

The Partnership for a Resilient Apalachicola Bay  
Meeting #7  
ANERR  
December 18, 2024

12:42- Entrepreneur Project for Franklin County- Matt Carter and Marina Lickson, FSU (Background- Matt [FSU Jim Moran College of Entrepreneurship] and Marina [Director of the Jim Moran Institute for NW Florida] are working with the ABSI leadership team to promote economic development in Franklin County through enhancement of small business activity.)

- ABSI supported economic development effort for Franklin County
- Both have worked with ABSI staff over the past year to develop plans
- Marina Lickson
  - o Described vision and scope of the Moran Institute
  - o Development of tool kits that are tuned for meeting needs of the particular locale
- Small business executive program
  - o Customized to Franklin County ecosystem
  - o Intensive boot camp
  - o Training modules for in all aspects of running small businesses
  - o Want to be very inclusive in terms of types of businesses
- Franklin County focus
  - o How to get new funding to support business developments
  - o Intergenerational entrepreneurship; how to pass these skills on to later generations
- Matt and Marina would like to identify what are the things that are important to the broader community. Comments from two Partnership members-
  - o Lack of training in secondary schools focusing on skills to run businesses
    - Marina- a module from Moran will help with this issue
  - o How could oyster culture be incorporated in training as has been done in Wakulla County?
    - Moran will focus on how to run small businesses while technical training is not part of their purview
- **Take home message-** Matt and Marina need help in identifying local needs, exiting small businesses that benefit from training/mentoring and budding entrepreneurs in Franklin Co

1:04- Office Amison- Call to order and welcome

- Introductions of Meeting Participants, Agency Representatives and Visitors

Visitors:

- Kim Miller- ANERR/FDEP
- Cliff Babbey
- Doug Brown
- Dan Elliott
- Jon Creamer
- Charlie Wood
- Matt Carter, FSU Jim Moran College of Entrepreneurship
- Marina Lickson, Director of the Jim Moran Institute for NW Florida
- Dr. W. Ross Ellington, Emeritus Professor of Biological Science, FSU

1:07- Betty Webb, Facilitator- Review of Agenda

1:08 – Committee Updates and Presentations

Communications Committee- Shannon Hartsfield (Betty)

- Committee in two meetings created a list of 12 questions to discuss with FWC [note: see later section of minutes]
- Preparing for next meeting with FWC

Education and Outreach Committee- Anita Grove

- Committee needs members
- Need to develop additional mechanisms for messaging including quick cards describing the Partnership

Finance Committee- Ken Jones

- Nothing to report
- Need additional members

Technical Committee- Chad Hanson and Dr. Andy Kane (UF)

- Considerations in Reopening Oyster Fishery Responsibly (presentation)
- Chad Hanson
  - o Met 3 or 4 times; developed tasks and activities (listed in presentation)
- Andy Kane
  - o Potential discussion points
  - o What we know about oysters and oyster fisheries
    - Best way to manage fisheries is by stock assessment
    - Managing people (the harvesters) is also critical
    - AP oyster declines reflect global patterns and trends
    - Past AP restoration efforts have not met expectations
    - Things are different now
    - Multiple stressors in AP have accumulated over the decade
  - o Altered ecological state exists in AP
    - Cumulative stressors have pushed oyster populations to a critical threshold
    - Stressors- over exploitation, shell depletion, salinity extremes, parasites and diseases
  - o Historical perspective
    - Prior to 2010, harvest has been highly variable but on average was 600 bushels/ac (running average)
    - Post 2010 collapse was rapid and recovery has been very limited
    - Some recent data show high densities in limited areas where substrate had previously been deposited
  - o Global data shows that restoration takes decades
    - Kane showed a model of time course of recovery of oyster densities which shows how protracted recovery can be

- Key question- How do we make decisions in terms of which areas to look at to assess recovery of oyster densities? Three possibilities
  - (1) Use historical beds? Very large area which now includes sites that lack suitable oyster habitat
  - (2) Live oyster hard bottom substrate sites as identified using recent side scan sonar data? Intermediate sized area.
  - (3) Sites that have been shown to have >300 bags/ac? (based on S. Brooke ABSI monitored sites; relatively small area)
  - Harvest projection estimator for Brooke monitored sites shows potential for harvest; future recruitment and monitoring will impact numbers
  - Estimator shows that these sites would yield a very limited fishery
- Current AP restrictions are not clear and should be readdressed
  - Kane recommends a minimum threshold
- Identifies points for future discussion

1:53- Sustainable Water management Plan Update- Ken Jones, RCSC/ACFS-

- ACF focuses on a bigger system
- Three dams are being rehabilitated, and gates will be open for navigation
- \$3M in funding to study dredging for navigation is in place. Dredging has obvious collateral impacts on the whole system including AB
- Reevaluation of broader ACF plan is underway the outcome of which will potentially impact water flow into the AB

1:58- Break and Networking

2:00- Discussion on Recommendations for Reopening Oyster Harvesting

- Devin Resko
  - Issues raised by Kane are important
  - FWC is here to facilitate the discussion
  - There will be formal workshops in 2025 to help formulate recommendations to Commission
  - Feb 26-27, 2025 meeting - oyster presentation to Commission (In Tallahassee)
  - May 2025 meeting - proposed rule for AB will be presented to the Commission
  - August 2025 meeting - final rule for AB will be presented to the Commission
  - There will be workshops between February and May; bulk in Franklin County
  - Question- data to be used for reporting oyster status
    - FWC- all data sets will be used
    - Input from the Partnership would be most welcome starting in late January
  - Question- any specific standards for data?
    - Under consideration
  - Question- Use of ABSI data?
    - FWRI data are largely complementary to ABSI results
  - FWC question- how many oystermen will return when AB is opened?
    - General response- Not clear but fisheries are very limited; it cannot support a large number of oystermen

- Comment/question- data are a year old and densities will be different in 2026
    - Comment - we cannot look at the densities as static numbers
    - Comment- Fisheries have to be based on starting at a conservative spot and adjust as numbers evolve
  - Comment- timely monitoring is critical to produce a sustainable harvest; the Partnership can make recommendations on the frequency of monitoring
  - Discussion continues to focus on importance of using the most current (and accurate) data for making management decisions
  - Comment- FWC must find a way to execute timely stock assessment surveys
  - Comment- FWC goes to the exact same area for sampling and is dependent on weather conducive for SCUBA sampling
  - FWC Comment- Discussion of sampling protocols should be done at a later date by bringing in the technical side to discuss the various data collection protocols and how they align with each other
  - Question to FWC- would they consider a random stratified design; answer is yes
- Questions addressed to the Partnership members to agree upon-
    - Should the bay be opened in 2026 provided oyster densities support the harvest? General agreement by members
    - Should there be limitations on harvest? General agreement by members
  - Communications Committee questions-
    - FWC is looking for input from The Partnership as to WHO will be selected as harvesters and HOW they will be selected
    - Multiple comments suggest that historically active harvesters should have high priority
    - Could be based on records of harvest (landings) by individual license harvesters
    - A certain percentage of harvester licenses could be devoted to younger harvesters for generational continuity (may be problematic due to capital input needed to start and risk)
    - Should we make a restoration requirement to potential license holders? Historically, there has been a State sponsored shell replenishment effort in AB. Other states require harvesters to deploy shells to harvest areas scaled to the intensity of their take.
    - FWC will require input from harvesters regarding intensity of effort (for instance, hours spent on water) to produce a particular harvest yield
    - FWC has the capacity to create licenses specific to AP
    - Comment- change from bag limit to count/bag limit (perhaps to 100 count/bag with information on harvester identity and site of harvest)
    - Comment- ongoing shell and substrate replenishment is critical
    - Question- based on current density data, what would be the number of harvesters that could be supported? FWC- looking to The Partnership to provide insight
    - Comment- transferability of license is important and should be considered.
    - Comment- timing of opening should be biologically appropriate taking into consideration issues such as spawning peaks and other factors. FWC should remain flexible regarding setting the open date.

3:44- Organization Business

3:44- Minutes Approval Decision- November 13, 2024 Meeting -

- Shannon moved then Steve seconded; approved.

3:46- Board of Directors Membership and Approval Decision

- One vacancy exists
- Shannon recommends Chris Rose - defer until next meeting

3:46- Committees Membership

- Discussed earlier
- Technical Committee becomes official

3:48- Other Organization Business

- Any issue in moving The Partnership meetings with the third Wednesday
- Moved by Shannon? And seconded by Bruce
- Approved

3:49- Other Business- Comments from Board Members and Attendees

- None

3:49- Adjourned