



***ST. ANDREW ST. JOSEPH BAYS
ESTUARY PROGRAM***

***POLICY BOARD
MEETING 4***

June 24, 2021

*Report prepared by
The FCRC Consensus Center
The Florida State University*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND 3

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS..... 3

UPDATE ON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH 4

REVIEW OF THE INITIAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL WORKSHOP 4

OPPORTUNITY FOR SUPPORT FROM UF/UWF TEAM FOR ESTUARY PROGRAMS 5

PROGRAMS & FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES SUPPORTING REGIONAL COLLABORATION AND RESILIENCY 7

REVIEW OF REVISED POTENTIAL BYLAWS..... 8

PUBLIC COMMENT..... 9

NEXT STEPS 9

APPENDIX A – PARTICIPANTS 10

DRAFT

BACKGROUND

On June 24, 2021, the Policy Committee of the St. Andrew & St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program held its fourth meeting in person and by teleconference. The meeting served as the fourth meeting intended to stand up the organizational structure of the estuary program and begin moving forward with identifying future potential efforts. The objectives of the meeting were to:

- Review recent developments in Executive Director search
- Review outcomes of June 23 Management Council Workshop and provide additional input
- Review and discuss possibilities for participation and cooperation with regional programs supporting collaboration on issues related to the bays and estuary
- Review and possible approval of draft bylaws

Approximately thirty-one Policy Board members, staff and members of the public attended. (A list of participants can be found in Appendix A). The agenda, as modified during the course of the meeting, was as follows:

- 1:00 Welcome, agenda review and introductions
- Update on Executive Director search
- Outcomes of June 23 Management Council Workshop
- Policy Board input on water quality indicators
- Programs and funding opportunities supporting regional collaboration and resiliency on issues affecting the St. Andrew and St Joe Bays and estuary – *Rick Durbrow, Sustainability Advisor, US EPA*
- Policy Board discussion of possibilities for participation and collaboration
- 2:30 Break
- 2:45 Review and possible approval of draft bylaws
- Next steps
- Public comment
- 3:30 Adjourn

This document summarizes key points of the presentations and discussions at the meeting.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Rafael Montalvo and Hal Beardall, facilitators, reviewed the objectives, agenda, discussion guidelines, teleconference protocols, and workplan for the process. They thanked members for participating and noted that today's meeting would continue to focus on organizational issues related to the initiation of the Estuary Program but also provide an opportunity for members to receive presentations and provide input on the initial Management Council Workshop and possible cooperation on regional programs in the region. Policy Board members and other participants then introduced themselves and the perspective they represented. (See Appendix A for list of members and participants.)

UPDATE ON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH

The facilitators provided an overview of the search for an executive director for the SASJBEP. Since the last Policy Board meeting the search committee reviewed the all the applications received before selecting and interviewing three candidates (in alphabetical order): Karen Bareford, Jon Brucker and Jessica Graham. The search committee is continuing to discuss next steps in the process of selecting a preferred candidate. Members were offered an opportunity to submit any comments regarding the candidates within the next week so that the search committee could finalize their recommendation to Florida State University.

REVIEW OF THE INITIAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL WORKSHOP

The facilitators provided an overview of the Management Council Workshop held the previous day, June 23rd. The initial Management Council Workshop was held to introduce the concept, kick start discussion, and solicit participant interest in serving on the Council.

The facilitators reminded everyone that the Management Council will be appointed by the Policy Board. The Council will provide the Policy Board with recommendations for the CCMP based on review of input from three Advisory Committees: STEM/Technical Committee, Community Action/Outreach Committee and Development & Finance Committee. The Council and Advisory Committees will also include self-selected at-large participants who will engage in the discussions but not serve in any formal or voting role. The formal appointed members will be subject to Sunshine requirements, but the at-large participants will not.

The Council will include representatives of each of the following stakeholder categories, for a total of up-to 15 members:

<i>Local government (1)</i>	<i>Industry/trade/ports/economic development (1)</i>
<i>Civic/community (1)</i>	<i>Business/tourism (1)</i>
<i>Federal agencies (1)</i>	<i>Development/construction/real estate (1)</i>
<i>State agencies (1)</i>	<i>Military (1)</i>
<i>Regional agencies (1)</i>	<i>Utilities (1)</i>
<i>Recreational & commercial fishing (2)</i>	<i>Academic/research (1)</i>
<i>Conservation/restoration (2)</i>	

Dr. Matthew Deitch (University of Florida, IFAS) provided a presentation at the workshop on the work a team from UF/UWF is doing with estuary programs in the Panhandle funded by the RESTORE Act. The team has already begun working with the Pensacola & Perdido Bays and the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Programs. The team is offering the same assistance to the SASJBEP. He will present a shorter version of the presentation to the Policy Board today in hopes you agree their assistance is an opportunity for the SASJBEP.

Rick Durbrow (Sustainability Advisor EPA, Region 4) presented at the workshop yesterday, and will cover today, a review of programs and funding opportunities in the region that EPA has started or worked with supporting collaboration and resiliency in the St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays estuary.

The facilitators will follow up with the thirty-two workshop participants (over half of whom represented the private sector) to explore the role they would be willing to serve on the Management Council. A list of candidates will be presented for formal approval at the next Policy Board meeting.

The facilitators indicate they will continue to reach out to a broad set of stakeholders to serve as at large participants in the Management Council discussion. It is anticipated the Management Council will meet at least once later this fall followed and then quarterly through next year.

OPPORTUNITY FOR SUPPORT FROM UF/UWF TEAM FOR ESTUARY PROGRAMS

Dr. Matthew Deitch (Assistant Professor, University of Florida) is working closely with Dr. Jane Caffrey (Professor, University of West Florida) and a team of graduated students, supported by RESTORE Act funding, in partnership with estuary programs on a project called Predicting Benefits in Panhandle Estuary Systems. They have been working with the Pensacola & Perdido Bays and the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Programs and hope to do so with the SASJBEP as well.

The UF/UWF team's goal is to help establish a scientific foundation for the estuary programs and support the development of their Comprehensive Conservation Management Plans (CCMPs) by developing frameworks to predict how the implementation of proposed projects will change or impact the estuary using scientific information based on local characteristics and data, as well as identifying gaps in local data. Their efforts include inventorying research and reports and organizing it into a summary bibliography, working closely with estuary programs and stakeholders to develop a list of ecological indicators important to stakeholders in the area, and collaborating with estuary programs in the development of their CCMPs.

They have developed tools for holding online regional public workshops to identify the concerns of stakeholders in each region. The workshops use focus areas identified by the estuary programs to engage stakeholders in identifying the key stressors in each region. Their process is adaptable to address the key concerns of each region.

Participants offered the following questions and comments: *(with responses and clarifications in italics)*

- How do we engage with your group?
- *We plan to attend as many of your Policy Board and Management Council meetings as possible but you should feel free to email any questions you may have directly to us*
- *The facilitators they will provide an opportunity at a future Policy Board meeting for members to offer and discuss indicators they think would help identify how the Bays are doing*
- I am concerned with St. Joe Bay – we love to scallop – concerned with the degradation of the seagrass beds including sediment build up on the seagrass bed – also concerned that flushing out the back of the Bay is being blocked by rocks put in to protect shorelines
- Same concern regarding flushing of the St. Andrew Bay. When the Old or East Pass was open you could see the difference in water quality and increased sea life. It is a major concern. The indicators are increased sea grass, increased sea life and fish. We need to clean up the Bay and support better flushing of the Bay. Let's get it going.
- Need to look at why in St. Andrews Bay our scallops and oysters not thriving like they did in the 1970's? Efforts to reestablish them have not been as successful as everyone hoped. Is it the salinity of the water? What do we need to do to address the problem?
- Stormwater runoff is a huge component of the problem in our Bay. We know it is there. I have a map in my office that shows over a hundred outfalls leading into our Bay system. We only have two places that have a sediment basin to treat the water before it gets to the Bay. How do we address cleaning up the stormwater runoff in as many places as possible?
- We look at Martin Lake – the spillway is a good indicator of what is going in there in terms of sediment

- We spend time and money to put in seagrass with limited success, when if we just opened the Old Pass to increase flushing of the Bay we could address all these issues and the oysters and scallops would return. I don't understand why we need more years of study when we have seen it before when the pass was open. Everything started going downhill after the hurricane in 1995.
- I think this work will to help us prioritize the most important issues and identify how to measure progress – for example, this work can help us identify where to spend limit funds to address the outfalls most impacting the Bay
- Where in the process is the East/Old Pass study that Bay County funded?
- It is at the beginning – just had an open house recently to get it kick started. We have a consulting firm out of Walton County heading it up.
- That could feed into what Matt's team is doing as it progresses – the study could provide good data
- Need to prioritize the top two or three issues – Matt's team can help us measure progress and determine if we get the results we expect –
- *Based on the comments so far, the facilitators will work with Matt & Jane's team to develop workshops in the near future*
- We just instituted permeable pavers in Mexico Beach – prevents water from running off into the streets and into the Bay. We lost our pine trees that soak up the ground water in the hurricane. I would like us to consider limiting the runoff, not just treating it before it goes into the Bay
- Preventing stormwater runoff into the Bay is the best approach – and preventing or reducing runoff is a priority of USDA and the Dept. of the Interior's Deep Water Horizon funds – pulling out concrete and putting in tree islands.
- *Other issues or indicators Matt and Jane's team should consider?*
- Is this the first step in identifying data gaps? How will the teams process kickoff science and research to support the estuary staff's efforts?
- *Many people already doing related work. One of the goals is to develop a summary of what has been done in the area, what is being done by public agencies and private entities. Developing baseline water quality data and trends and looking at correlations to biological indicators as a first step. Trying to identify what is already going on in the region*
- St. Andrew Bay Watch would be a good group to reach out to and collaborate with
- As for indicators, there is a lot of mobile sediment, seagrass and oysters as habitat and species indicators, and of course water quality is important
- *St. Andrew Bay Watch is a sub award and partner to our grant*
- St. Andrew Bay Watch has a seagrass program and is in the middle of a sediment study with Bay County – definitely have data to give you insight on what we know from the past and what we see moving forward – looking forward to cooperating with Matt's team in any way we can
- We have been in contact with Matt's team. We have data dating back to 1990 baseline water quality data. We are working to get that data into (?) so it is available. Just reach out and we can get that data to you.
- Look to the end of this process we will need funding for it. Looking for some guidance on this – if we know what questions or information we need to qualify for grant money then let's get to it to in order to get the grant money we need. What grant money is available and what data do we need or need to put together to get it? Hopefully cut through steps to get the grant money quicker.
- Facilitators noted that estuary program will have input from a Development & Finance Advisory Group to help pull that information together as part of the CCMP in parallel with the technical group
- We need to have our ducks in row to go get those grants. If we are not ready, someone else will get that money. We want to be ready
- Lots of opportunities coming up, but with short time or application horizons, from FEMA. The estuary program will allow this region to coordinate and cooperate on grant opportunities. Also having the data and measures in place to support the grant applications will be important to those entities making the grants

- Recently received notice that DEP will have a webinar soon regarding application for the resiliency funding the legislature passed this last session
- Note in the chat box states that Matt and Jane’s teams work has been very instrumental to the Pensacola & Perdido Bay Estuary Program. It has been a great collaboration.
- The Facilitators will share the DEP webinar information following the meeting today, and will begin working with the UF/UWF team to set up public workshops and coordinate with the Management Council and Advisory Committees

PROGRAMS & FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES SUPPORTING REGIONAL COLLABORATION AND RESILIENCY

Rick Durbrow (Sustainability Advisor EPA, Region 4) provided a presentation on the programs and funding opportunities supporting regional collaboration and resiliency in the St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays and estuaries following Hurricane Michael. His work the past few years has focused on helping communities identify their vision for where they want to go in their recovery efforts through the Recovery and Resiliency Partnership Projects ((R2P2). The R2P2 supports FEMA’s disaster recovery in the region by bringing together regional, state and federal agencies to support coastal and inland communities recover from Hurricane Michael, improve resiliency to future stormwater impacts, and strengthen local economies with existing natural assets.

The projects and key points he reviewed in the presentation included the following:

- City of Mexico Beach Recovery & Resiliency Partnership with a focus on a Stormwater Management and Greenspace Project aimed at providing economic and recreational opportunities
- Worked with the Cities of Parker and Springfield together to identify regional recreation connectivity opportunities with stormwater projects, including Lake Martin and the Great Northwest Trail.
- Identify direct funding capacity to support implementation of stormwater management and greenspace projects for six cities
- Regional Recreation Economy Alliance is a collaborative effort that grew out of the R2P2 and a Regional Capacity Summit. The Alliance builds links across cities and the region to identify and support long-term resilience, cultural and historic resources and economic recovery.
- Economic development recovery was a key for every city we worked with and it takes time and commitment from leadership.
- Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge – a collaborative process among public and private partners to improve the social, cultural and economic structure of a community.
- Assisting communities to develop an investor prospectus which allow communities to highlight private sector economic development investment opportunities, including identifying watershed credits for wetlands, stormwater management or carbon sequestration.
- Capacity support for the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape to leverage Dept. of Defense resources to create a network of lands to conserve watersheds, wildlife habitat, agricultural lands, community recreation opportunities, and support the mission of Northwest Florida military installations.
- Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy – tool for leveraging resources in support of priority landscapes and critical habitat.
- Efforts to create a Panhandle National Heritage Area, including a feasibility study in collaboration with local communities and the National Park Service/Dept. of Interior.
- Each of these projects is leveraging community vision for recreational and economic development with a regional perspective and capacity support from state and federal entities
- Other programs and efforts outside the R2P2 efforts:
 - City of Parker and Springfield Lake Martin Watershed Hydrological and Hydrology

Study – Silver Jackets Program

- Mexico Beach – Army Corps of Engineers Coastal Storm Risk Management Study
- Scaling Up Nature-based Solutions – The Nature Conservancy and Naval Academy
- Oyster Reef Study – Pew Charitable Trust
- Salt Marsh Study
- Tyndall Air Force Base Resiliency
- The cultural resource survey in North Port St. Joe looking at the historical and cultural resources that help people understand the socio-economic, cultural and environmental connection and the communities connection to the natural landscape.

Participants offered the following questions and comments: *(with responses and clarifications in italics)*

- Martin Lake – what is the future of that lake? Part of the Bay system?
- *The mayors are looking at turning the lake back into a part of the estuary system and making it a centerpiece for recreational opportunities. Currently an ongoing study to determine what is in that lake and in the soils first before the project can proceed.*
- *See it as waterfront property that could be an amenity and support economic development while playing a key role in stormwater management in future storm events.*
- Bay Watch has two water quality collection sites in Lake Martin and is willing to make that information available as we go forward
- Two potential links from the presentation: projects like Martin Lake that are currently underway that will impact the estuary and efforts that could be partners in implementing projects that the estuary program may identify
- Mexico Beach flooded heavily from Hurricane Sally rain event. We are eighteen months into a three-year Army Corp study. Is funding we need to get projects started being slowed down by the need for studies? Seems like nothing is getting done while we wait for studies to be done.
- *They are currently assessing the potential purchase of St. Joe land. Keep in mind it is long term recovery and the study is needed to get the federal funding you need to address the issues*
- Not an engineer but trying to understand how to dig a hole in a level area to catch stormwater without it filling up with water because the ground water is so high due to the loss of trees.
- Concept is to take ten acres west of the canal to use as a natural wetland to attenuate the runoff. Not really digging a big hole, but creating a natural wetland with elevated trails as an amenity
- Army Corp is studying the feasibility of the wetlands to attenuate the stormwater in addition to other hydrology issues for the community
- Part of the solution may be to enhance the ability of the wetlands to soak up water
- May need a district stormwater management strategy including parks and planting more trees
- May need to determine how many trees would be needed to make a difference and where would they need to go in order to then get the funding necessary to make it happen
- Facilitators will look for ways to follow up on the discussion today at future meetings

REVIEW OF REVISED POTENTIAL BYLAWS

The facilitators reviewed the changes to the potential bylaws based on the Policy Board members discussion and suggestions at the last meeting in April. The changes included minor corrections of language for clarification and elimination of the need for any interlocal agreement to support staff since the program is supported by and based at FSU-PC. As the host for the program, FSU General Counsel office has reviewed and approved the revised bylaws.

The facilitators suggested members take time to review the potential bylaws before adopting them at the next Policy Board meeting in August. Once the bylaws are adopted, the Policy

Board can approve the membership of the Management Council in August, take nominations for a Chair and Vice-Chair in a November/December meeting, followed by formal election at the first Policy Board meeting in the new calendar year as called for in the potential bylaws.

Members did have any questions or offer additional suggestions.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Members of the public were asked if they would like to offer comments for the Policy Board to consider:

- Lynn Marcoux (St. Andrew Audubon) – appreciate the opportunity to observe the meeting today. Community outreach and education is a critically important component of this program. Once the program is underway you need to make the connection with the community so they buy in to your efforts and take ownership of what happens in our Bays. I have seen how outreach efforts in the estuary program in Rhode Island have made that a successful program.
- *The plan is for the Community Action Advisory Committee to work closely with the UF/UWF team on public participation at future workshops*

NEXT STEPS

The facilitators will follow up with Policy Board members on the three following items:

- send you information on the three Director candidates and ask you to provide any comments within a week to the facilitators to distribute to the selection committee so they can quickly move forward in the selection process
- send the revised potential bylaws for review prior to the next Policy Board meeting
- send the information on how to participant in the upcoming DEP webinar on how to apply for resiliency program funding approved during the last legislative session

Facilitators will send the Policy Board members a doodle poll to determine the best date and time of the next meeting, most likely in mid-August. While the next meeting will likely still need to be a hybrid in-person and online meeting, members were urged to attend the next meeting in person if possible.

Final comments offered by participants:

- Will it be the responsibility of the new Director to apply for grants and future funding? Who will drive the process for identifying and applying for future grant money?
- *Anticipate the Director and staff will play a key role, in consultation with the Policy Board and guided by recommendations developed by the Development and Finance Advisory Committee*
- Ada Clark and the Regional Planning Council can provide resources and be instrumental in helping in the grant process
- This estuary program is a collaborative effort and goes beyond just one entity. In many cases the projects identified in the CCMP will not be done by the Estuary Program but done collaboratively by the participants in the Policy Board and Management Council. Many of the projects will be multi-jurisdictional, while other projects may be done by individual jurisdictions. It will not just be the staff of the Estuary Program identifying, pursuing and managing grant opportunities. This is a watershed wide collaborative effort to get this done.

APPENDIX A – PARTICIPANTS

√ Indicates participation at this meeting

MEMBER	AFFILIATION
Local Government Elected Officials, Voting Members	
Greg Brudnicki	Mayor Panama City
Rich Buzzett	Mayor Port St. Joe
Phil Chester √	Councilman, Panama City Beach
Irvin R. Clark. EdD √	Associate Dean, Student & Strategic Initiatives, FSU Panama City
Bill Dozier	Commissioner, Bay County
Ralph Hammond √	Mayor, Springfield
Darrell Key √	Councilman, Mexico Beach
Frank Mancinelli √	Commissioner, Callaway
Andrew Kelly	Mayor, Parker
Doug Moore √	Commissioner, Bay County
Pat Perno √	Commissioner, Lynn Haven
Sandy Quinn	Commissioner, Gulf County
Regional, State and Federal Agency Non-Voting Members	
Angela Bradley √	Emerald Coast Regional Council
Darryl Boudreau √	Northwest Florida Water Management District, Regional Policy Manager
Jonathan Brucker √	Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Water Resources Management
Katie Konchar √	Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, Biological Scientist
Jeremy LaDart	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, Chief, Planning and Environmental Division,
Bryan Phillips √	Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission
Barbara Powell	Bureau of Community Planning and Growth, Florida Department of Economic Opportunity
Thomas McGill √	U.S. EPA Region 4, Water Division, Chief, Ocean, Wetlands & Streams Protection Branch
Melody Ray-Culp √	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Coastal Program Coordinator
Caitlin Young	NOAA RESTORE Science Program, Science Coordinator
COORDINATION TEAM AND FACILITATORS	
Jim Muller √	Bay County RESTORE Act Coordinator
Hal Beardall √	Estuary Policy Board Facilitator, FCRC Consensus Center
Rafael Montalvo √	Estuary Policy Board Facilitator, FCRC Consensus Center
OTHER PRESENTERS	
Matthew Deitch √	University of Florida
Rick Dubrow √	Sustainability Advisor EPA, Region 4

Others participating: Janet Bowman (TNC), Lela Curry (FEMA), Rose Driber (FSU), Gail Carmody, Amanda Croteau (UWF), Haley Gancel (UF), Jessica Graham, Andrea Graves (TNC), Keith Hagan (St. Andrew Bay Watch), Becca Hatchell (FWC), Mike Matthews (Dewberry Engineers), Lynn Marcoux (Bay Co, Audubon), Amy Neubold (EPA), Eric Schneider.