



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

***POLICY BOARD
MEETING 15***

February 28, 2024

*Report prepared by
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Florida State University*

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BACKGROUND

On February 28, 2024 the Policy Board of the St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program (SASJBEP) met in person and videoconference. The meeting was the fifteenth 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:

- Action: CCMP final review
- Logo and website discussion
- Action: 2024 SASJBEP Workplan Overview
- Review recent and upcoming grant proposals
- SASJBEP Policy Board leadership transition planning

Approximately 13 Policy Board members, staff and public attended. (A list of participants can be found in Appendix A). The agenda is pasted below and references the Boardbook found [here](#).

1. Welcome and Meeting Overview
2. Action Items
 - a. Review and approve near final CCMP
3. Logo and Website
4. Estuary Program future focus and finances
 - a. Grant overview
 - i. New grant award
 - ii. Grant extensions
 - b. Auxiliary account
 - i. Statement of service discussion
5. 2024 Workplan Summary
6. Policy Board leadership and member terms
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 for today's meeting and recapped the previous progress. 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. During the review of the agenda, we realized that our Chair, Councilman Chester would not be present at the next scheduled meeting. A new date was selected prior to the start of this meeting to ensure the leadership handoff would be streamlined.

See Appendix A for a list of members and participants.

CCMP - REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Jessica reviewed the CCMP and indicated that the Policy Board did not need to read through it as you already read through it and nothing in the text has really changed.

LAYOUT & CLEAN-UP

Jessica indicated that there were a few things to review and fill in throughout the document but that it is coming along and is finally a pretty document to review. Jessica reviewed the discussion with the Management Council was about the Action Plan layout. We followed the recommendations to keep it short and sweet and Kerigan was able to do so and so far looks sharp and each action plan were made on a single page. Jessica requested that the Policy Board use this as last looks and approve this and move everything forward. A member noted that we did not have quorum and couldn't vote via email so will have to call a special meeting. Policy Board members in attendance all agreed that we should move forward even though we cannot vote. Comments were made that this was so impressive and Kerigan did a great job putting together.

LOGO AND WEBSITE

The first meeting the Community Action Committee said we needed a new logo. We weren't able to do it then, but we had some funding in order to add to the contract and get a new logo. Jessica gave Kerigan only one week to put together some drafts, building off of what Aleighsa has already put together previously and feedback from the Policy Board and others. We also gave use of it and how we would be using it and needs for our program. They will make tweaks but gave some initial feedback.

LOGO

Jessica had the logos out on the floor in the room and asked the members to pick the top 3 but keep in mind they are all drafts. The highest voted ones would then be moved forward with Kerigan to refine based on feedback. Totals from in room and online are as follows:

1a-5
1b-5
2-2
3-1
4a-0
4b-0
5a-4
5b-1
6-4

Discussion included: The Policy Board was completely different than staff's choices and that the Board didn't see that the scallop being a sunset and that it was two fish tails representing the two bays. Number 6 looks a lot like Nature Coast logo and the license plate so staff stayed away from that one. We liked 5a too but thought it was too much but the Policy Board liked it. Also talked about how the swoosh was supposed to be connected to the current logo. Additional discussions outlined font choices and that Bays needed to be on the top line with St. Andrew and St. Joseph.

Jessica said she would get additional votes from the people missing during the special meeting.

WEBSITE

A requirement for the grant is that the CCMP is hosted electronically, which is difficult to do with FSU's currently managed website and therefore, staff have been working with Kerigan to create a new website that will be standalone from FSU. This allows us to choose our domain name. There are four options including sasjbep.org or other versions with fsu or ep etc. Discussion took place and the following was informed to the Policy Board members in attendance that we get to choose a domain name that they wanted sasjbep.org as it is simple. The website will be managed by staff as Aleighsa already has that skillset and will make it much better.

Discussion overall was praise for the CCMP and all of the grants etc. and that the Estuary Program has been doing this so fast and so well. Jessica noted that is all because of having unrestricted funding allowing staff to spend the time on these activities because grants often restrict what you can work on.

ESTUARY FUTURE FOCUS & FINANCES

GRANT OVERVIEW

Jessica reviewed the different grants that are currently active including the RESTORE grant from the County where a request for extension had been filed and approved but the extension had not been executed. The grant expires tomorrow and because of the lack of communication with the County, Jessica indicated that she has put a stop payment on everything and moved all staff salaries off of the grant in the event that it did not get executed and to FSU in time. Luckily, we have the TNC grant that we can do that while these issues can be handled.

The TNC grant actually ends in April rather than June, which puts pressure on deliverables. Jessica has requested an extension and county and TNC are OK with it but on condition, which is to invoice asap through June, which is difficult to do with FSU's process. This puts us in a very difficult situation where we have one grant that expires earlier than expected, another that hasn't been executed and further delays if the Board flips to the next page with additional funding from RESTORE pot 1.

The County has still not approved these three grants that had been approved by the Board of County Commissioners twice and the public twice. Jim Muller resigned his position and since then the County is getting up to speed on everything. I've requested a timeline on when they might get them submitted and they said they don't have one. If the RESTORE grants that are pending don't get approved, we will run out of staff funds. Jessica stressed that this is the problem with grant funds because right now we have \$2.5M in grants secured that we are just waiting on getting into the bank and some of these we have been waiting on for 1.5 years. So- we really need bridge funds which is what we are trying to do with allocations.

Discussion:

- The question was posted if there was anything we can do to push it along and the Director advised she is working on it.
- Another question was posed that if these were reimbursement grants and did we go for any legislative appropriations? Yes, we were written into last year's request with SAS and UWF- we were allocated \$100,000 last year but still don't have the money in hand. We are in this year's allocation as well looking at \$150k maybe more but no promise. That will help but need assurance that those 3 grants are coming.

- Board members indicated that the Program needs to be able to have bridge funding. They also indicated that the Director needs to get Commissioner Dozier and Moore to get things moving. Jessica indicated that it is in transition and it takes time and Jessica has been pushing for a meeting but haven't been granted the meeting. The concern is that they haven't pushed the button because they don't want to and want the projects to die.

ADDITIONAL GRANT UPDATES

CSTARS

CSTARS is going well and the Postdoc is being processed and the EP is gearing up for sampling.

Discussion:

- The question was posed where are the samples taken from. Jessica described the different types of sampling that will be occurring across the different pays and that Liz will make sure it's all standard across all 3 bays.

Living Shoreline suitability tool in St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays

This was submitted back in 2022 but there has been very slow progress. Jessica did not have an update but has requested another update from FL Department of Environmental Protection RESTORE funding priorities list three.

Seagrass Nursery pilot project through St. Joe Foundation

Seagrass nursery pilot is going but we need to get the greenhouse on property. Dr. Clark asked if there was something that he could do and Jessica indicated that it is stalled in Tallahassee. A suggestion was made to put it at the Lynn Haven property but unfortunately power is needed and there is no power at the Lynn Haven property. It also requires daily checking to ensure it is operating properly.

Pipeline: Increasing Coastal Resiliency of Springfield, FL through Stream Restoration and Wetland Enhancement

The Design for Springfield restoration went back to FSU and is reviewing again so it is moving along with NFWF.

Protecting seagrass in St. Andrew Bay through reduction of directed and indirect impacts

This is one of the three projects at the County mentioned previously.

Identifying sources of waterbody impairments to determine effective actions to increase water quality of St. Andrew Bay

This is one of the three projects at the County mentioned previously.

Determining Aquatic habitat quality using benthic communities as indicators to guide recommended actions to increase habitat quality in St. Andrew Bay

This is one of the three projects at the County mentioned previously.

Coordination of Tyndall Stakeholder group

This project is one that we coordinate a bi-annual meeting and helps us stay in the loop with everything going on in and around Tyndall.

Creation of a State of the Watershed report

State of the watershed is active and Ryann is working with the Science and Technical Committee to meet the deliverables. The job posting for the Staff Scientist job is out and just closed last week.

Benefiting Water quality across the Panhandle Estuaries-assessing benthic indicators in ST. Joe Bay

Legislative request with UWF-waiting for funding.

Support for the Estuary Programs Operations

Thank you to FPL for providing overhead funds to support the program.

Together for the Bays: A collaborative approach to transforming St. Andrew Bay and increasing coastal resiliency through the implementation of NBS

This one is under review, hoping to hear back in March. If we get this, then those 3 projects with the County can go away and we would be fine and be able to breathe easier.

Strategically reforested Bay County through assessing stormwater potential and existing infrastructure

This was funding secured from submitted applications. FDACS-preliminary outfall assessment and prioritization of tree planting to mitigate stormwater and understand stormwater potential. Not a lot of funding but will allow us to work with engineering students here at FSU PC and fund a portion of the staff scientist position.

Reducing debris entering our bays in partnership with local municipalities

Invited for a full proposal and we are working on it and were asked to indicate scalability into this and want to know if we can fund at lower amount.

Conclusion

Overall, for grants, the Program has applied for over \$25M and secured \$5.6M. EP is also working on 3 other proposals and one would be a subaward in workforce dev, another for native plants and a greenhouse for use and reuse water. This project covers all the way to Texas and be a large scale native plant network. The others are NFWF grants that Jessica intends to apply for.

ALLOCATION

Jessica described that with grants there are delays and not sure if its turnover, different funding sources but it unanticipated as Jessica has never experienced this level of delays. There is a lot of uncertainty with projects like grants and want to make sure staff feel secure and not move on because of the uncertainty. Because it is a soft money and takes a lot of time from proposal to actual execution and all activities must be funded by a grant so lose interest/partners.

Discussion:

- The question was asked do we work with DEP on stormwater? Jessica indicated that it wasn't difficult to get something like a stormwater training, but it takes time to coordinate. We also have requests from Arnold and others to help develop new CTE program but don't have that.
- Living shoreline tech assistance is another area that we get a lot of requests. Jessica usually puts them to Bay watch or IFAS but this entire area doesn't have a lot of capacity to fill those needs.
- Member talked about the FWC created a contractor training for marine contractors that was developed and offered to connect folks together.
- Water quality is collected by BayWatch and Ryann has created a report card and want to put together a dashboard but it takes time.

Membership allocations

Jessica reviewed a proposed allocation methodology with a tiered approach to the population of each municipality to provide a ballpark allocation. Jessica clarified that the Program is not asking the municipalities to fund the entire program and asking for less than half.

Discussion:

- A question on Return on Investment was asked and Jessica provided that for every dollar invested it has been leveraged to \$5.5. A comparison was made by a Board member that Tampa Bay has \$1 to \$10 and that is a national estuary program that has been around for a long time.

- Comments were made that TDC's could be a source of revenue for the municipalities to help offset the costs to the cities.
- Commissioner Dozier joined the meeting.
- A question was asked about how we were going to be able to invoice the cities. Jessica mentioned that we are working to get an auxiliary fund created to take these funds in. We finally have a meeting coming up and hoping for good news.
- Members outlined the timeline to get allocation requests in and Jessica requested a gut check on where folks are and most said that we need to get approved by our respective boards.
- Jessica recapped a conversation that she had with Jennifer Vigil about the living seawall project and asking if we supported it. The Estuary Program doesn't support or not support projects as decided by the board but that it aligned with things listed in the CCMP.
- Additional discussion occurred regarding the Mexico Beach TDC and Kimberly Shoaf as the Director.
- Jessica asked the Board again for a gut check on the costs and Commissioner Dozier reiterated that it is a Board decision. He then outlined the process for the County in order for an outside organizations to request funding in next year's budget. Next step would be to get with Bob or Miranda to get a form and then gets into the budget process and then have all of the outside agencies come and get into the slot.
- Jessica asked if it would be helpful to get in front of the Boards but it would be up to the Chairman on who gets on the agenda. It was stressed to be short and sweet and to the point.

SPONSORSHIP TIERS

Jessica described the Sponsorship Tiers that Kerigan will be working on to design as Jessica has taken it as far as she can without additional external support and areas of expertise. This should help in raising funding through donations.

SERVICES AGREEMENT

There is a services agreement in your Boardbook and two options of how it is written. This is something that I need in order to get an account with Office of Sponsored Research since we were denied an Auxillary account. This is the account that could receive funding from local governments. Jessica had resolution language that also included the formation of the Estuary Program. You could do the one that doesn't have the whereas and then have the resolution with it that goes through the formation. FSU asked that we had to outline what would be provided to the local governments. Jessica reviewed a number of projects and how they touch different municipalities and governments as examples of how funding could be used to develop these additional services, as well as grant support.

Discussion:

- A question was asked if money from The Nature Conservancy was added into the Return on Investment. Jessica said no only direct funding to the Estuary Program was included and not other funding that touches the program.
- A discussion around the SUNS project and how influential it is to the area and how much time Jessica has spent on it that she hasn't really highlighted because it isn't directly funded by the Estuary Program.

Jessica asked the Board if Option 2 would work with the addition of a cost and the Board agreed.

Jessica also presented examples of how to present the Return on Investment and used the Lynn Haven example and examples from previous positions of how to show impact. This is something that Jessica could provide to the boards.

2024 WORKPLAN

Jessica reviewed the Workplan that was broken into quarters and each staff member for each grant. It gives the

Board a brief idea of what is going on without Jessica having to get into the details each meeting. This is just a brief summary so you can see how things are divided and conquered. According to the By-laws the Policy Board is supposed to approve the workplan. Jessica asked the Board to provide feedback on the format and provided an example from other National Estuary Programs whose workplans can be close to 100 pages.

Discussion:

- A question was that this was just the responsibilities of each staff member but there were no dates or amounts of money. Jessica pointed the Board to the other pages that outlined the funding, the dates, and reiterated that this was just an outline of what each staff member will be devoted to for the next year.
- There were comments that the format was good and easy to read. It likely was helpful for Jessica to make this and Jessica indicated that it was important for the Board to realize that not all staff were funding off of all grants.
- Commissioner Dozier asked about the Springfield project and where that was in the rest of the Boardbook. Jessica directed Commissioner Dozier to page 6 of the Boardbook.
- A question asked if St. Joe Company was involved with the Estuary Program and St. Joe Company does sit on the Management Council and does participate regularly. There will be a conversation with St. Joe Company on whether or not they are able to provide funding not through the Foundation. The Foundation did grant us money for the seagrass greenhouse but they do not pay for staff salaries.

POLICY BOARD MEMBER/AGENCY UPDATES

Jessica outlined that Councilman Chester will term out in April and we will move our April meeting up to the 10th to provide time for Councilman Chester to still attend. Previous discussions stressed the need to have operational continuity and have the Vice chair move into chair position and then nominate members for the vice chair position. Jessica reviewed that Commissioner Dozier would move to Chair and then we would elect a Vice Chair and then when Commissioner Dozier left then the Vice Chair would move to the Chair and we would again elect a Vice Chair. This would allow for us to keep someone familiar with the program in the Chair seat. However, Commissioner Dozier will not be here after November and then will need to plan who will take his place when he leaves office.

Discussion:

- PB agreed it would be great to have continuity but also have a transition document that could be passed along to the next person. Jessica agreed that it would be good to have a Chair transition document. Also need to make sure that the new person isn't coming in cold on the first day.
- Mayor Hammond said the first thing we need to do is to get people who are on the Board to show up. There were subsequent discussions about who was representing some of the cities that were not in attendance. There's a difference between letting people know you'll not be there versus never hearing from them. A discussion regarding how representatives are selected and that City of Panama City doesn't have an appointment process. The members indicated this could be something brought up during presentations to the Commissions/Councils. Quorum really needs to be something we are not stressed to get at each meeting. Members suggested that they could reach out to the Mayor of PC as they may not realize they are a voting member. Everyone agreed with Wednesdays as meeting day moving forward and
- Vice Chair either Commissioner Perno or Mayor Hammond at special meeting will call for nomination and vote.
- Commissioner Dozier brought another approach to be considered which would be to just elect a new chair now rather than sliding folks around and then just back filling the Vice chair position when he leaves. If Commissioner Perno can commit to being the chair until April 2027 then it may make more sense to have him elected to Chair now.
- Jessica described the longer-term model depending on election cycles and outcomes but that doesn't mean it can't change throughout the process.

There is no quorum in order to vote on a decision so that will be addressed during a special call or in the April meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Perno recapped a project of 12th street and the priority level on 17th street according to Lynn Haven. The next meeting is scheduled for April 10th, 1-3 CT. Jessica also discussed a celebration event for the publication of the CCMP as a thank you for everyone's time and effort devoted to the CCMP. This will be opened to the entire program and just want to make sure that we will have printed copies by the date of the celebration.

Policy Board announcements?

- There was thanks expressed for all of the hard work.

Jessica thanked the Board and others for attending the meeting and for the great discussion.

The meeting was formally adjourned at 3:00 pm

APPENDIX A – PARTICIPANTS @ FEBRUARY 2024 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 √ (half of meeting)	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 https://floridadep.gov/water
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)
Stephen Schmidt √	Kerigan creative Director