



SASJBEP STC Meeting Notes 12/18/2025

Meeting summary: The STC received brief updates on projects, successes and challenges from several partners to wrap up the STC meetings for 2025. Lauren Brisley provided updates on the FWRI SIMM program, Katie Konchar with TNC provided an update the seagrass enhancement project in St. Andrews Sound, Matt Davis with FWRI Molluscan research group shared updates on the FL oyster data gaps project and NRDA scallop project. Cassidy Manzonelli reported on the West Bay oyster restoration project and Meg Christopher provided an update on activities completed by the CPAP with a focus on seagrass. Jessica Graham provided a brief overview of the SASJBEP impact report.

Access the meeting recordings [here](#) and materials [here](#).

Attendance: Jessica Graham, Tim Lee, Mark Hyman, Aleighsa Wright, Ryann Rossi, Brett Connell, Cassidy Manzonelli, Claire Rosental, Liz Farmer, Meg Christopher, Matt Davis, Katie Konchar, Norm Capra, Erin Pereira, jadams, Joy Brown, Lauren Brisley, Lena Kury, Mike McManus, Phil Maxwell

Summaries of each presentation are below:

Lauren Brisley (FWRI SIMM Program)

Lauren reported on new seagrass mapping efforts that classify patchy and dense coverage, offering more detail than previous presence-absence maps. She highlighted that updated St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bay datasets are available through FWRI and encouraged partners to monitor SIMM newsletters for new data, publications, and opportunities. Lauren emphasized the program's need to track statewide seagrass projects for strategic planning and efficient funding use. She also announced she is leaving her role at the end of the year and encouraged sharing the upcoming job posting. Information about the SIMM program can be found [here](#).

Katie Konchar (TNC- Tyndall Nature-Based Solutions Project update)

Katie provided updates on the Tyndall Nature-Based Solutions project, focusing on seagrass habitat protection and shoreline erosion in St. Andrews Sound. This project includes submerged shoreline stabilization (12 breakwaters) and seagrass protection/enhancement. While waiting for permitting and funding, small experiments with bamboo stakes to keep the seagrass edge in place were conducted in 2024 and showed some promising results so in May 2025, they scaled up to a 400-m bamboo stockade at the deep bed edge. As of late 2025, the treated areas (with bamboo stakes) had higher shoot length, density and percent cover than untreated areas. Other results of note were that ~ 20% of bamboo needed repair and sod staples were added to help stabilize rhizomes on the edge. The final monitoring will





take place in May 2026 and will help determine next steps. Katie also provided additional information about how wave energy was measured- via modeling and active wave gauges, what type of grazing is seen in the area- mostly turtle and manatee, and shared where sediment tends to be moving-east to west in the area.

Matt Davis (FWRI) – Oyster & Scallop Updates

Matt summarized progress on the Florida TIG Oyster Data Gaps Project, including completed mapping of oyster habitat in St. Andrew Bay, ongoing monitoring, and development of a habitat suitability index (HSI) to guide restoration. The project's methods and code will be publicly available, with the HSI adaptable to multiple estuaries. Matt shared the following parameters will be included in the HSI: salinity, temperature, depth, substrate/bottom type, historic habitat, sturgeon habitat, shellfish harvest zones, and more. He also reported on scallop surveys, noting improved pre-season numbers in St. Joe Bay were better than last year but canceled post-season surveys due to red tide. Despite ending grant funding for the scallop surveys, FWRI intends to continue seasonal scallop monitoring.

Cassidy Manzonelli (FWC) – St. Andrews Bay Oyster Reef Restoration

Cassidy presented updates on St. Andrews Bay oyster reef restoration, a decade-long project that recently completed Phase 6 with construction of 16 new limestone reefs to rebuild degraded areas which was completed in early fall 2025. These reefs were built over earlier phase 1 & 2 footprints where material degraded. She noted earlier limestone reefs are performing well and covered in live oysters. She also shared that additional work may occur if funding is secured. Cassidy also announced she is leaving her FWC Northwest region position for a new role in South Florida, with her current position expected to be posted in January.

Megan Christopher (FDEP - Central Panhandle Aquatic Preserves)

Megan shared an overview of her program's wide-ranging responsibilities and highlighted major accomplishments, including completing seagrass monitoring across four aquatic preserves, finishing multiple restoration projects, and maintaining water quality monitoring and outreach efforts. The NRDA project for monitoring prop scars in St. Joe Bay closed out with ~ 400 scars restored. She described significant challenges such as funding limitations, staff turnover, rapid coastal development, and ecological stressors like red tide, drift algae, mangrove expansion, and severe urchin grazing. Looking forward, she emphasized strengthening partnerships, adopting new monitoring technology such as RTK and drone, and upcoming seagrass plantings in St. Andrews that will total ~16 acres.





**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 Program Update

Jessica shared SASJBEP's annual impact report, highlighting progress in restoration planning, new datasets and tools, active research and monitoring, and expanded public outreach. Achievements included identifying ten new restoration projects, producing numerous technical summaries, hosting successful events like Race for the Bays, and tracking CCMP progress—showing advancement on 44% of planned actions. She also outlined grants closing and beginning in the upcoming year and emphasized the program's growing workload and momentum.

View the impact report [here](#).

Announcements

- Lauren Brisley leaving SIMM Program Coordinator role (job posted on My Florida Jobs).
- Cassidy Manzonelli leaving FWC Northwest region; position will be posted mid-January.

