepared a five-year strategy consistent with guidance available from the EPA National Estuary Program.

Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) made a motion to approve the 2023-2027 Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy. Commissioner Robert Bender (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Staff Updates

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

i. **Organizational Transition**

A framework of the anticipated organizational transition timeline was presented to the board. With the board's final approval, PPBEP will register as a corporation. During the month of May, the program will apply for an EIN, UEID, and non-profit filing with the IRS. Starting in July, the official transition of PPBEP into an independent non-profit corporation by transition operations, personnel, and grant management policies will be underway, with all processes complete by the end of the fiscal year in October.

ii. **Legislative Update**

1. **Appropriations**

PPBEP's Appropriation Request sponsored by Senator Broxson and Representative Andrade was approved for the Senate budget in the full amount of \$750,000. Year two of the Northwest Florida Water Quality Improvement Project was also approved for the Senate budget, with \$350,000 to be allocated to PPBEP.

The Legislature is also approving the funding of the Northwest Florida On-Site Septic Systems at \$2 million, the Department of Environmental Protection Wastewater Grant Program at \$200 million, Total Maximum Daily Loads at \$40 million, Innovative Technology for Harmful Algal Blooms at \$10 million, the Resilient Florida Grant Program at \$300 million, and the Florida Wildlife Corridor at \$850 million. The approval of the funding for the programs will provide a substantial funding opportunity to address regional priorities.



2. Senate & House Bill Updates

An overview of Senate and House Bills was given to the board. The Bills include:

Senate Bill 1604 – Land Development Regulations

House Bill 111 – Flooding and Sea Level Rise Vulnerability

Senate Bill 724 – Seagrass Restoration Technology Development

House Bill 1379 – Environmental Protection

iii. 2nd Annual PPBEP Management Conference

Over seventy-five people attended the second annual PPBEP Management Conference held on May 4th. Participant input will help staff to shape PPBEP's upcoming projects and programs.

iv. University of Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute (NRLI)

Matt Posner (PPBEP, Director) provided a recap of his Fellowship with Class 2022 in the University of Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute (NRLI) Program. Matt Posner expressed his appreciation to the Board for investing in this professional development program, which will benefit both program leadership and community engagement in the years ahead.

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

i. State of the Bays Report

PPBEP staff released the first State of the Bays report for the Pensacola & Perdido Bay systems at the second annual Management Conference on May 4, 2023. The report provides summary data such as graphs and maps on key indicators such as habitats, water quality, bacteria, and wildlife. The indicators are ranked with a scale of ecosystem health of improving, stable, declining, critical, or undetermined. Historical information, potential causes, latest trends, solutions, and actions the public can take are provided for each indicator. The report is intended to serve as a centralized source of information for the public to learn more about the condition of our local waters.

The key findings from the report include:

- Oysters are in critical condition in the Pensacola Bay System due to declines since the 1980s and a loss from 2010-2022
- Seagrass beds have expanded or remained stable in the Pensacola and Perdido Bay Systems
- Water Quality in the Pensacola Bay System has recently improved for phosphorus, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity and is stable for chlorophyll-a, but recently declining for nitrogen
- Water Quality in the Perdido Bay System is largely undetermined due to inconsistent monitoring
- Fewer Sanitary Sewer Overflows have occurred in the Pensacola and



Perdido Bay Watersheds

- Fewer beach advisories have been issued due to bacterial concentrations, indicating improved conditions in the Perdido Bay System
- More beach advisories have been issued due to higher bacterial concentration, indicating declining conditions in the Pensacola Bay System, particularly in urban bayous (Bayou Texar, Chico, & Grande)
- Manatee siting has increased in both Pensacola and Perdido Bays

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

i. Outreach Events

1. Earth Day

PPBEP staff hosted observation tanks at two Earth Day events, one at the Pensacola Bayview Center and the other at Alabama Gulf State Park.

2. Santa Rosa County Bay Day

The elementary students for Santa Rosa County's 2023 Bay Day helped design oyster shells to leave their mark on future oyster restoration projects in the Pensacola Bay watershed.

3. Episcopal Day School Field Day

Staff took part in the Episcopal Day School's 10th annual fourth-grade field day with partners. Students participated in a waterway warrior relay race to clean the water of hazards for sea turtles and manatees.

4. PLACE | SLR Pop In

PPBEP's first Pop-In was held at the downtown Pensacola Main Library. Participants enjoyed fun activities to help educate them on sea level rise in the Pensacola Bay area.

5. American Magic Wave Gauge Volunteer Day

American Magic volunteers help staff build wave gauges to be used for future monitoring projects.

ii. The Humble Oyster Documentary

The Humble Oyster documentary that explores the past, current, and future conditions of oysters in the Pensacola Bay System was completed. A premiere and panel discussion event was held on May 23rd at the Jean & Paul Amos Performance Studio.

SAVE THE DATE:

Oyster Documentary Broadcast Premiere

May 25th



7:00 PM in-studio episode
8:00 PM broadcast premiere

iii. **Community Grant Updates** (*Madi Ross, Community Outreach Assistant*)

1. **Blackwater Soil & Water Conservation District No-Till Seed Drill Rental Program**

In January 2023, the Blackwater Soil and Conservation District acquired the No-Till Seed Drill for their Rental Program. Their team has created the rental agreement to initiate the program. This project will be renting out the drill to local farmers as a low-cost rental to aid in cover-crop plantings to lower sedimentation inputs from unplanted fields during the off-season. A release ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on May 18th.

2. **Navarre Beach Marine Science Station Aquatic Care Team**

The Navarre Beach Marine Science Center has been taking bi-weekly water quality samples in the Santa Rosa Sound. The final piece of equipment for the project, the CastAway, has been received and will help expand the water quality parameters that students are able to measure. The device will allow students to monitor conductivity, water temperature, depth, sound speed, salinity, time, and position at each of their sampling sites. Students will use the data collected to educate the community on the status of local aquatic ecosystems.

3. **Franklin's Promise EscaRosa OysterCorps**

EscaRosa OysterCorps members work to restore and protect coastal resources by collecting and recycling oyster shells, growing native marsh plants, implementing living shoreline projects, and educating high school students through hands-on experience. In May, the OysterCorps members hosted a field day for students from Pace High School at FloridaTown Park and planted over one hundred salt meadow cordgrass plants.

iv. **Trash Free Waters Lesson Update** (*Madi Ross, Community Outreach Assistant*)

The 2022-2023 high school Trash Free Waters lessons and case studies have been completed. Staff is in the process of planning litter reduction projects with teachers on the campuses of Gulf Breeze High School and West Florida High School for implementation in the 2023-2024 school year.

7. **Discussion Items**

a. **FY23-24 Local Government Contributions**

A framework for local government contributions was presented to the board that adopts a population-based approach for contribution levels.



The board agreed to the authorization of the Chairman and Executive Director to request the adoption of the population-based approach for local government contributions to each governing body's jurisdiction.

8. Committee Updates

a. **Technical Committee** (*Paul Looney, WRA*)

The second annual Management Conference brought together members from all the committees, including the Technical Committee. Attendees were present for a walkthrough of the newly released State of the Bay Report and participated in a breakout session to identify the goals and priorities for the PPBEP Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy.

i. **Oyster Subcommittee** (*Whitney Scheffel, Senior Scientist*)

The second annual Management Conference brought together members from all the committees, including the Oyster Subcommittee. Attendees participated in a breakout session to identify the goals and priorities for the Pensacola Bay Oyster Initiative NOAA Project.

b. **Education and Outreach Committee** (*Rick O'Connor, Florida Sea Grant*)

The second annual Management Conference brought together members from all the committees, including the Education and Outreach Committee. Attendees participated in a breakout session to identify the priorities and necessary planning for the Estuary 101 Campaign and the Evening for the Estuaries Gala.

c. **Environmental Justice Committee** (*Ryan Kirby, Escambia County*)

The second annual Management Conference brought together members from all the committees, including the Environmental Justice Committee. Attendees participated in a breakout session to identify partners and barriers for the Environmental Justice Strategic Plan.

9. Policy Board/Agency Updates

10. Public Comment

11. Adjourned