



**Policy Board Meeting Minutes**

January 26, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. CT

Santa Rosa County Administrative Complex, BOCC Chambers

6495 Caroline Street, Milton, FL 32570

[Virtual Meeting Recording](#)

**Members Present**

Dave Piech, Chair	Santa Rosa County
Bob Cole	Santa Rosa County
Mike Norberg	Okaloosa County
Shannon Rice	City of Milton
Ben Boutwell	Town of Century
Jeff Bergosh	Escambia County
Ann Hill, ph	City of Pensacola
Dan Dealy, rep, ph	Baldwin County
Cherry Fitch, rep	City of Gulf Breeze

**Member Absent**

Robert Bender, Vice-Chair	Escambia County
Woody Speed	City of Orange Beach

**Interested Parties Present**

Matt Posner	PPBEP
Whitney Scheffel	PPBEP
Logan McDonald	PPBEP
Emerson Cheney	PPBEP
Haley Gancel	PPBEP
Madi Ross	PPBEP
Amanda Croteau	UWF
Amy Newbold	EPA
Anne Birch	TNC
Angela Underwood	Weeks Bay NERR
Ashley Campbell	Baldwin County
Barbara Albrecht	BFA/UWF
Casey Fulford	AACD
Chasidy Hobbs	UWF
Chips Kirschenfeld	Escambia County
Chris Verlinde	UF/IFAS, Sea Grant
Clare Davis	Community Member
Dana Morton	Escambia County
Darryl Boudreau	NFWFMD
Dottie Byron	DISL
Eric Schneider	ESA
Heather Patten	UWF CETES Student
Jessica Bibza	NWF



Kristin Bennett	TetraTech Inc.
Melissa Schumacher	UWF CETES Student
Naisy Dolar	Santa Rosa County
Paul Looney	WRA
Raylene Solis	UWF CETES Student
Samantha Bolduc	Escambia County
Shelley Alexander	Santa Rosa County
Tanya Linzy	Santa Rosa County
Wade Lehmann	EPA

**1. Call to Order**

**2. Roll Call**

**3. Approval of December 1, 2021, Policy Board Minutes**

Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) made a motion to approve the December 1, 2021 meeting minutes. Mayor Boutwell (Town of Century) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**4. Staff Updates**

• **Director's Update** (*Matt Posner, Executive Director*)

i. **Office Space**

The Estuary Program has moved their offices to Seville Tower. The arrival of office furniture was delayed but is scheduled to arrive in mid-February.

ii. **Legislative Update**

The Estuary Program's Florida State Appropriation request (HB3383/SB2320) is moving forward. Matt Posner visited Tallahassee to discuss progress with the northwest Florida legislative delegation. The appropriation would continue to support the program's Community Grant Program as well as the implementation of the Oyster Management Plan. The appropriations have passed the first phase in the House Subcommittee.

iii. **EPA Budget Amendment Update**

The EPA grant budget amendment has been approved by Escambia County BOCC and is currently awaiting final review by EPA.

• **Technical Update** (*Whitney Scheffel, Senior Scientist*)

i. **CCMP Development Status, Schedule, and Process Moving Forward**

- A final CCMP draft will be distributed to selected editors in February.
- The CCMP rollout and development timeline includes engagements such as a Management Conference Meeting in April, public comment events in May, and the "State of the Bays" reveal and fundraiser Gala in August.



**ii. NOAA Actionable Science Seagrass Restoration & Resiliency Project**

- The Estuary Program is partnering with Dr. Erin Cox and the University of New Orleans and Mississippi State University to develop a strategic plan for seagrass restoration considering seagrass resiliency to climate stress through genetic diversity. The project team has accomplished the following:
  - Conducted literature review
  - Conducted survey to gather feedback from community users, practitioners, and researchers on seagrass restoration, perceptions, and needs
  - Team meeting Thursday, Jan. 27<sup>th</sup> to discuss survey results
  - Upcoming Advisory Panel meeting in February
  - Planning for stakeholder workshop Spring 2022

**iii. NFWF Emergency Coastal Resilience Fund Grant**

- The Estuary Program provided feedback on The Nature Conservancy's NFWF ECRF Grant proposal for the restoration of Robinson Island in lower Perdido Bay.
  - The project would complete design, permitting, and the implementation of the Robinson Island restoration plan.
  - The restoration plan will increase island elevation, include marsh plantings and breakwater construction, balance human uses with conservation concepts, provide long-term management of the island, and implement the use of beneficial dredge material.
- **Outreach Update** (*Logan McDonald, Community Outreach Coordinator*)
    - i. Community Grant Update**
      - The Perdido Key Coastal Demonstration Garden has a volunteer workday planned for January 29<sup>th</sup> to prepare the site for an upcoming planting event.
      - Santa Rosa County has created new watershed signage for 12 watersheds.
      - EscaRosa OysterCorps continues to collect recycled oyster shells from participating local seafood restaurants and grow marsh plants in their plant nursery. In December, OysterCorps members participated in a training on how to build plastic-free oyster prisms for restoration sites, part of a state-wide initiative.
      - The Pensacola MESS Hall's Estuary Exhibit is now open. The exhibit includes an augmented reality sandbox where children can explore how topographical changes affect water flow.
      - The Town of Century has completed site mapping and an inventory for Fischer's Landing. Educational signage and a sedimentation study are underway. WRA (project contractor) is partnering with St. Paul's and the Estuary Program to host a field trip for students to learn about the site and the watershed. Students will visit Fischer's Landing and Pensacola Bay to compare the upper and lower portion of the watershed.
      - IHMC has developed its app. Recruitment and roll-out of the app are coming



soon.

- The UWF Historical Ecology team has been working to assess and digitize historical records in partnership with archive and archaeology faculty and staff.
- University of South Alabama's video sampling on oyster reefs is complete. The video processing is now underway.

**ii. Biking for the Bays**

Logan McDonald biked 100 miles on Saturday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> to raise money for the Estuary Program's monitoring and education efforts. Over \$1,000 was raised and she expressed thanks for the generous donations.

**iii. Orange Beach Seafood Festival**

PPBEP will participate in the Orange Beach Seafood Festival on February 19<sup>th</sup> with a general education booth and a fish printing station in the kid's area.

**iv. Library Programming (*Madi Ross, Community Outreach Assistant*)**

- Madi Ross updated the Policy Board on the new library programming.
- The West Florida Public Libraries are hosting an Ocean of Possibilities Summer Reading & Science Program that PPBEP will be participating in.
- In June and July, the PPBEP will join the libraries and participating children for ocean-themed story time and activities to help educate youth throughout Escambia County.

**v. Trash Free Waters (*Emerson Cheney, TFW Volunteer Coordinator*)**

- Since the Trash Free Waters project began in 2021, the Estuary Program has:
  - Engaged 146 volunteers and removed 3660 lbs. and approximately 344 cubic feet of trash from Carpenter, Pond, and Jones Creek.
  - Partnered with 15 different organizations to conduct cleanup events in each creek watershed.
  - Installed 6 floating litter capture booms to reduce the downstream flow of floatable trash.
  - Held 17 litter boom monitoring events to collect data about trash accumulating in the floating litter booms.
- In the coming year, PPBEP will expand the TFW volunteer program and utilize the data collected during monitoring to inform the development of property trash reduction plans and other litter mitigation measures to reduce trash loading in the targeted watersheds.
- The Program is continuing to develop the curriculum and will begin delivering lessons to high school students in Escambia and Santa Rosa County schools this spring.

**5. Action Items (*Matt Posner, Director*)**



- **Approval of Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium Grant Agreement No. XXXXX, for \$28,496, for the Resilience Readiness Project**  
Commissioner Cole (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to approve the contractual services agreements. Mike Norberg seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
  
- **Approval of the following contractual services agreements:**
  - i. Contract with Dauphin Island Sea Lab, in the amount of \$60,000, for seagrass mapping in the Pensacola and Perdido Bay Systems
  - ii. Contract with the University of Southern Mississippi, in the amount of 50,000, for seagrass survey ground-truthing in the Pensacola and Perdido Bay Systems
  - iii. Contract with Dauphin Island Sea Lab, in the amount of \$15,000, for fish trawling surveys in the Pensacola and Perdido Bay Systems
  - iv. Contract with the University of Southern Mississippi, for \$50,000, to produce an oyster documentary
  - v. Contract with the University of West Florida, for \$75,000, for the Upper Watershed Streams Assessment
  - vi. Contract with Troy University, in the amount of \$30,000, to complete the Living Shoreline Suitability Model
  - vii. Amendment to idgroup’s contract, for \$50,000, to aide with Estuary Program marketing
    - Dan Dealy (Baldwin County) asked if the fieldwork for the seagrass surveys is being extended since the proposal states monitoring occurred in the Fall of 2021. Matt Posner clarified that no work has started since the budget has not been approved yet. The proposal will be corrected to reflect the current year.
    - Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) asked if PPBEP plans to coordinate with FWC for fish trawling surveys. Whitney Scheffel confirmed that staff will be in contact with FWC to collaborate on the survey to ensure there is not a duplication of effort.

Commissioner Bergosh (Escambia County) made a motion to approve the contractual services agreements. Mayor Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- **Selection of Policy Board Chair and Vice-Chair for 2022**  
Commissioner Bergosh nominated Commissioner Bender (Escambia County) for the 2022 Chair position. Commissioner Cole seconded the nomination. Commissioner Bender was elected unanimously as Chair.  
Commissioner Cole nominated Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) for the 2022 Vice-Chair position. Commissioner Bergosh seconded the nomination. Woody Speed was elected unanimously as Vice-Chair.

## **6. Discussion Items**

- **PPBEP Organizational Structure Update**
  - Staff have begun the process of transitioning PPBEP to an Independent Special District. The Special District will be non-taxing and non-regulatory. The Interlocal Agreement was renewed, and approval of an Interlocal Agreement revision is scheduled for March 2022. Staff will ensure that FDEO compliance standards are met.
  - Future administrative support for the program could be contracted out, provided as an in-kind



service from Interlocal Agreement partners, or supported by an MOU with a third-party institution, such as UWF. Further discussion will take place at the March Policy Board Meeting.

- Chair Piech requested that staff provide the Policy Board with current cost estimates for services (e.g., IT support, HR, legal) from Escambia County so Policy Board members can assess the workload that would be associated with providing in-kind services.

- **PPBEP Finance Strategy**

- PPBEP has established a Finance Sub-Committee. The first event will be held on March 24<sup>th</sup> in Pensacola at the PPBEP office, 226 S. Palafox Pl.
- Chair Piech suggested that the Finance Sub-Committee budget updates should be added to the agenda for future Policy Board meetings.
- M. Posner provided the Policy Board with suggested FY22-23 Local Government Contributions (totaling \$275,000 annually) to support operating costs that will also serve as a match for grant funds.
  - Commissioner Cole asked if in-kind contributions would be considered as a match for grant requests. Posner confirmed that in-kind could be used in this capacity.

## **7. Committee Updates**

- **Technical Committee Update**

Technical Committee (TC) Chair Jessica Bibza (NWF) provided updates on the January 25<sup>th</sup> TC meeting. The meeting was well attended and included partner presentations from TNC on the Perdido Islands Management Plan, recent community survey, and upcoming projects and from Wood on the Carpenter Creek/Bayou Texar Watershed water quality and stream assessments. Also, the committee participants elected a new chair and vice-chair. The 2022 Chair is Paul Looney, Senior Environmental Scientist (WRA), and the Vice-Chair is Casey Fulford, Coastal Restoration Planner (AACD).

- **Education & Outreach Committee Update**

Education and Outreach (EOC) Chair Chasidy Hobbs (UWF) provided updates from the January 20<sup>th</sup> EOC meeting that included a presentation from a representative from the Scientist in Every Florida School (SEFS) program. The Program plans to partner with SEFS to implement teacher professional development training this summer. PPBEP is partnering with UWF CETES students to complete projects of interest related to storm drain marking, social media and marketing, and the development of a brewery proceeds program. Students will help with planning and implementation of new PPBEP programs that align with the CCMP goals. The EOC Committee voted to keep the current Chair and Vice-Chair for 2022, Chasidy Hobbs (UWF) and Carrie Stevenson (UF/IFAS Sea Grant). Chair Hobbs thanked Logan for Biking for the Bays and proposed expanding the fundraising event in future years. C. Hobbs also wanted to recognize and congratulate fellow EOC member Chris Verlinde (UF/IFAS Sea Grant) for being awarded the 2021 Outstanding Marine Educator Award from the Southern Association of Marine Educators.

- **Business Partnership Committee Update**

M. Posner updated the Policy Board on the Business Partnership Committee. The kick-off Business Partnership social is scheduled for February 24<sup>th</sup> at Perfect Plain Brewery at 5:30 pm and is being sponsored by WRA. Staff are recruiting more businesses and will schedule additional events across the watershed.



#### **8. Policy Board/Agency Updates**

- Commissioner Cole suggested Will Dunaway as a potential representative for pro-bono legal services and counsel for PPBEP. Commissioner Cole confirmed he would reach out to Mr. Dunaway. Commissioner Cole suggested that PPBEP provide board members with brochures to provide to interested parties that are looking to get involved and/or support the Program.
- Chair Piech announced that the Eglin Rapid Infiltration Basins (RIBs) Project is moving into the design phase soon in Santa Rosa County and a permit update from Eglin is expected this week that will move Holley-Navarre into the construction phase. The project will treat wastewater effluent in Holly-Navarre and Gulf Breeze.

#### **9. Public Comment**

Barbara Albrecht (BFA/UWF) asked for an update on the site of the Blackwater Wastewater Treatment project. Councilwoman Rice shared that the location for the RIBs will be discussed at the February Santa Rosa County BOCC.

#### **10. Meeting Adjourned**