



**Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program**  
**Education and Outreach Committee Virtual Meeting**  
**March 17, 2021 – 2:00 p.m., Central Time**

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**Zoom Link:** <https://myokaloosa.zoom.us/j/98945448570?pwd=SUk5aDdmNXVjeG9tdkhaaTZSSElrUT09>

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Synopsis:**

The Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program's first Education and Outreach Committee meeting was held virtually on Wednesday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 2:00 p.m. C.T. Brian Underwood, Executive Director of the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program, and Chelsea Conley, Public Outreach Specialist for the Estuary Program, facilitated the meeting consistent with the meeting agenda.

**Committee Members and Informal Advisors Attending Remotely:**

Brian Underwood – CBEP Executive Director  
Chelsea Conley – CBEP Public Outreach Specialist  
Amanda Croteau – University of West Florida  
Christina Meyer - volunteer coordinator, biologist Eglin AFB natural resources  
Clair Norden - 4-H Camp Timpoochee  
Darryl Boudreau – NFWFMD  
Haley Gancel – University of Florida  
Harley Peters - Emerald Coast Science Center  
Heather Griffin - ADEM Nonpoint Source Unit  
Jenna Kilpatrick - Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance  
Kristin Bennett - Tetra Tech, Inc.  
Laura Bell - Auburn University – ACES  
Laura Tiu - UF/IFAS Florida Sea Grant  
Logan McDonald - Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program  
Melinda Gates - Walton County  
Rick Harter - WSP  
Sonia Vedral -Northern Gulf of Mexico Sentinel Site Cooperative at Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center

**Key Discussion:**

All participants were welcomed to the Education and Outreach Committee virtual meeting and the meeting minutes from February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 were approved following a motion by Logan McDonald and a second by Jenna Kilpatrick.

Chelsea provided updates for the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program. The CBEP in partnership with Ocean Hour is planning to hold a clean-up event along the Okaloosa Island portion of Gulf Islands National Seashore on April 10<sup>th</sup> with details to follow. The Estuary Program will also host a table at the Fort Walton Beach Earth Day event on April 17<sup>th</sup> at the Landing in Fort Walton Beach, FL. There will also be a large Earth Day Coastal Clean-up event between several partners at several locations throughout Destin and Fort Walton Beach on April 24<sup>th</sup> from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Central Time. The Estuary Program will be helping check-in volunteers at Mattie Kelly Park and Joe's Bayou. The Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Coalition Board of Directors meeting will be held on April 29<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m. Central Time at the Walton County Commission Board Room in Freeport, FL. The meeting is open to the public and will also be available virtually via Zoom. Finally, CBEP will be working with the University of Florida and the University of West Florida to host a series of public workshops. The workshops will be held virtually for the Alabama watershed region on May 4<sup>th</sup>, the Upper Florida watershed on May 6<sup>th</sup>, and the Lower Florida watershed on May 11<sup>th</sup>, each 6:00-7:00 p.m. Central Time. The goal of the public workshops is to gather a wide range of stakeholder perceptions on the values, issues and needs of the Choctawhatchee Bay watershed. The CBEP staff ask all willing partners to spread the word and share this event with their stakeholders with a flier and link to follow.

Chelsea then asked for partner organization updates.

- The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance will be hosting Family Learning Hubs with *Spartina* plant bagging and observation tanks for hands-on learning. These will be held at their different NWFSC locations (Okaloosa County) April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and (Walton County) May 1<sup>st</sup> and May 8<sup>th</sup> from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. (see flier for details). CBA asked for any other organizations that are interested in participating in the events or providing activities for students to email Amanda Briant: [brianta@nwfsc.edu](mailto:brianta@nwfsc.edu).
- The Florida Marine Science Educators Association is holding a virtual conference April 26-30<sup>th</sup> with field trips in the Apalachicola area on May 1<sup>st</sup>. The cost is \$40 for this conference and more information can be found here: <https://sites.google.com/a/fmseas.org/welcome/events/conference>

- Kristen Bennett provided this grant opportunity for environmental education teachers, centers, and organizations through American Water Resources Association, Florida Section. There are also scholarship opportunities available for students. The deadline for this opportunity is April 15<sup>th</sup> with more information found here: [www.awraflorida.org](http://www.awraflorida.org) under 'grants and awards.'
- Laura Bell introduced the Alabama Watershed Stewards program which promotes healthy watersheds, increases understanding of water pollution, and provides information on preventing water quality issues. This is now available virtually here: <https://aub.ie/awsonline>.
- Laura Tiu mentioned the Defuniak Springs Lake Fest May 14-16<sup>th</sup> as an opportunity to participate with an educational booth. This event falls on the same weekend as the Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day that many are also signed up for. Details can be found at these websites: <https://www.defuniaksprings.net/1101/LakeFest-2021>  
<https://www.defuniaksprings.net/FormCenter/LakeFest-2/Educational-Booth-Space-Registration-For-44>

Chelsea then asked for members of the committee to consider nominations for the role of Committee Chair to help facilitate meetings and strategic planning. This will be re-addressed at the next meeting.

Chelsea received feedback from the last meeting, including having a contact list for the educators in the area. A Google Doc will be sent out to the different committee members if they would like to share their information for future collaboration purposes. The list is not intended for mass email threads, but it will provide networking opportunities.

Laura Tiu also mentioned a common theme for the Estuary Program at the last meeting and using the term Partnership as the reoccurring theme for the program was discussed. If partners and collaborators can help spread the message of the Estuary Program and how it is building partnerships throughout the watershed, this will help build awareness in the community.

Next, the comprehensive education and outreach plan was discussed. The Education and Outreach Committee will be the primary advisory group in providing stakeholder-guided, participatory planning as required by the RESTORE funding and the U.S. EPA's National Estuary Program model. Chelsea asked if organizations had any similar strategic plans that would serve

as a good example for how to structure the CBEP plan. Logan McDonald mentioned a few NEP plans that she had found. Darryl also mentioned another.

Next, Chelsea introduced the Miro virtual whiteboard to the committee with an activity to establish current watershed education efforts, identify gaps, and brainstorm programs relevant for the Estuary Program. The first activity established current programs and initiatives throughout the watershed, sorted by region. The results from this activity are provided in Figure 1. Partners spoke more about the different types of programs. Harley from the Emerald Coast Science Center mentioned their living mural project and asked if anyone has information to include in their guidebook to email her.

- Darryl Boudreau also mentioned the Jiminy Cricket Environmental Challenge that may have been a past program in the area to maybe try to participate with again:  
[https://www.wdwinfo.com/news/General\\_Disney\\_News/Jiminy\\_Cricket\\_Environmental\\_Challenge\\_won\\_by\\_a\\_1406.htm](https://www.wdwinfo.com/news/General_Disney_News/Jiminy_Cricket_Environmental_Challenge_won_by_a_1406.htm)
- Jenna Kilpatrick also mentioned a similar program run by NOAA:  
[https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/education/ocean\\_guardian/](https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/education/ocean_guardian/)

Participants then answered the brainstorming question on what types of programs they would like to see in the area that the Estuary Program might host in the future (Figure 2). Darryl mentioned the geocache idea, potentially in partnership with the TDC. The other program ideas were discussed briefly, but will be re-addressed at a later date. Brian Underwood described that, to meet Florida Sunshine Law standards, the E & O Committee will not formally vote, or set official policy for the Estuary Program. Instead, the body will provide information and facts to Program staff, who will use the information for compiling information and recommendations to the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Coalition, for their consideration.

The next Education and Outreach Committee Meeting will be scheduled for May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 2:00 p.m. C.T. Chelsea then asked for updates from the committee members and attendees. No additional comments were received and the meeting was adjourned.

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What is your favorite Outreach/Education program or project run by your organization within the watershed?

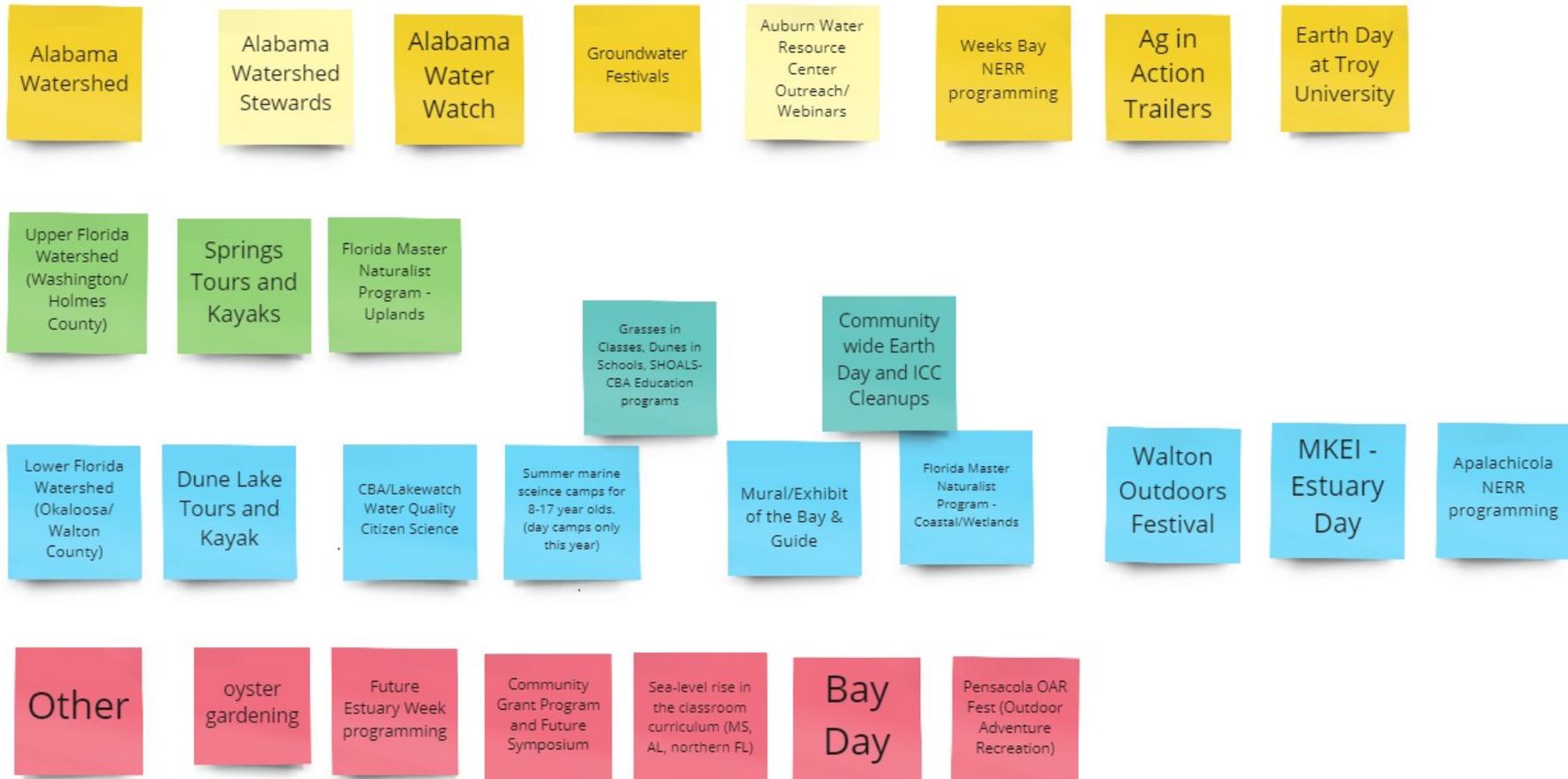


Figure 1. Current Outreach and Education Programs in the Choctawhatchee Bay Watershed

What do you want to see happen in the watershed that is not currently being done?

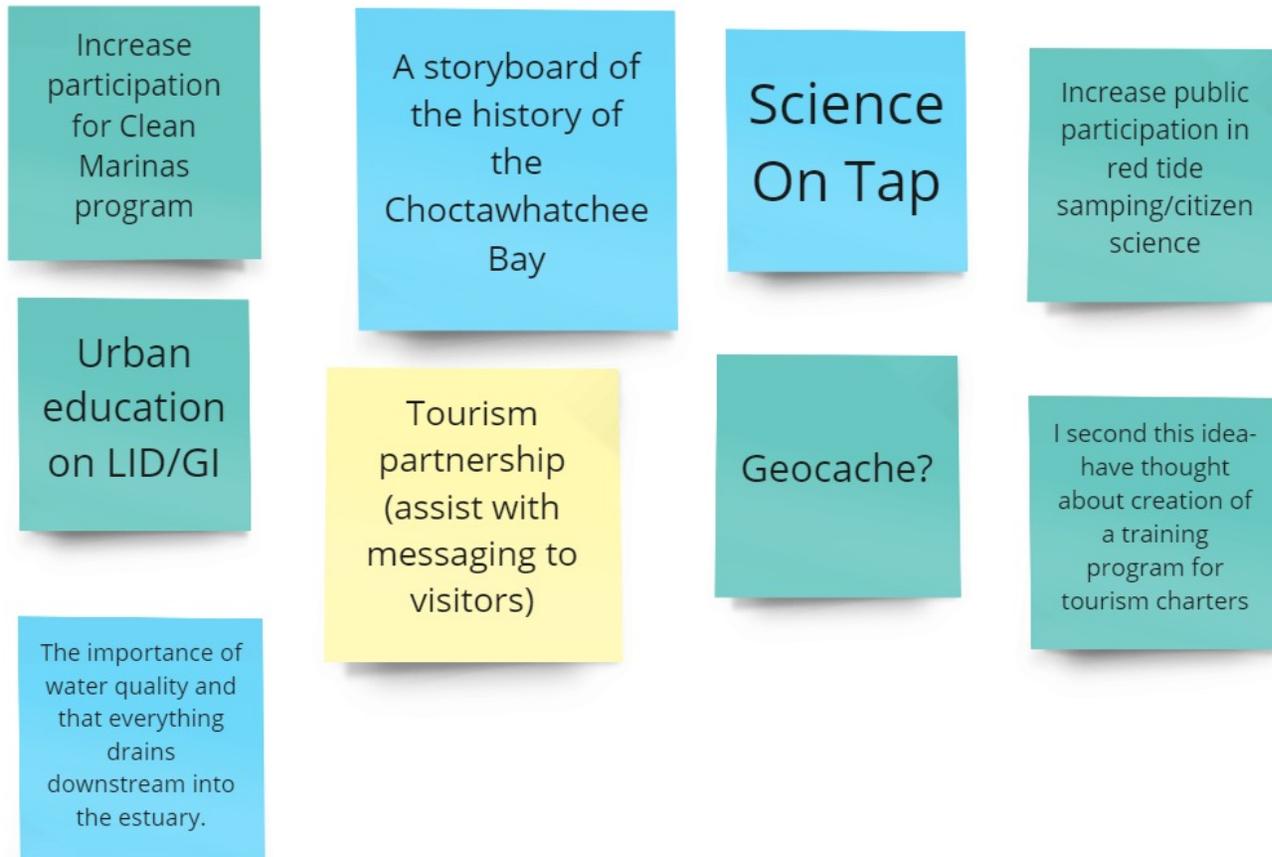


Figure 2. Programs that partners would like to see done in the watershed