



Policy Board Meeting

October 26, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. CT
Pensacola City Council Chambers
222 W Main St, Pensacola, FL 32502
[Meeting Recording](#)

Members Present

Robert Bender, Chair	Escambia County
Woody Speed, Vice Chair	City of Orange Beach
Dave Piech	Santa Rosa County
Benjamin Boutwell	Town of Century
Ashley Campbell, ph	Baldwin County
Ann Hill	City of Pensacola
Jeff Bergosh	Escambia County
Cherry Fitch	City of Gulf Breeze

Members Absent

Bob Cole	Santa Rosa County
Mike Norberg	Okaloosa County
Vernon Compton	City of Milton

Interested Parties Present

Matt Posner	PPBEP
Whitney Scheffel	PPBEP
Logan McDonald	PPBEP
Haley Gancel	PPBEP
Madi Ross	PPBEP
Molly McDaniel	PPBEP
Tucker Reynolds	PPBEP
Amanda Croteau	UWF
Amy Newbold	EPA
Beth Fugate	DEP
Brent Wipf	Escambia County
Carrie Stevenson	UF IFAS Escambia County
Casey Fulford	AACD
Chips Kirschenfeld	Escambia County
Dana Morton	Escambia County
Darryl Boudreau	NWFWMD
Elizabeth Major	LWV
Elizabeth Orr	FDEP
Janet Bowman	TNC
Jeanette Kelson	Wood



Jessica Graham	SASJBEP
Joshua Smith	City of Gulf Breeze
Katie Doughty	Office of U.S. Senator Rick Scott
Kristin Bennett	TetraTech
Marybeth Barrons	Office of U.S. Senator Marco Rubio
Naisy Dolar	Santa Rosa County
Paul Looney	WRA
Paul Thorpe	NFWFMD
Ryan Kirby	Escambia County
Ryan Rossi	SASJBEP
Shelley Alexander	Santa Rosa County
Sydney Armstrong	NFWFMD
Tanya Linzy	Santa Rosa County
Thomas McLaughlin	PNJ
Trent Matthews	USDA
Trevor Mitchell	Office of Florida State Representative Alex Andrade
Turner Mitchell	Office of Florida State Representative Alex Andrade
Wade Lehmann	EPA

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

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

3. Approval of Board Agenda

Councilperson Ann Hill (City of Pensacola) made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Jeff Bergosh (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Approval of August 31, 2022, Policy Board Minutes

Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) made a motion to approve the August 31, 2022, meeting minutes. Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Staff Updates

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

i. FY22-23 Operating Budget

PPBEP is fully funded for the new fiscal year. Minor budget amendments to the staff operating budget will be brought to the board at the November Policy Board Meeting.

ii. Local Government Contributions

Commitments have been received from Escambia County, Santa Rosa County, the City of Pensacola, and the City of Orange Beach for this fiscal year. Staff are



working with the remaining local governing parties to secure additional commitments.

iii. Organizational Structure Transition Update

The Estuary Program received a response from the Florida Attorney General's office regarding the transition to an Independent Special District status and the inclusion of the Alabama governing parties. The Special District statute does not provide for the inclusion of other state governing parties. Staff is exploring other governing structures that would allow equal representation from the Alabama parties. The alternatives will be presented and discussed at the November Policy Board meeting.

iv. NEP Designation Update

Staff are continuing to work toward the National Estuary Program designation with the support from the Offices of Senators Rubio and Scott and the respective Alabama offices.

v. November Board Meeting

The November Board meeting has been rescheduled to November 30, 2022. Commissioner Bender notified staff of a conference conflict with the November 30th date. Staff will propose a new Policy Board Meeting date to Policy Board members.

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

i. Project updates

1. Seagrass mapping and trawling survey

PPBEP partnered with the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL) to conduct seagrass extent mapping and trawling surveys. Flight transects were completed in September by NV5 Geospatial for both Pensacola and Perdido Bay systems. Multispectral imagery will be processed to assess the current extent of seagrass habitat and will serve as an update to the 2017 seagrass maps. Trawling surveys were conducted throughout the Pensacola and Perdido Bay systems to add to an existing historical dataset as well as provide current information on juvenile fish communities across seagrass habitats to track species changes over time. Final reports will be available in early 2023.

2. Seagrass monitoring

The Program partnered with researchers at the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Lab to complete seagrass surveys to collect data on species and macroalgal cover, canopy height, and water quality parameters. Ninety-five sites were selected across lower Pensacola Bay, lower Perdido Islands, Big Lagoon, and Santa Rosa Sound adding to existing sites established as part of an existing National Park



Service monitoring effort. Sediment cores were also collected to evaluate dormant seagrass seed densities.

3. Upper watersheds assessment

PPBEP is partnering with University of West Florida (UWF) researchers and community scientists to conduct water quality monitoring along the upper reaches of the watersheds to fill previously identified data gaps. A total of 24 sites were selected throughout the Perdido, Escambia/Conecuh, and Yellow/Shoal sub-watersheds across a gradient of land-use categories. Water quality parameters being measured as part of this assessment include conductivity/salinity, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, chl-a, dissolved nutrients, bacteria, and more. Field work is due to be completed in November.

4. Economic impact and valuation

PPBEP partnered with FSU staff to conduct an Economic Impact and Valuation assessment for the Pensacola and Perdido Bays watersheds. The analysis found that businesses located within a half mile of the estuaries employ more than 84,000 people and generate nearly \$8 billion in sales, and the estuaries are estimated to contribute \$2.7 billion to property values and \$81 million to consumer spending.

ii. State of the Bays

PPBEP staff is working on the first State of the Bays report and will launch the digital platform in the new year. The main indicator groups include water quality, habitat, land use, and wildlife. The report will provide an overview of how conditions have changed over time, the current condition of the bays, and efforts that are underway to improve the condition of the bays. Staff plans to engage the Technical Committee in the development of future State of the Bays reports, which could include additional indicators or metrics, as PPBEP and partners continue to fill data gaps.

iii. PPBEP Annual Work Plan

The Annual Work Plan will include FY22-23 Programs, Projects, and Partnership Priorities like organizational structure, research and monitoring priorities, and policy and technical assistance. Project input provided at the April 2022 Management Conference Meeting including a living shoreline cost share program, sedimentation studies, microbial source tracking water quality studies, and policy recommendations for stormwater and green infrastructure projects will also be incorporated.

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

i. National Estuaries Week

National Estuaries Week was a successful celebration with participation in



events across the watersheds. The week-long celebrations included the Brews for the Bays program, guided tours, the 2022-2023 Community Grant Symposium, an Estuary Earring Collection, and many other events.

ii. Estuary 101 Campaign

Staff are working with Impact Campaigns and Hatchmark Studios, to develop and launch an Estuary 101 Campaign. Community stakeholders recently participated in a marketing workshop and provided feedback on the best ways to engage the community through membership, pledges, and business support. The Estuary 101 Campaign will launch in the new year. Commissioner Bender noted the Panhandle Manatee component of the Estuary 101 Campaign and recognized Jessica Bibza's contributions to both the Panhandle Manatee Program and the Estuary Program and spoke to her legacy.

6. Action Items

a. Approval of the PPBEP Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan

W. Scheffel reviewed the finalized Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan, highlighting the main sections. Amy Newbold (EPA) and Mayor Robinson (City of Pensacola) commented on the history of the program and expressed their excitement about the finalization of the CCMP.

Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) made a motion to approve the PPBEP Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan (CCMP), authorized PPBEP staff to submit the final CCMP to the EPA and approved the request for each governing party to adopt a resolution of support to implement the CCMP. Commissioner Jeff Bergosh (Escambia County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Approval of Establishing an Environmental Justice Committee

Commissioner Bender (Chair, Escambia County) suggested approving Action Items B-G as a slate.

Councilwoman Ann Hill (City of Pensacola) made a motion to approve the slated Action Items B-G. Mayor Benjamin Boutwell (Town of Century) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Approval of DEP Agreement No. OWP02 Amendment 4

d. Approval of DEP Agreement No. 22PLN35

e. Approval of Subaward Agreement with FSU

f. Approval of Issuing a Purchase Order to Background Stories, in the amount of \$23,000, to complete the State of the Bays Report Card



g. Approval of a Minor Budget Modification to USEPA Grant Agreement No. 00D81118

7. Committee Updates

a. Technical Committee

Paul Looney (Technical Committee Chair, WRA) reviewed the presentations given at the October 25, 2022, Technical Committee Meeting, the Committee's priorities now that the CCMP is completed, and the proposed ideas recognize Jessica Bibza and the legacy she left on the Pensacola & Perdido Bay area.

i. Oyster Sub-Committee

W. Scheffel updated the board that the next meeting will be a round-table discussion with community stakeholders and partner agencies to identify solutions to water quality impairments impacting Pensacola Bay System oysters.

Tentative: January 31st 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM; Location: Santa Rosa County Extension Office (Milton, FL)

b. Education and Outreach Committee

Carrie Stevenson (Education & Outreach Committee Co-Chair, UF/IFAS) reviewed the National Estuary Week events, highlighted the importance of getting people out to experience the estuary, and announced the Estuary 101 Campaign support and roll-out.

c. Business Partnership Program

M. Posner reviewed the Business Partnership event held in Santa Rosa County.

d. Environmental Justice Work Group

M. Posner announced the approval of the Program's new Environmental Justice Committee. The first official Environmental Justice Committee Meeting was held on Tuesday, November 1, 2022, at 5:30 PM.

8. Policy Board/Agency Updates

- a. Commissioner Piech announced multiple awarded projects in Santa Rosa County, including a USFWS grant for approximately \$1.3 million, combined with the ARPA funds, to purchase two parcels at 545 acres that will go into conservation status and provided passive recreational opportunities, \$800,000 for construction of the FloridaTown Park Living Shoreline Project, a grant \$250,000 NFWF for site assessment and 90% design for a living shoreline at the Navarre Beach Wastewater Treatment Plant, and a \$2.5 million NFWFMD grant to implement Phase 2 of the Wastewater Treatment Plant Rapid Infiltration Basin Site (RIBS) Project to pump effluent across the Santa Rosa Sound.
- b. Commissioner Bender recognized Escambia County for their hard work and initiative to help support the Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program.
- c. Paul Thorpe (NFWFMD) congratulated PPBEP on the success of the program and the finalization of the CCMP. P. Thorpe announced the full funding of Phases 3 and 4 of the



Wastewater Treatment Rapid Infiltration Basin Site (RIBS) Project.

- d. Amy Newbold (EPA) announced the Gulf of Mexico Innovative Nutrient Reduction: Farmer to Farmer and Watershed-based Non-Agriculture Approaches funding opportunity now open until December 8, 2022, from the EPA-Gulf of Mexico Division.
- e. Elizabeth Orr (FDEP) congratulated PPBEP on the finalization of the CCMP.

9. Public Comment

10. Meeting Adjourned