



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

St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program

Bay Ambassadors Kickoff Meeting '26-'27

8/22/26

Meeting Notes

Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome
 - a. Sign In
 - b. Icebreaker
2. Introductions
 - a. Estuary Program 101
 - b. Club History
3. Future Projects and Year Plan
4. Questions and Suggestions
5. Looking Ahead
6. Adjourn

Attendance: Katelyn Rich, Jessa Skipper, Josie Buell, Alexandra McAllister, Robyn Toole, Lucas Latiolais, Adelyn Lucin, Avery Hill, Ayla Hill, Abby Erickson, Michaela Dwyer

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome

Students signed in and began the meeting with an icebreaker activity including their name, school, grade, and a fun fact about themselves. There were 3 returning students from last year, with the majority of attendees being first-timers. Aleighsa introduced herself as the Outreach Specialist for the Estuary Program and the primary point of contact for the Bay Ambassadors. Students also completed a “What connects you to the bays?” activity to connect the goals of the group to their personal lives. Answers included:

“Spending every second near a body of water,” “appreciating the wildlife,” “walks along beach drive at night,” “flamingos,” “paddling,” “going kayaking with my mom,” “fishing and swimming,” “the marine life and boating with my family,” “my family used to have a big oyster business,” “going to the beach,” and “my dogs love swimming.”

2. Introductions

Aleighsa presented a slideshow to inform the students of the club’s history and relation to the estuary program. The goal of the group: to take on projects to help meet desired outcomes of the estuary program and raise program awareness.

Desired Outcomes:

- **Clean, swimmable, fishable water** that supports the local community and wildlife
- **Functioning Ecosystems** that support resilient communities and wildlife
- **Stronger, more resilient communities** and ecosystems through comprehensive long-term and integrated nature-based solutions (NBS)
- **A responsible community** working together to protect and restore our bays.

Club History:

- The club was started 3 years ago by high school student Pearl Amromin
- First projects included cleanups, creating monofilament recycling tubes, an environmental ad competition, and lectures

3. Future Projects and Year Plan

Aleighsa presented a tentative schedule for the year including meeting dates and topics, additional volunteer events, and questions regarding group interest in field trips and guest speakers. The students showed a unanimous interest in an “Ask a Scientist” speaker panel, with majority interest in a college admissions panel as well. Other projects that garnered special attention were vertical oyster garden assembly,

pollinator garden planting, wastewater treatment plant field trip, and local market presence to raise funds and recruit new club members.

Students were then asked which day of the week and time of day would be best for meetings. All students in the room preferred Saturday mornings. Students who could not attend the meeting will also be given the opportunity to provide input.

4. Questions and Suggestions

Historically, the Bay Ambassadors group sees higher turnout and enthusiasm at the beginning of the school year, with attendance continuing to drop throughout the school year. Because of this, students were then asked, “What would make you want to come back each month?” Answers included:

“We could do crafts throughout the year (like during meetings) instead of doing them all at once,” “Just doing things for our environment,” “Small DIY projects,” “I think I would come back already,” “Look for more activities and do more of those! Or go to Pitt Springs as a group for cleanup/research stuff, “Activities! I really like how active we were last year,” “It’s not really up to me (I’m in band, choir, theater, and the AICE program) but mostly snacks,” “Being able to be active in the community, maybe more frequent meetings so if someone is unable to make one they can come to another meeting,” and “volunteer hours”.

5. Looking Ahead

To wrap up, the group discussed upcoming volunteer opportunities in September including International Coastal Cleanup Day and the 2026 Race for the Bays. All students were interested in hosting a standalone cleanup for the Bay Ambassadors and the public at a park within Panama City due to transportation and time constraints. Aleighsa will research potential locations to host this cleanup on Saturday, September 19th.

Many students were interested in volunteering for Race for the Bays on September 26th. Sign-up details were provided.

Several students believe it may be worth attending high school orientations or club rushes in order to spread the word about the group and recruit new members. These students were asked to provide contact information or reach out to their teachers on behalf of the Bay Ambassadors to get information about attending these events.

6. Adjourn

Next group meeting: September 19th, 2026