

## PARTNERSHIP FOR A RESILIENT APALACHICOLA BAY

### MEETING #14

Wednesday, August 27, 2025 - 12 Noon to 3:30 PM EST  
Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve  
108 Island Drive, Eastpoint, Florida

**Facilitator:** Betty Webb

**Members Present:** David Barber (Acting Chair), Shannon Hartsfield, Roger Matthis, Gayle Johnson, Cameron Baxley, Ken Jones, Anita Grove, Steve Rash, Grayson Shephard

**Advisory Members & Visitors:** Joel Trexler, Betsy Mansfield, Jared Fuqua, Kim Branciforte, Doug Brown, David Fowlkes, Sandra Brooke, Kim Miller

**Online:** Andy Kane, Jim Estes, Portia Sapp, Aden Barksdale

**12:47** *Call Meeting to Order and Welcome – David Barber, Acting Chair*  
*Introductions of new faces*  
*Review Agenda - Betty Webb, Facilitator*

#### **12:49** *Organizational Business*

1. Meeting Minutes Approval for July 23, 2025 – Anita Motion, Shannon Second, Approved
2. Confirming Remaining Meeting Schedule – confirmed
  - a. Sept 24<sup>th</sup> (regular), Oct 29<sup>th</sup> (5<sup>th</sup> Wed), Dec 18<sup>th</sup> (Thursday, joint Nov & Dec)
3. Reminder that the next FWC commission meeting is November 5&6 in Clewiston
  - a. Location may change, but it is quite far away from this area, Betty will keep folks updated

#### **12:52** *Committee Updates*

- Technical meeting met with FWC on the request of FWC to discuss the potential rule updates from the Commission meeting, then also met with Communications committee
- **Technical Committee: Sandra, Shannon, Ken, Andy, Jim, Jenna, Chad (combined with communication committee report)**
  - o Met last week to discuss the development of rule changes & restoration
  - o Tasked with looking at the 2.1 million dollars that the legislature had set aside for restoration
    - Need to spend within standard time frames, want to move as quick as possible on that
    - Still have the \$17 million from NFWF, still planned to use based on research and pilot study
  - o Lot of discussion on material, lot of advocacy for crushed concrete
    - Committee
  - o Don't think it should be a low bid process, should consider factors of the bid in terms of timing and consideration of recommendations, prioritize best value
  - o Recommendation of the bid process going forward – include both crushed concrete and limestone in the bid to get the cheapest option
  - o Primary deployment periods for maximal spat set – early spring (Mar-Apr) 2026

- Tight schedule with bid process
  - Alternative in late summer (Aug-Sep) 2026
  - If unable to deploy in 2026, then deploy in spring 2027
- Material – prefer concrete broken clean (2-4 inches)
  - Alternatively use #4 limestone
- Height – 6 inches, no more than 12 inches so that there is minimal boating hazards
- Size of reefs – Area of reefs to be approximately 2-6 acres in size, run north to south, make them elongated (3:1), long side will be perpendicular to shore
  - Number depending on material, height and cost
  - Committee recommends larger, less bars
  - Rec building the reefs parallel to each other with 100 ft gaps between the reefs for culled oysters to fill in the sections
- RFP – include ‘penalty clause’ or verbiage reflecting if not deployed properly based on post-deployment monitoring, contractor will not get paid fully
- Provided recs on locations, prioritizing north to south, and implementation would depend on funds and cost for amount availability
  - Sandra says that FSU can create a map based on the sonar of the shape and exactly where the reefs are
  - Shannon: Also talked about focusing on the most desirable areas, which is Cat Point on the north end
    - Also maybe move the #2 spot to the north, there is a little bit of material, but not a lot of oysters, so moving this would fill in Cat Point a bit more
    - Really focus on the 1 and 2 spots to maximize the area covered with material then start filling in the gaps in between as the funding comes
- 2.1 million – 1.8 for putting material out, 80-100k for a clutching program
  - This could cover between 20-50 acres
  - Lot of work being done to see if they can source crushed concrete
- FWC did say that they wanted to spend the money by next June to show that they are spending the money to also show the need for continual funds
- Comments:
  - Anita: Has there been any definitive results from the concrete study?
    - FWC says they want to see the concrete but they haven’t reached out yet
  - Ken: Is it worth it for safety issues, to mark that channel formally and get the Coast Guard to install markers to keep people in that channel (discussed by Shannon on the map)?
    - Discussion on the utility of marking based on how folks come across the Bay, most folks know to go to the ship channel in order to go east to west
  - Sandra: for points 3 & 4, could join some points together to make 6 acre areas
    - SH: Won’t really know about potential due to the uncertainty of cost, priority would really be sites number 1 & 2

- Shannon: Historically, a lot of the bars were expanded by the oystermen culling oysters off the side and putting them off the side of the bar. Would expand the footprint of the bar.
- Roger: Talked to people that say there are landfills full of concrete that they can't get rid of, so it will likely be cheap, just need someone to crush it.
  - Shannon: One guy is working on figuring out what the price would be, have to remove the rebar and clean the concrete before crushing
  - Sandra: FSU doing last sampling of the concrete this fall, currently it is working very well, very similar to the limestone, it was \$10 per cubic yard cheaper than limestone – doesn't seem like a lot, but at the volume we're looking at, it'll make a difference
- Chad: Is 100 yds between bars or is that too wide?
  - SH: Should be ok
  - SB: Will take the map and clean up, zoom in, and clarify the layout and spacing
- Steve: \$2.1 million, is that what the state said was originally \$20 million?
  - Anita: It was \$30 million, but that's what it got down to at the end of the budget approval
  - Betty: That's why they want to be proactive in spending the money to show the need
- Steve: Is the height based on what is working the best? Proposed 6in.
  - Shannon: It is working between 6 and 12, but if you say 12 in. It tends to be over that and thus too tall
  - Sandra: Also how it was laid created more like rings than filled areas, so it created more of these hazards
  - Ken: Better to think about how high off the bottom, but the amount of space between the top of the reef and the surface at low tide?
    - Sandra: Want to have some relief, the flat stuff tends to get buried, a foot is about as low as you want to go, if this is managed properly you will get oysters growing on top of it
- Ken: Should a recommendation be that there should be bathymetry done before placing material?
  - Conclusion: Will have a discussion about this in the technical committee meeting in the future
- Andy: Last meeting had a discussion on performance based payment to encourage the bid winners meet what is outlined in the contract to the best of the ability – to try and ensure that the material is placed in the right places, at the right height, and in a way that minimizes hazards and such
  - Conclusion: Will have a discussion about this in the technical committee meeting in the future
  - Chad: FWC wants information/ recs by Friday – Chad will compile information, recs, and changes based on discussion
  - Sandra: Mechanism is in place for bidding, there are two different ways, so it's not reinventing the wheel on considering this

- Steve: Over the years there has been significant questions about the planting of material by contractors. Are we looking for somebody to do something that actually isn't achievable, or are there just contractors not filling the bid correctly?
  - Ken: there are two steps, need to thoroughly describe and outline what is needed and expected of the project, and then need someone checking the work that doesn't accept that it is 'good enough' – and when there is push back on implementation have to have the documentation of the outlined expectations so that there isn't legal issues
- Kim & Ken: The height rec is based on previously poorly placed material
  - Shannon: 12 in would be preferable, but can't get too high
  - Ken: Could give a plus or minus on either side of the outlined height (eg. 4 in)
- Chad: Will give context and further detail in the recommendations when sent to FWC – will include statement on the need for bathymetry mapping by FWC on the proposed areas
- Anita: Recommendation – person who is overlooking the work on behalf of FWC needs to also be held to account and trained in the specifics of contract → add a recommendation clause
  - Ken: Very specific details will be needed to outlined for the implementation and monitoring of the project
  - Review process needs to be built in
  - Betty: Technical Committee should have a further discussion on the specifics of the documents and clauses included
- Jim: Support what Ken says – FWC has done this on other projects – had an engineer that would manage the project, and there was financial responsibilities
  - Verbiage needs to be – accountability – both for the state and the contractor
- \*\*Motion to recommend to FWC the mapped 4 sites or prioritization of sites 1 & 2 and the configuration
  - Motion – Shannon moves for prioritization of sites 1 & 2 – amended that if there is not enough money focus on one and then move in on two (Roger second, approved)
- \*\*Motion to recommend to FWC timing, material, height, size of reefs, RFP clauses
  - Motion – Ken motion for recs as discussed, Anita seconded, approved
  - As discussed means height = 12 in.

**2:00 Break**

**2:15 Continued Committee Updates**

- **Education and Outreach Committee: Anita, Cameron, Doug, Office, Morgan, Betsy**
  - Grant for the Partnership has several deliverables that need to be met for communications and publishing of material and information

- Presentation of the proposed changes approved by FWC commission
  - Want to put this information out into the community to provide information on the rules
  - Information was cross-checked with Erika
- Goal for this discussion – approve something to put out online for the information, and then also work on establishing recommendations or considerations for further rule changes
- \*\*Communications and technical committee needs to come up with new input to FWC
- Comments:
  - Ken: Why is there a division of the recreational and the commercial fishing?
    - Shannon: There aren't enough FWCLE to enforce both at the same time maybe
    - \*\*Need clarification on recreational harvest areas and limits
  - Ken: Will the information have a space for responding or asking questions?
    - Doug: We could put it on Facebook
    - Betty: Would also like to have a community meeting to talk with folks about the rule proposal. And FWC staff will be holding workshops between now and the final rule vote
  - Jim: Would suggest that on the communication for the public put that folks can contact Erika if they have questions. And put information that the final rule will be made in November and that people can have input at that meeting.
  - Kim: In the presentation from the meeting – there was a discussion on splitting up the recreational and subtidal harvest areas
    - Number of undersized oysters – 10 unattached, 15 attached
  - Steve: Devin put out a presentation that there would be about 3700 bushels at a previous meeting, is that still the number?
    - Shannon: Numbers might potentially change, trying to convince them to move from bags to numbers as there is a variation in the number of oysters per bag when base it on weight
  - Joel: The discussion of opening in January and Feb – there will be a harvest on the oysters that are out there, then FWC will do a census on what is left over right after the harvest season (April), which will then set the harvest numbers for the fall
    - Shannon: Not necessarily, there are 6 months for the oysters to grow
    - The census will happen right after the harvest, so the number of oysters
  - Ken: Opening in Jan is a purely political decision. Think personally that the Partnership appreciates the political pressure to open, but there needs further protection and thus a fall season would be better
  - Kim: Under first goal – rec including a bullet to clarify recreational harvest opportunities

- For bars deemed harvestable – 100% of the intertidal reefs will go to recreational harvest, and 5% of subtidal harvest will go to recreational
  - Chad: when talked to FWC staff after the vote – anyone who wants to harvest will have to be ready to harvest in Jan, if they don't have landings in Jan-Feb → can't harvest in fall
  - Roger: In 2019, last time worked the bay, they closed the bay in Jan and Feb quite a bit due to the height of the river
  - Ken: Make sure the FWC logo is on the material put out to the public or no logo
  - Grayson: Ottice is concerned about the cap of oysters – something the technical committee should talk
- \*\* Does this presentation represent good information?
  - Intent is that there is so much misinformation in the community – trying to just clarify everything
- \*\* Suggestion – get FWC to produce this information and publish it and then share it on the Partnership platforms?
  - Chad: Of the opinion that the role of the Partnership is to provide information to the community and should be presented to the community
- Anita: Going to get Erika to create the document, and then Partnership will promote the information
  - Steve: FWC very much needs to clarify based on Partnership questions, as the Partnership has been working on this for 5 years and there is confusion here
- \*\* Conclusion – Have Erika update the document and FWC issue it and then it will be shared by the Partnership
- **Finance Committee: Ken**
  - Potentially look into requesting appropriations funds
  - Have a call looking to see what FWC has in their budget request for oysters
    - Need to have a strategy meeting in October for funding
  - Grayson: Madison Swanson or Steamboat Lumps (protected areas close to AB estuary) – Chris Koenig and Felicia Coleman did research on Gag grouper life cycle and how they spend time in the Apalachicola Bay
    - Need to put the correlation of restoration on the health of the bay needs to be on a much larger scale
    - Need to re-frame the narrative
    - Message: Rehabilitating the bay for Gag grouper and hundreds of other species → could bring in a lot more funding
    - Grayson presented to the FWC Commission about this
      - Betty: May need to have conversations with Commissioners one on one to change perspective on restoration from oysters to the health of the whole bay. Door has been opened
  - An oyster reef is worth way more than 400 bushels worth of harvest
  - Stakeholder value is the key phrase

**3:42 Meeting Adjourned**