



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

***POLICY BOARD
MEETING 14***

December 08, 2023

*Report prepared by
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Florida State University*

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 2

BACKGROUND..... 3

WELCOME AND MEETING OVERVIEW..... 4

PROGRAM UPDATES 4

NEW STAFF..... 4

ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE 2021 4

COMPOUND FLOOD STUDY 4

REVIEW AND APPROVE DRAFT PAGES OF COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION AND
MANAGEMENT PLAN (CCMP)..... 4

NEW OUTREACH CAC MATERIALS 5

ESTUARY FUTURE FOCUS AND FINANCES 5

CZM GRANT 5

MISSION INTEGRITY 5

FLOODING 6

ALLOCATION METHODOLOGY 6

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ROI..... 6

STAFF SALARY OUTLOOK 7

ESTUARY PROGRAM FINANCES 7

2024 SCHEDULE 7

OTHER BUSINESS..... 8

APPENDIX A – PARTICIPANTS @ DECEMBER 2023 MEETING 9

BACKGROUND

On December 8, 2023 the Policy Board of the St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program (SASJBEP) met in person and videoconference. The meeting was the fourteenth in a series of meetings to support the direction of the estuary program and the completion of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). The objectives of the meeting were to:

- Review and approve draft CCMP layout
- Review new materials
- Discuss future needs for financial sustainability and MOU
- 2024 schedule

Approximately 13 Policy Board members, staff and public attended. (A list of participants can be found in Appendix A). The agenda was as below and referenced in the Boardbook found at this link:

1. Welcome and Meeting Overview
2. Action Items
 - a. Review and Approve draft CCMP layout to continue forward.
3. Review new CAC outreach materials
4. Estuary Program future focus and finances
 - a. Transition into implementation and grant deliverables
 - b. Auxiliary account update
 - c. FSU PC MOU discussion
5. STEM Committee snapshot into 2024
6. 2024 Schedule approval
7. Policy Board member/Agency Updates
 - Updates on projects or ongoing work related to benefiting the Bays

Public Comment

Adjourn

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

WELCOME AND MEETING OVERVIEW

Jessica Graham, Executive Director (ED), reviewed the objectives, agenda and reviewed the past meeting and objectives for today's meeting. She thanked members for participating and taking the time out of their day to be here today. Jessica called roll and reviewed in room participants. Jessica introduced the new staff member, Elizabeth Farmer (Liz), as the new Research Assistant for the grant funded project to evaluate the effectiveness of living shorelines over the next 2.5 years.

See Appendix A for a list of members and participants.

PROGRAM UPDATES

NEW STAFF

Jessica introduced Elizabeth (Liz) Farmer the new Research Assistant that will be working on the FIO funded FLRACEP project across the Panhandle. Liz has diverse experience in freshwater streams, shorebirds and some estuarine work.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE 2021

Jessica reviewed and went over the Estuary programs accomplishments made since 2021. In 2023, \$3.6 M grant funds have been secured with \$1.7 M allocated to partners. In addition, SASJBEP reached over 2000 people through social media and events, hosted 6 public workshops and held 47 committee meetings to guide the completion of the CCMP.

COMPOUND FLOOD STUDY

Discussion was made regarding the Compound Flood study that is being conducted by FSU Tallahassee's Dr. Ebrahim. Jessica showed the draft model results for the flooding for the VA-100yr and 500 yr. event. The question was posed how will they incorporate the compound flooding? Ultimately, the information from the Vulnerability Assessments should be worked into comprehensive municipal plans and Hazard mitigation plans. There is a phase 2 that has been funded with Dr. Ebrahim to incorporate tree loss into the model results, which was one of the main concerns from municipalities.

REVIEW AND APPROVE DRAFT PAGES OF COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN (CCMP)

Dr. Jessica Graham, SASJBEP Executive Director, provided a background of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) where it was recommended that the Board approve the CCMP elements and continue forward on the remaining pages.

Discussion regarding adding initial application for the SAB to be an NEP in the First Call (1991) to the background /timeline. Further discussion was made regarding presenting at all different places and may want to track where it has been presented because word of mouth is important. It was suggested that Historical Society may be a good one to present at because continuing the speaking engagements will help. It was noted that there are about 25 people at the Historical society and that they would love to have the CCMP presented. They meet monthly every 3rd Sunday at 2pm.

The following question was proposed regarding heat maps from the VA if they will be included in the CCMP. It was confirmed it would not since it's a project and that one of the biggest changes will be the population figure based on MC comments.

NEW OUTREACH CAC MATERIALS

Aleighsa SASJBEP Outreach Specialist has been working to create a few different ideas that the CAC reviewed on December 7, and Management council reviewed on December 8th. It was recommended that materials get approved to move forward for final review and approval by the Policy Board. The Policy Board review materials including: Teen outreach logo, Go Slow Don't mow sticker, and CAC rack card. General feedback was given with suggestions for slight improvements including if there was enough room for the watershed outline on the logo which was clarified that the watershed outline is often mistaken for St. Andrew Bay when in fact it is the entire watershed so it was removed. The Policy Board agreed.

Discussion took place regarding the seagrass logo regarding the design. The Policy Board felt that the motor was unclear and asked for contrast but with printing on items, Estuary Program staff re trying to be monochromatic, but will work to adjust and make it more clear. Further discussion took place regarding the Community Action Committee Facebook group. The group has been created and its private to help keep bots away and right now it is up to over 100 members.

ESTUARY FUTURE FOCUS AND FINANCES

Jessica discussed the growth of the Estuary program and the transition into a primary focus of implementing the CCMP actions in order to reach our desired outcomes. The following considerations were discussed as shift to implementation would require unrestricted general funds to support program staff to assist partners, write grants, develop additional projects etc. It was also noted that the Auxiliary account with FSU will allow the Program to accept funds and to consider the creation of an MOU with FSU PC.

Additional supporting materials were provided for viewing:

- Grant spreadsheet
- Milestones schedule
- Reminder of Finance strategy growth plan

CZM GRANT

Discussion took place regarding CZM Grant and delays and steps the grant has to go through in order to get approved on both ends. The anticipated start date was end of January.

MISSION INTEGRITY

Jessica then shifted the conversation into the growth of the program and how to move forward while ensuring mission integrity. The Estuary Program Governance is setting priorities and giving guidance and direction. PB are the voting members with 2 seats for Bay County, municipalities and FSU-PC. The Governance structure needs to remember that they are this program and their involvement is what will make this program successful. It was discussed and noted that the following needs are needed to help implement the CCMP. Serve as convenor, umbrella, submit large suites of projects with much going out of the program. Remain neutral and be founded on best available science and stay aligned with the CCMP. There are numerous requests for letters of support for different projects from both citizens against projects and for projects. The Board discussed the lines of the Estuary Program and supporting projects and endorsing projects. Jessica described that according to the NEP guidance, the Estuary Program cannot advocate for projects or lobby and can provide technical information for the various entities for them to use as they see fit to make decisions. The Board agreed to follow the NEP guidance and keep the Estuary Program neutral and use their respective boards, councils and commissions to advocate and push for specific projects. A motion was made by Commissioner Perno, a second by Mayor Hammond. The motion passed unanimously. The Policy Board further indicated their desire to continue to seek National designation and expressed the importance of getting the designation to increase funding to the area.

Additional discussions took place that some of the programs needs in order to be successful include aspects such as financial vehicle, staff support, office space, supportive and collaborative hosting entity partnerships. Discussion took place regarding what it will take for sustainable funding. If the program is going to be fully funded by grants, cannot write for additional grants and therefore cannot sustain the program. There were many ideas discussed similar to those previously discussed. Jessica reminded the Board that in order to start diversifying there needs to be an account to put those funds in at which hasn't been approved yet.

FLOODING

Flooding discussion took place, and it was noted that Belaire estates have seen whole area underwater and that no structural flooding after the rain. The question was posed if stormwater sensors had an update, and it was confirmed there was not an update. Background information was provided that the stormwater sensors are used to determine water level in structures that drain to the bay and LH is one of the test areas. Policy Board members discussed other areas of funding and grant opportunities including the main veins at Hwy 77 at Publix Additional issues that could be contributing including trash that isn't being removed and Estuary Program reminded the Policy Board that they have applied for a littatrap grant that would help to facilitate trash and debris removal.

ALLOCATION METHODOLOGY

Jessica moved the discussion into the allocation methodology and requested that the Policy board provide direction on how to move forward. It was noted that some Estuary Programs do it differently with some areas giving a flat rate while others provide a population value. Jessica provided a Table in the Boardbook that showed an allocation based on population with totals provided for \$0.1 per person, \$0.25 per person, \$0.5 per person as a way to request funds from each municipality in support of the program.

Discussion:

- If we raised more than what was needed, then would it roll over to the next year? Jessica provided options for the additional funding including using it for projects and/or making grant programs for municipalities to apply to similar to other estuary programs where other organizations could be supported through these allocations to implement projects.
- Board members suggested asking for more in the first year rather than a slow increase so it isn't such a shock.
- Board members also indicated that there were other fundraising that can be done as well and it was mentioned that that PPBEP raised about \$20K from their Gala and a fundraising event has been discussed by the CAC in the early stages of the committee but it was too much for staff to take on while creating the CCMP and seeking grant funding.
- Members noted there are lots of opportunities for securing additional funds but need to get a seed amount going to give us the breathing space and therefore next year we will be coming with a request. Other ideas were suggested such as a possible disc golf tournament and that Bayou Preserve Park has disc golf.
- Members asked if this would be in the budget for next year and Jessica indicated that was the hope but need a bank account to put the money into. Members noted the budget meetings have started and met in June 2023. Jessica expressed a desire to attend commission meetings but would need to show a ROI to be impactful. It was proposed to start going in March because it would be a good time for Bay County.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ROI

Jessica then moved into discussing how to message our accomplishments to the commissions/councils/board that will resonate. Springfield mentioned that it will be easier for them because we are looking at getting \$500,000 in the first year. Jessica mentioned that when she requested speaking at a commission/council meeting she is often told she will get 3-5 minutes only which makes it important to get the message across clearly and concisely. Board members provided insight into making it quick and short and impactful and ROI can help but also projects that are ongoing.

STAFF SALARY OUTLOOK

It was noted that the program is only funded through April 2026 on all current grants and ideally we would have a portion of each staff members time on unrestricted funds. Jessica mentioned that after June 2024 the Executive Director technically cannot be writing grants without unrestricted funding as grants do not fund time to write for other grants. This does not include proposals that have already been submitted.

Discussion:

- Members asked if the NOAA \$10M grant was awarded how does that affect this? Jessica mentioned that it would allow for hiring of additional staff and support staff for longer than currently projected.
- Commissioner Ayers noted that Bay County's number included all the municipalities so should subtract the municipalities from that number and make sure it only represents the unincorporated.
- Commissioner Dozier mentioned a concern over funding staff because many Commissioner/Council members want to see the funding of projects, so what percentage of that time would be going to projects and they want to see project accomplishments and things moving and going and not just funding people. There was a request to see a % to staff, % to projects and % to accomplishments as this moves forward and ultimately we would like to see more projects/accomplishments over staff. Jessica noted that research grants will often be heavy staff because that's how the research gets done, but Implementation grants will be different, so need to make sure understanding the difference of research vs implementation grants with FSU PC umbrella, it can be easier to get research grants than implementation and there is FSU PC pressure to bring in research grants. With implementation grants, the EP are not always submitting the grant itself because we can't run the pipes and dig the trenches, but we are using a lot of admin effort to help the municipalities submit to grant opportunities and secure the funding.
- The question was asked on implementation what are you looking for as a metric on that? Acres? Miles? Jessica indicated that it depends on the type of project but yes, generally some metric of area.
- Additional discussion was asking for a breakdown further into staff amount as this will be asked at the County when presenting and if we are giving funding to keep your staff or to get the project completed with results? It was discussed that if you identify it well and be specific about the future product and that a lot of work that is done throughout the County is funded by grants.

ESTUARY PROGRAM FINANCES

Jessica discussed the need to extend the Bay County pot 1 RESTORE Grant since we have an unmet need for the CCMP that needs to be addressed. The CCMP will continue on the current trajectory, but will mentioned the reports provided by these sampling efforts. It was also noted that the EP has submitted several grants this past fall. NOAA transformation habitat came out to be a \$10.6 M request and we also worked with others to submit to NOAA underserved-working with City of PC, City of PSJ and both due next week. And the NOAA Marine Debris opportunity is also due and the Stormwater Committee indicated interest in submitting for an innovative project using LittaTraps to trap debris.

2024 SCHEDULE

Jessica proposed the following schedule for approval for the 2024 year to ensure meetings remained shorter as we are only meeting every other month and there was concern if we moved to quarterly the meetings would end up being 3-4 hours long again.

Proposed meeting dates:

- February 28th @ 1-3 CT
- April 24th @ 1-3 CT
- June 26th @ 1-3 CT
- August 28th @ 1-3 CT
- October 24th @ 1-3 CT
- December 18th @ 1-3 CT (Bill won't be able to make this one as he is rotating off)

Mayor Hammond suggested the dates be sent out so everyone can review their calendars.

And other members recommended that the schedule be approved for now and revisit in June meeting timelines. Commissioner Dozier inquired about September's Oyster presentation from the Science and Technical Committee meeting and requested that it be sent to the Policy Board.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business discussed by the Policy Board. Jessica thanked the Board and others for attending the meeting and for the great discussion.

The meeting was formally adjourned at 2:45 pm

APPENDIX A – PARTICIPANTS @ DECEMBER 2023 MEETING

√ Indicates participation at this meeting

MEMBER	AFFILIATION
Local Government Elected Officials, Voting Members	
Vacant	Mayor Panama City
Rex 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
Linda Hamilton	Councilmember, Mexico Beach
Kenneth Ayers√	Commissioner, Callaway
April Gibson	Councilwoman, Parker
Doug Moore	Commissioner, Bay County
Pat Perno √	Commissioner, Lynn Haven
Sandy Quinn	Commissioner, Gulf County
Regional, State and Federal Agency Non-Voting Members Present	
Jonathan Brucker √	Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Water Resources Management
Angela Bradley	Emerald Coast Regional Council (ECRC)
Gail Carmody	Citizen
Catrina Martin	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Thomas McGill (Wade Lehmann) √	U.S. EPA Region 4, Water Division, Chief, Ocean, Wetlands & Streams Protection Branch
Chris Plymae	EPA, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Barbara Powell	Bureau of Community Planning & Growth, Florida Dept. of Economic Opportunity
COORDINATION TEAM AND FACILITATORS	
Jessica Graham √	SASJBEP Executive Director
Ryann Rossi √	SASJBEP Scientist
Aleighsa Wright √	SASJBEP Outreach Specialist
Elizabeth Farmer √	SASJBEP Research Assistant
Hal Beardall	Estuary Policy Board Facilitator, FCRC Consensus Center
Rafael Montalvo	Estuary Policy Board Facilitator, FCRC Consensus Center
OTHERS PRESENT	
Darryl Boudreau √	Northwest Florida Water Management District, Regional Policy Manager
Jim Muller	Bay County RESTORE Act Coordinator
Teresa Cox √	City of Springfield City Clerk
Larry Hawks	President of Friends of St. Andrew Bay (BEST)