



**ST. ANDREW &
ST. JOSEPH BAYS**
ESTUARY PROGRAM
at FSU PANAMA CITY

Chair: Commissioner Pat Perno

Vice Chair: Councilmember Mary Coburn

Executive Director: Dr. Jessica Graham

SASJBEP STC Meeting 10/16/2025

1-2:00 pm CT

In person: *FSU Panama City 3rd floor Holley Building, Dean's Conference Room*

Online/phone:

<https://fsu.zoom.us/j/99781494831>

Meeting ID: 997 8149 4831

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Attendance: SASJBEP Staff (JG, RH, Al.Wr., TL, LF), Norm Capra, Janelle Johnson (FWRI FIM), William Fisher, Phil Maxwell (St. Andrew Bay Watch), Katie Konchar (TNC), Megan Christopher, Dale Cronwell, Jeff Talbert (Atlanta Botanical Garden)

Meeting Summary:

Jessican Graham presented the STC with a review of current SASJBEP led grants. This review included the following grants: CSTARS, UWF, FDACS, Springfield, NOAA Marine Debris, NCCA, Scaling Up Nature Based Solutions, EPA- Bay Guardians, SPARK, Resilient Florida, Microbial and Nutrient Source Tracking. Partners were also given the opportunity to provide updates on current and potential grants/projects. Norm Capra presented on a Restore Audubon grant to restore Bird Island, Katie Konchar shared information on TNC's partnership with USF to utilize bamboo fences to support seagrass growth at Tyndall Air Force Base, and Jeff Talbert gave an update on a NFWF grant and partnership with the Air Force. December's meeting will include guest presentations and a year in review.

Access the meeting recording here:

https://youtu.be/L0ReJhXo6rc?si=xv9dm8vfJm1d6q_H





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Updates on SASJBEP led grants

CSTARS

Data for 2024 has been collected and QA/QC'd and delivered to GRIIDC. Collection of 2025 data to be completed by first week of November and likely submitted by the end of December/beginning of 2026. We also received the extension for 3rd year of data into 2026. An example of a homeowner report was also shared.

UWF

Meiofauna has been delivered, and we are waiting on sediment contaminants and dating results. Prelim data suggests collected sediments were 50-100 years old. We should be able to piece together about 100 years of information in some areas. This information is due Dec 2025.

FDACS

Curve number analysis was completed and used to prioritize public parcels for reforestation. The StoryMap is now live on sasjbep.org

(<https://sasjbep.org/programs/planning/strategically-reforesting-bay-county/>) and will





remain as a living product. Cities provided valuable feedback to refine priority areas, and the project is now fully wrapped up.

Springfield

The project is at 60% design completion, and we are awaiting delivery of final products to complete reporting. The City Commission has voted to continue advancing this project as funding becomes available. Project engagement contributed to the acquisition of approximately 10 acres of floodplain for conservation.

Marine Debris

All LittaTrap installations are complete, and monitoring is ongoing with monthly surveys at each site. Murals are on hold due to new state restrictions on artwork on roadways and sidewalks. The dashboard is functional, automatically updates, and is awaiting NOAA approval for public release. Cities are able to access dashboard data, and monthly summaries are also shared. Monitoring remains limited in Panama City due to staffing, and low rainfall has reduced debris capture in recent months.

National Coastal Condition Assessment Intensification

We expanded sampling from the standard five stations to ten across SJB and SAB. All samples have been submitted for laboratory analysis, and we have begun receiving partial results. We are currently exploring analysis pathways and research questions for the dataset.

Scaling Up Nature Based Solutions

We are identifying potential projects across the watershed and advancing several toward implementation, focusing on the bay and gulf sides. This includes living shoreline work at Lynn Haven Bayou Preserve and a potential project at the Lynn Haven refuse pond. We are assisting with permitting for the Bayou Preserve project, and the identification process has generated new grant application opportunities.

EPA - Bay Guardians

This project continues current water quality monitoring and adds new bayou stations while establishing citizen science monitoring in St. Joseph Bay. It includes analysis to prioritize stations under high, medium, and low funding scenarios. The QAPP was submitted before the federal shutdown, and we hope to begin field sampling in 2026.

SPARK



Leveraging TNC's SUNS work and Resilient Florida efforts, SPARK focuses on getting projects shovel ready through grant-writing support and engineering assistance. It expands beyond nature-based solutions to include broader resilience projects. The program is based at FSU and is expected to be fully active soon.

Resilient Florida

This project supports identification and development of resilience projects and delivery of grant workshops for local governments. It also includes the creation of a public flood reporting tool to document flooding for project justification. Partnerships are expanding throughout the watershed, beyond Bay and Gulf counties.

Norm Capra also shared concerns from the citizens of Jamaica Lakes subdivision regarding growing development and how that development could negatively impact Lake Powell and eventually lead Lake Powell to lose its status as an Outstanding Florida Water. Jessica acknowledged this concern and shared that she is aware of the flooding issue and has brought the issue up with SUNS, and how challenges arise in managing development impacts as Florida is a right to develop state. She also shared that examples could be provided where commissions have been able to limit developmental impacts in unique ways, but she will be looking into this further.

Microbial and Nutrient Source Tracking

This project will examine microbial DNA and nutrient isotopes to identify whether pollution sources are human or animal, allowing targeted remediation strategies informed by land use. Initial sampling will focus on DEP-impaired waters, with potential to expand, but sampling will not begin until summer 2026 for reliable results. Stakeholder requests are already helping guide site prioritization.

Bill Fisher asked if there exists a map of septic systems in order to get an estimate of how many people are on septic, and shared that a county map of sewers should be available and anything else can be assumed to be septic. Jessica confirmed that SASJBEP has a data layer of likely septic areas, but these need to be compared with soils data and the septic layer needs to be validated.

Partner Updates

Norm Capra

Bay County Audubon Society (BCAS) is potentially pursuing an Audubon in Action grant to support the re-establishment of Bird Island, an important site for breeding Pelicans and other species. The grant has two levels 1) \$5k-9,999 and 2) \$10k-15k with very few level 2 grants available for this cycle. Applications are due November 23rd. Bird Island is the only nesting place for Brown Pelicans in Bay County and is a critical nesting area for the entire western





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Panhandle. Storms have washed away much of the vegetation over the years, with some restoration completed by volunteers previously but not enough. Norm would like to know if BCAS and SASJBEP can become shared stakeholders in mitigating this island for bird habitat. Clarification will need to be obtained on the remediation strategy before moving forward.

Katie Konchar (TNC)

TNC has partnered with USF to install bamboo stakes to deter herbivores and reduce erosion within seagrass beds. Results are promising, and more information can be found at <https://ccs.eng.ufl.edu/bamboo-fences-offer-seagrass-a-lifeline-at-tyndall-air-force-base/>.

Jeff Talbert

NFWF NCRF grant has been applied for and worked budget to get proposal in for REPI on July 3rd, should hear next month. Got all agreements with State Park to move forward and use equipment bought on the last project. Positionally ready, just waiting on funding approval.

December 18th Meeting

Will be more of a partner updates. If you have been approached and agreed, great. If you have not been approached, then let Jessica know.

2025 STC Meeting Schedule:





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January 16	Guest Presentation: "Monitoring Waterbodies through Spatially Balanced Surveys: National, State, and Local Perspectives"
February 20	Grant Update(s) (1 hour meeting)- virtual only
April 17	Guest Presentation: Oysters
August 21	Guest Presentation: Water quality and microbial source tracking in St. Joseph Bay
October 16	Grant Update(s) (1 hour meeting)- virtual only
December 18	Guest Presentation, Year in Review

