



## **Policy Board Meeting**

December 14, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. CT

Pensacola City Hall Hagler Mason Conference Room

222 W Main St, Pensacola, FL 32502

[Meeting Recording](#)

### **Members Present**

Robert Bender, Chair	Escambia County
Woody Speed, Vice Chair	City of Orange Beach
Colten Wright	Santa Rosa County
Ashley Campbell, ph	Baldwin County
Mike Kohler	Escambia County
Cherry Fitch	City of Gulf Breeze
Kerry Smith	Santa Rosa County
Mike Norberg	Okaloosa County

### **Members Absent**

Vernon Compton	City of Milton
Benjamin Boutwell	Town of Century
Jared Moore	City of Pensacola

### **Interested Parties Present**

Matt Posner	PPBEP
Whitney Scheffel	PPBEP
Logan McDonald	PPBEP
Haley Gancel	PPBEP
Madi Ross	PPBEP
Barbara Albrecht	BFA, UWF
Betty Brannon	LWL
Bob Cole	Community Member
Carrie Stevenson	UF IFAS Escambia County
Chris Verlinde	UF IFAS Santa Rosa County
Elizabeth Major	LWV
Elizabeth Orr	FDEP
Kristin Bennett	TetraTech Inc.
Naisy Dolar	Santa Rosa County
Paul Looney	WRA

#### **1. Call to Order**

#### **2. Roll Call**

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



### 3. Welcome New Board Members

M. Posner opened the floor for the new Policy Board Members to introduce themselves. Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County), Kerry Smith (Santa Rosa County), and Mike Kohler (Escambia County) introduced themselves. M. Posner announced that Jared Moore will be the new representative for the City of Pensacola and that Vernon Compton will be the new representative for the City of Milton.

### 4. Approval of Board Agenda

Commissioner Mike Kohler (Escambia County) made a motion to approve the agenda. Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### 5. Approval of October 26, 2022, Policy Board Minutes

Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) made a motion to approve the October 26, 2022, meeting minutes. Woody Speed (City of Orange Beach) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### 6. Recognition of Santa Rosa County Commissioner Bob Cole

M. Posner recognized former Policy Board Member Bob Cole for his dedication to the Estuary Program and presented him with an award. Commissioner Robert Bender (Escambia County) thanked Bob Cole for his service on the Board and congratulated him on his retirement. Barbara Albrecht (BFA, UWF) thanked Bob Cole for supporting the progress of the environmental initiatives within Santa Rosa County.

### 7. Staff Updates

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

##### i. Annual Performance Review

An annual performance review for Executive Director Posner was held with Chairman Bender. M. Posner identified communication goals for 2023 and provided a summary to board members.

##### ii. Chair and Vice Chair Election in January 2023

Policy Board Meeting Chair and Vice-Chair positions for 2023 will be elected on February 8, 2023.

##### iii. Finance Committee Membership

The Finance Committee will commence in 2023. Board members that are interested in being part of the Finance Committee should contact M. Posner.

##### iv. Overview of 2023 Program Initiatives

Staff highlighted 2023 Program Initiatives, including:

- Community Grant Program
- Creation of a bi-annual State of the Bays Report Card



- Estuary 101 Campaign
- NOAA B-WET Grant
- Compound Flood Model & Adaptation Plan
- Carpenter Creek Restoration Design
- FLRACEP: Evaluating Restoration Effectiveness
- Pensacola Bay System Oyster Restoration Initiative
- Northwest Florida Water Quality Program Partnership
- Orange Beach Marine Debris Grant
- an initiative to secure funds for Microbial Source Tracking & Water Quality Improvements.

b. **Technical Update** (*Haley Gancel, Environmental Scientist*)

i. **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 report will provide an overview of how conditions have changed over time, the current condition of the bays, and the efforts that are underway to improve the condition of the bays. The four main indicator groups are water quality (dissolved oxygen, chlorophyll-a, total nitrogen, total phosphorus, turbidity), habitat (oysters, seagrass, wetlands, longleaf pine forests), bacteria (beach advisories, sanitary sewer overflows), and wildlife (manatee sightings). Additional indicators and metrics will be added in future iterations of the State of the Bays Report.

ii. **Oyster Round Table Event**

PPBEP and partners (FDACS, DEP, Santa Rosa County, FWC, utilities, and oyster aquaculture industry) will host an Oyster Round Table Event at the Santa Rosa County Extension Service, 6363 Dogwood Dr. Milton, FL, on January 31, 2023 from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm. The purpose of this event is to discuss current steps being taken to address bacterial pollution in the Pensacola Bay System and collaboratively identify solutions. The event will include partner presentations and discussions on topics including bacterial pollution, shellfish harvest re-classification, infrastructure improvements, and projects that address bacterial issues.

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

i. **Restore America's Estuaries Conference**

PPBEP staff attended the Restore America's Estuaries Conference in New Orleans, LA in early December. Staff informed attendees on the release of the PPBEP Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan and the current six priority goals. M. Posner participated in a panel discussion with the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program and the St. Andrews St. Joes Bays Estuary Program to discuss steps in the process of creating a new estuary program. The Program was invited to host an exhibitor booth that was very



successful, and staff engaged with collaborators and partners from around the nation.

**ii. Estuary 101 Campaign**

Staff continues to work with Impact Campaigns and Hatchmark Studios to finalize the 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.

**iii. Outreach Events**

**1. Navy Federal Community Give-Back Day**

A successful event with Navy Federal volunteers was held at Shoreline Park, Gulf Breeze in November. Volunteers helped with the construction of scientific monitoring tools for oyster recruitment and seagrass surveys. Quotes from the participants were shared showing their excitement towards the event. Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) attended the event and helped seine for wildlife in seagrass beds.

**2. Balance on the Blackwater Kayak Tour**

PPBEP, in partnership with the Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN), hosted an informational kayak tour along the Arcadia Mill/Blackwater River. Participants enjoyed a relaxing paddle while learning about the history and ecology of the Blackwater River.

**3. Exploring Escribano Kayak Tour**

PPBEP, in partnership with the Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN), hosted an informational kayak tour along East Bay at Escribano Point WMA. Participants enjoyed a learned about the history and ecology of the waterways and the East Bay oyster reefs.

**iv. Oyster Documentary**

MSU TV completed the first cut of the Oyster Documentary that includes perspectives from oyster farmers and scientists on the Pensacola Bay Oyster habitat. The final documentary will be released in the new year. The documentary will be included in the NOAA B-WET grant curriculum to enhance student and teacher understanding of oysters and their history in the Pensacola area.

**v. Education Efforts (*Madi Ross, Community Outreach Assistant*)**

The K-12 Trash Free Waters curriculum has been updated into an interactive Prezi form. Presentations in the classroom are underway, currently including two high schools, one middle school, and three elementary schools. Each grade



level contains new hands-on activities to give students a better understanding of their watershed.

## **8. Discussion Items** (*Matt Posner, Director*)

### **a. PPBEP Organizational Structure and Transition**

PPBEP is actively pursuing an Independent District status to make the program a fully independent program. The Florida Attorney General's Office stated that special districts can only be created by Florida units of local governments. The recommended alternative to include Alabama representation is for the Florida local governments to charter the new special district as the host agency for PPBEP, revise the existing Interlocal Agreement to reflect the new host structure, and maintain equity on the Board with both Alabama and Florida governing parties. This structure would allow for equal representation and rights between Alabama and Florida, for the Program to still be designated as a governmental body ensuring the eligibility for state and federal grants, and to keep the staff enrolled in the Florida Retirement System.

### **b. 2023 Legislative Priorities**

The Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program has the potential to significantly influence legislative funding and policy decisions through a well-coordinated, regional approach. Initial staff-identified priorities include:

- Support a local funding request to the Florida Legislature in the amount of \$750,000 for PPBEP's Community Grant Program, operations, outreach, and monitoring initiatives
- Support the University of Florida Center for Coastal Solutions' Northwest Florida Water Quality Program, with PPBEP serving as a lead partner in the Program, and a minimum of \$300,000 provided to PPBEP for implementation of the Program
- Support recurring competitive grant programs that support water quality improvement, habitat restoration, and community resilience projects
- Support a local funding request to the Alabama Legislature in the amount of \$25,000 to further outreach and monitoring activities in the upper reaches of the watershed
- Support working with Alabama-based organizations, including the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program and the Choctawhatchee, Pea, and Yellow River Watershed Management Authority, to work with the Alabama Legislature to advance investments in water quality improvements, habitat restoration, and community resilience projects
- Support requesting Governor DeSantis and/or Governor Ivey request the USEPA Administrator enroll the Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program into the National Estuary Program, and work with Senator Rubio, Senator Scott, and the Florida and Alabama Congressional representatives to advance accompanying legislation to designate Pensacola and Perdido Bays as estuaries of national significance

## **9. Action Items**

### **a. Approval of Amendment 1 to the FY2022-2023 Budget**



Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to approve Amendment 1 to the FY2022-2023 Budget. Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**b. Approval of the PPBEP 2023-2027 Finance Strategy**

M. Posner reviewed the PPBEP 2023-2027 Finance Strategy with the board. Discussion was held on a change in the operation budget and the addition of new staff positions. Suggestions were made to look for in-kind and contracted services versus hiring more full-time positions. Commissioner Robert Bender (Escambia County) and the board suggested postponing the approval of Action Item B for the February Policy Board Meeting.

**c. Approval of the PPBEP 2023-2027 Education & Outreach Strategy**

Commissioner Colten Wright (Santa Rosa County) made a motion to approve the PPBEP 2023-2027 Education & Outreach Strategy. Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**d. Approval of 2023 Travel Schedule for PPBEP Staff**

Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) made a motion to approve the 2023 Travel Schedule for PPBEP Staff. Mayor Cherry Fitch (City of Gulf Breeze) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**e. Approval of the 2023 PPBEP Policy Board Meeting Schedule**

Approval of the proposed 2023 PPBEP Policy Board Meeting Schedule was postponed to the February Meeting due to board member conflicts.

**10. Committee Updates**

**a. Technical Committee**

**i. Oyster Subcommittee**

SAVE THE DATE:

Oyster Round Table Event

January 31, 2023

9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Santa Rosa County Extension Services

6363 Dogwood Dr., Milton, FL

**b. Education and Outreach Committee**

Carrie Stevenson (UF/IFAS) updated the board on the recent Education and Outreach Committee Meeting. The committee gained interested new parties and discussed the Estuary 101 Campaign. Committee nominations were discussed for the next Education and Outreach Meeting in 2023. Committee priorities were discussed for the 2023 year including focus areas that can assist with.



**c. Environmental Justice Work Group**

Per the October 26, 2022, Policy Board Meeting, the Environmental Justice Work Group has become an active committee. The 2023 meeting schedule is being finalized.

**11. Policy Board/Agency Updates**

**12. Public Comment**

Barbara Albrecht (BFA) highlighted the City of Pensacola stormwater tax and suggested a partnership with Escambia County to help increase public awareness and action on stormwater and water quality issues, as well as wider adoption of a stormwater tax. B. Albrecht also shared the Impact 100 Mobile Water Quality Lab project with PPBEP as a potential partnership for outreach and education activities.

Mike Norberg (Okaloosa County) suggested reaching out to FDACS for the Microbial Source Tracking Project and including FWC in the Oyster Round Table Event.

**13. Adjourned**