

The Partnership for a Resilient Apalachicola Bay
Meeting #1
Franklin's Promise Coalition
March 26, 2024
12:00 – 3:30 pm
Minutes

Facilitator: Betty Webb

Voting Members Present: Chad Hanson, Cameron Baxley, Ken Jones, Shannon Hartsfield, Jim Estes, Roger Mathis, Rickey Banks, Anita Grove, Grayson Shepard, Ottice Amison, David Barber, Bruce Millender, Donnie Segree, Gayle Johnson

Advisory Members Present: Devin Resko, Jenna Harper, Joel Trexler, Portia Sapp, Sandra Brooke

Others Present: Maddie Mahood

- 1) Networking Lunch – 12:00 – 12:50
- 2) Call Meeting to Order – called to order by Betty Webb, Facilitator
- 3) Stakeholder Introductions – Meeting Participants and Agency Representatives

What is a stakeholder? It is used to represent people who have a deep connection or “stake” in an entity – someone who is deeply affected or has love and care for the person, place, or thing in question. What do each of our members bring to the table? What’s their “stake” in the Bay?

- a. Chad Hanson – The Pew Charitable Trusts
 - i. Biologist and researcher in the area was an active and integral part of the Apalachicola Bay System Initiative (ABSI) Community Advisory Board (CAB) and wants to see continued group success moving forward.
- b. Cameron Baxley – Apalachicola Riverkeeper
 - i. Riverkeeper provides stewardship and advocacy for the protection of the Apalachicola Bay watershed, outreach and advocacy are big components of their organization.
- c. Ken Jones – Riparian County Stakeholder Coalition (RCSC)
 - i. Oceanographer and state negotiator, RCSC supports the local counties and Apalachicola – Chattahoochee – Flint River basin, looks at water resource issues.
- d. Shannon Hartsfield – Waterman and Seafood Management Assistance Resource and Recovery Team (SMARRT)
 - i. Born and raised in the area, 4th generation waterman/seafood worker, who has worked off the Bay for generations – it is his livelihood, heritage.

- e. Jim Estes – FWC (*ret.*), biologist
 - i. Happy to be a part of the Partnership as a private citizen with 36.5 years of biology expertise in the area, he is great at interpreting science and boiling it down to something that makes sense, wants to see the Bay get better.
- f. Roger Mathis – Oysterman/Seafood Worker
 - i. Born and raised, 3rd generation, owned an oyster house from 1982 – 2017, his whole business was Apalachicola oysters – tonging, shucking, processing, packaging, and selling.
- g. Ricky Banks – Waterman, Seafood Worker
 - i. Born and raised, 4th generation. “The Bay is my life. It’s my heritage. It’s what my dad has done, my grandfather...” He brings to the table local knowledge and the pressing need to restore the Bay back to its glory.
- h. Anita Grove – Apalachicola City Commission
 - i. Came to the area in 1997 and works at ANERR but is serving as an elected local official. She says it’s a special place and she wants to keep the heritage and culture alive – not watch it get transformed into another industrial coastal town. The Bay is the economic backbone of Apalachicola.
- i. Grayson Shepard – Charter Captain, Real Estate Agent
 - i. Local charter captain with a unique knowledge and perspective of the waters, but also land development as a real estate agent. He also chairs the artificial reefs organization of Apalachicola. Very environmentally conscious and in tune with human interaction and the Bay.
- j. Ottilie Amison – Franklin County Commission
 - i. Born and raised, 3rd generation. Grew up working the Bay and transitioned into local politics. He has seen the Bay in its ups and downs, the programs that have worked and the ones that haven’t. Excited to take part in the process and help blend the science side and the local knowledge/experience side.
- k. Bruce Millender – Waterman, Seafood Worker
 - i. 4th generation, his family has been in the seafood industry since the 1800’s when his great-granddaddy arrived in the area. Seen the Bay go through its ups and downs and recognizes its vitality as the local livelihood.
- l. David Barber – Barber’s Seafood
 - i. This group is something he wants to be a part of as a seafood dealer. Important to him to see the Bay do well, as he has survived on the Bay for as long as he can remember.
- m. Donnie Segree – Commercial Fisherman
 - i. Been working the waters as long as he can remember. He recognizes oystering and working the Bay as a heritage. Eager to see the local

people, scientists, and agencies come together. Past groups have fallen apart due to being divided and we can't do that again.

- n. Gayle Johnson – Indian Lagoon Oyster Company
 - i. Been on St. George Island for 35 years – she loves these waters. Integral to have aquaculture involved in the group as aquaculture can help boost wild oyster populations. She wants to have these waters back and beautiful again.
 - o. Devin Resko – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
 - i. As a state agency, FWC wants to restore Apalachicola Bay. As an advisory member, he wants to help facilitate communication and collaboration between the local community and FWC. He will take everything he learns at the meeting back to Tallahassee decision-makers.
 - p. Jenna Harper – Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve (ANERR)
 - i. ANERR has federal and state resources to bring to the table, as well as tools and information to address other coastal management issues. ANERR is here to serve the Partnership and meet its needs the best they can.
 - q. Joel Trexler – Florida State University Coastal & Marine Laboratory (FSUCML)
 - i. The director of the lab moved here in 2020. He participated in ABSI and wants to make sure the lab is used as a valuable resource for everyone in the community.
 - r. Portia Sapp – Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
 - i. FDACS monitors shellfish area water quality and they are responsible for developing and regulating the aquaculture industry.
 - s. Sandra Brooke – FSUCML, ABSI
 - i. Principal Investigator of ABSI. She has learned more about the Bay from Shannon, Roger, and other watermen than data has ever provided. Very interested in seeing the bars restored in the Bay, as the loss of habitat is astounding. Globally, ecosystems are being lost and destroyed, and there are very few success stories, but she believes Apalachicola could be one of them.
 - t. Betty Webb – Facilitator
 - i. 3rd generation, born in Eastpoint, grew up in Apalachicola. She was the facilitator for the SMARRT group, and while she has never oystered herself, her family has, and she has grown up on these waters. The local people need her and she needs to be here. She wants to be a conduit between the locals and agencies/scientists.
- 4) Review Agenda and Opening Remarks (Betty Webb)
- i. Webb – “There’s been miscommunication and I believe it can be resolved. ABSI’s CAB was not balanced, but I understand the challenge in creating and keeping trust.”

- ii. Ms. Webb reviewed the agenda with the members and called Dr. Sandra Brooke to present on ABSI's research and the CAB's Restoration and Management Plan
- 5) Review ABSI Summary Report/Q&A – Dr. Sandra Brooke, FSU/ABSI
 - a. Dr. Brooke notes that the Plan is not prescriptive, it is a list of options and recommendations for the Bay. Management agencies have the freedom to do whatever they so choose with it.
 - b. Dr. Brooke and Shannon Hartsfield offer to take anyone that wants to go out on the bars and show what is tongable, what's not, the status of the bars, etc.
 - c. Mr. Amison notes that it is important to not have one person listed on all Partnership materials – everyone's names should be listed.
- 6) Organization Business
 - a. Confirm Official Name of Organization
 - i. Everyone approved of the official name – The Partnership for a Resilient Apalachicola Bay
 - ii. In conversation, the organization will now be referred to as The Partnership.
 - b. Election of Officers – President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer
 - i. Question – will there be an election term?
 - 1. The group decides on two years.
 - ii. **President** – Ottice Amison
 - 1. Mr. Segree motions for Ottice Amison to be President, Grayson Shepard seconds it.
 - iii. **Vice President** – David Barber
 - 1. Mr. Millender motions for David Barber to be Vice President, Anita Grove seconds it.
 - iv. **Secretary** – Ricky Banks
 - 1. Mr. Hartsfield motions for Ricky Banks to be Secretary, Mr. Millender seconds it.
 - v. **Treasurer** – Ken Jones
 - 1. Mr. Hanson motions for Ken Jones to be Treasurer, Mr. Shepard and Mr. Millender second it.
 - vi. Ms. Webb will create role descriptions for each position.
 - vii. Ms. Webb will create six-month workplan for the group
 - c. Review Operational/Procedural Policies and Guidelines (Recommendations from ABSI/CAB) – Adoption Decision
 - i. The group has agreed to adopt the Plan from ABSI's CAB.
 - ii. The group decides to amend the rules to allow local government representatives (such as county and city commissioners) to vote in

- Partnership rulings, but also recuse themselves from decision-making as needed.
- iii. State and federal agencies and government members are not allowed to vote. They are advisory members.
 - 1. This includes FSU as they are part of the government. They are there to provide information and data as needed.
 - iv. The group agrees they need to include representatives from Carrabelle.
 - 1. The group also needs to encourage more locals to join.
 - 2. Anyone interested should contact Ms. Webb directly.
 - v. Total number of members should be no more than 25.
- d. Review Agreement to Serve
- i. Mr. Banks notes that we are all working towards the same goal.
 - ii. Ms. Webb will tweak some of the verbiage in the consensus-building practices.
 - iii. Mr. Jones offers the notion that if are against an issues, you may oppose it, but you must offer an alternative solution in its place.
 - iv. Mr. Millender moved to adopt the changes to the bylaws and documents, Mr. Hartsfield and Ms. Grove second it.
 - v. Mr. Hanson motions to approve all documents with changes to this point, Mr. Mathis seconds it.
- e. Discuss Not-for-Profit State Registration and 501(c)3 Submission
- i. Current funding takes the Partnership to September 2024. There are certain benchmarks that must be established by then: election of officers, become a 501(c)3, establish executive committee, etc.
 - ii. Dr. Trexler announces that the Partnership has the funds to apply to be a 501(c)3 organization.
 - 1. Mr. Millender motions to proceed with filing for 501(c)3 status, Mr. Hartsfield seconds it.

10 Minute Break

- 7) Current Bay Restoration Update/Q&A – Devin Resko, FWC
- a. All rock that is being bought by NFWF and FWC is specifically for Apalachicola Bay
 - b. Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute in Eastpoint is in charge of monitoring oyster recruitment and sampling in Apalachicola Bay.
 - i. Mr. Resko notes that there has been an increase in spat fall.
 - c. FWC is mapping 15,000 acres of the Bay using three methods:
 - i. 3-D Mapping
 - ii. Bottom Profiling
 - iii. Ground-truthing
 - d. Apalachicola Bay is in its pilot study era with FWC and NFWF; FSU will conduct complementary studies.

- e. There has been on discussion on extending the wild oyster fishery harvest ban.
 - f. FWC hoping to move forward with the pilot study in the fall, but next spring may be more realistic.
 - g. NFWF needs to see that there are improvements in the Bay's ecosystem before deciding to move forward with funding additional projects.
 - h. In April 2024, FWC is going to begin putting barges in the Bay.
 - i. Mr. Resko will contact Oyster Radio and The Apalachicola Times to alert the public of this process.
 - ii. Mr. Amison and Mr. Shepard note that FWC needs good PR.
 - i. Mr. Hanson notes that The Partnership should include an Outreach and Education Subcommittee like ABSI's Community Advisory Board.
 - i. This committee is vital to help disseminate information and create materials and press releases.
 - j. Mr. Hartsfield notes that poaching is a large issue in the Bay. How is FWC going to monitor that? How will it effect the restoration projects? How will it affect potential funding sources?
 - i. Ms. Webb tabled this discussion for next meeting
 - ii. Perhaps FWC Law Enforcement can attend as well.
 - iii. Ms. Webb encourages the group to send her topics they would like to discuss for the next meeting, such as poaching.
 - k. Mr. Resko will send out a bullet point fact sheet on FWC's restoration plans to the group.
- 8) Moving Forward/Discuss Future Meeting Schedule and Workplan
- a. Ms. Webb will create a press release about the formation of this group.
 - i. Ms. Grove and Mr. Hanson offer to aid in its creation, editing, and distribution.
 - b. Next meeting will be May 1st from noon – 3:30ish.
 - c. All following meetings will occur on the last Wednesday of each month.
 - d. Meetings will occur at Franklin's Promise unless the facility is in use. In that case, the meeting will shift to the Eastpoint Firehouse.
 - e. Ms. Harper notes that ANERR and NOAA have more funding opportunities for the group.
- 9) Adjourn – 3:45 pm