

Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Coalition
Technical Advisory Committee Virtual Meeting
May 20, 2021 - 1:30 p.m., Central Time

Page | 1

Zoom Link:

<https://myokaloosa.zoom.us/j/99459081850?pwd=SEk4UTY4eTVqVk9EU0JzQXE4eGdWQT09>

MEETING MINUTES

Synopsis:

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting of the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Coalition was held virtually on the afternoon of May 20, 2021. Brian Underwood, Executive Director of the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program, Heather Griffin, TAC Chair, and Chelsea Conley, TAC Co-Chair, 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
Heather Griffin – ADEM
Alison McDowell – Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance
Amanda Croteau – UWF
Andrea Graves - TNC
Beth Fugate – FDEP, Northwest Florida Aquatic Preserves
Brian Walker – McKim & Creed
Darryl Boudreau – NFWFMD
Eric Schneider – ESA
Gina Alvarez - FWC
Graham Thompson – Matrix Design Group
Haley Gancel – UF
Jenna Kilpatrick – Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance
Kent Smith - FWC
Kevin O’Donnell - FDEP
Kristal Walsh – FWC
Kristin Bennett – Tetra Tech
Latilda Neel – City of Freeport

Minutes for May 20, 2021 CBEC TAC Virtual Meeting

Page | 2

Leah Fox - Emerald Coast Regional Council
Lisa Harris – CPYRWMA
Marcy Frick- Tetra Tech
Mark Mauldin – UF/IFAS Extension Washington County
Matt Deitch – UF IFAS
Melinda Gates – Walton County
Mike Norberg- Okaloosa County
Rachel Gwin - Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance
Rebecca Prado - WSP
Sandy Pizzolato – Eglin Air Force Base
Scott Bitterman- Okaloosa County Engineer
Tesfay Gebremicael - UF

Key Discussion:

All participants were welcomed to the TAC virtual meeting. Brian Underwood began recording, and Heather Griffin confirmed Technical Advisory Committee member and participant attendance via the Zoom chat function. The minutes from the April 15, 2021 TAC meeting were referenced and approved by the TAC. Brian Underwood motioned to approve, and Matt Deitch seconded the motion.

Haley Gancel provided a presentation with an update on the regional virtual workshops and activities which the UF/UWF project team has been conducting in partnership with the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program. Regional virtual workshops were held as follows: May 4th – Alabama Pea and Choctawhatchee Rivers; May 6th – Choctawhatchee River region (Florida); May 11th – Choctawhatchee Bay region. For the three virtual workshops, a total of sixty stakeholders registered, and a combined total of thirty stakeholders attended during the workshops. Activities including a Mentimeter and Mural white board were utilized during the virtual workshops for gathering stakeholder feedback concerning resources within the watershed, as well as management challenges. Word clouds were generated and summaries of input were generated through these virtual exercises. Specific questions presented during the workshop activities, to solicit feedback, included:

- How do you use natural resources?

Minutes for May 20, 2021 CBEC TAC Virtual Meeting

Page | 3

- How do you use aquatic resources?
- What do you value the most about the natural resources in the Choctawhatchee Bay watershed?
- What do you think the challenges are to protecting and managing natural resources in the Choctawhatchee Watershed?
- What would you prioritize for the first 5 years (for inclusion in the CCMP)?
- What would you like the Estuary Program to do in your region?

Haley highlighted the word clouds and written responses gathered following presentation of these key questions. Key accomplishments were also described which were attributable to the Workshop series, including:

- New connections were made to support the Program's social media;
- Stakeholders who were unfamiliar with the CBEP were engaged;
- Positive feedback was received;
- Technology-based tools were effectively utilized;
- The link to a community values and uses survey for the Estuary Program was promoted.

An upcoming Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Workshop Series was described. Haley indicated that the TAC workshops will help identify data needs, appropriate metrics and performance measures, as well as tangible actions to include in the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) for the Estuary Program. Input received from the TAC will guide additional revisions to the existing draft of the Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives which have been developed for the CCMP. Each of the Focus Areas will be addressed during the upcoming workshops, with the exception of the Education and Outreach Focus Area, which will be addressed through the Education and Outreach Committee.

Haley also provided an update on the stakeholder input received during the previous Workshop series concerning stressors and management concerns for the estuary and watershed. The top-three priority stressors affecting water quality, along with key indicators were described, based on the stakeholder feedback received. Land use change, stream restoration, as well as bacteria and other pathogens were mentioned as concerns.

Minutes for May 20, 2021 CBEC TAC Virtual Meeting

Page | 4

For the Resource Protection and Management Focus Area, population growth, lack of prescribed fire, land use change, sea-level rise, and lack of funding were described as priority stakeholder concerns. For the Floodplains and Wetlands Focus Area, saltwater intrusion, sea-level rise, and development were highlighted as key stakeholder concerns.

The stakeholder input specific to the Community Resiliency Focus Area included sea-level rise and flooding.

As a follow-up to the regional virtual workshop series, a series of three TAC workshops are proposed, to gain additional feedback for three broad categories including water and sediment quality, natural resources, and policy and planning. Tentative dates proposed include June 17th, July 1st, and July 15th. As a data-driven participatory process is intended, stakeholder evaluation surveys will be administered following each of the three TAC workshops. Haley articulated that the purpose of the evaluation surveys will include:

- Improvement of future workshops and engagement activities;
- Improvement of stakeholder satisfaction and participation;
- Facilitation of open communication and feedback.

Heather referenced the link to the evaluation survey, which Amanda has shared within the Chat box. Chelsea asked for feedback concerning the proposed dates for the upcoming TAC workshop series, and asked that stakeholders provide information about any major conflicts which may exist concerning the proposed schedule. Brian Underwood thanked Andrea Graves and The Nature Conservancy team for reviewing and providing comments to the current draft of the Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives. An updated draft including their guidance will be distributed, which is dated May 17th. Heather asked whether there will continue to be an opportunity to provide comments to the draft Goals and Objectives, or whether we are coming to a conclusion of the updating process to this document. Brian responded that the current Goals and Objectives document is considered as a working draft, to which editing and updating may continue until the time at which the draft is handed off to the selected consultant team.

Heather highlighted several activities and events which are occurring upstream within the watershed, in Alabama. The Alabama Watershed Stewards Program, an initiative started by Auburn University and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) with funding through a 319 grant, will host a workshop this July, in Enterprise, Alabama (<https://mell->

Minutes for May 20, 2021 CBEC TAC Virtual Meeting

Page | 5

base.uce.auburn.edu/wconnect/CourseStatus.awp?&course=C210716). Laura Bell is the point of contact for the Alabama Watershed Stewards. Heather also referred to the upcoming Alabama Water Resources Conference, coming up this fall in Orange Beach (<https://aaes.auburn.edu/wrc/extension-outreach2/annual-alabama-water-resources-conference/>). Links were provided in the chat box for both of these upcoming events. Also, the Choctawhatchee, Pea and Yellow Rivers Watershed Management Authority will be developing a watershed management plan for Upper Wright's Creek, a tributary to the Choctawhatchee River. Lisa Harris with the CPYRWMA is the point of contact for this initiative. Lisa added her contact information to the chat box. Darrell Boudreau asked if the CBEP will plan to submit an abstract seeking a panel presentation with the PPBEP at the Alabama Water Resources Conference. Brian indicated that Chelsea is coordinating with Logan McDonald, PPBEP, concerning potential participation.

Darryl Boudreau commended Haley, Amanda, and Chelsea for their work in planning and facilitating the stakeholder virtual meetings for the CBEP. Graham Thompson with Matrix asked if the data compiled by the UF/UWF project for the Estuary Program is progressing. Matt Deitch described the progress, indicating that approximately seven-hundred resource documents have been located and compiled in a Zotero database, for future access. Additional resources will be added to the database, as located. Brian followed-up by indicating that the scope of work for the CCMP development contains an item describing future collaboration between the selected consultant team and the FLRACEP project team, as the project team represents a specific stakeholder group for the CBEP.

Darryl Boudreau asked Brian whether the grant application on behalf of Fort Walton Beach was submitted. Brian then described the partnership which was formed among the City of Fort Walton Beach, the Emerald Coast Science Center, and the CBEP to successfully apply for an FDEP grant for a green stormwater infrastructure project at the science center. If selected for the grant award, the project would include replacement of the asphalt parking surface at the Science Center with pervious concrete. Further information should be received from the FDEP in June. Darryl recommended that a natural feature be included in the project if possible. Chelsea Conley adjourned the meeting.