

PARTNERSHIP FOR A RESILIENT APALACHICOLA BAY

MEETING #22

Thursday, May 27, 2026 - 12 to 3:30 PM EST
Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve
108 Island Drive, Eastpoint, Florida

Facilitator: Betty Webb

Members Present: Ottice Amison, Shannon Hartsfield, Roger Mathis, Ken Jones, Anita Grove, Gayle Johnson, Steve Rash, Chad Hanson

Advisory Members & Visitors: Betsy Mansfield, Alejandra Rios, Kim Miller, Carrie Jones, Joel Trexler, Doug Brown, Faith Causey, Capt. Mitchell Mims, Hannah Bleth, Destiney Bates, Bruce Ritchie

Online: Morgan Eason, Chad Hanson, Portia Sapp, Jenna Harper

1:00 *Call Meeting to Order and Welcome – Ottice Amison*
Review Agenda - Betty Webb, Facilitator

1:03 *Organizational Business*

- Meeting Minute Approval – Motion: Ken, Second: Shannon, Approved

1:05 *Franklin-98 Project History, Current Work and Future Plans – Destiney Bates (FCCM)*

- Overview of the project thus far
- Total budget is \$15 million from three different funding sources
- About to do Phase 3 construction
- FL DOT very interested in the project, over the years they have sent several groups to look at the progress – they are pushing nature-based solutions in recent years

1:15 *FWC Updates – Morgan Eason*

- For the 1st season – Total tags sold: 3,868
 - o Had 2 commercial harvesters did not pick up their tags
 - o Had 5 people pick up their tags, but did not sell any of their tags – their endorsements will be available for lottery in October 2027
- Number of total tags assigned: 4,726
- Unused tags: 858
- Recreational tags reported: 52
 - o Had a significant number of recreational harvesters did not pick up their tags (~100)
- Total bags between both recreational and commercial reported: 4,058
 - o So about 138 tags reported but not sold (used for personal consumption)
- Number of folks that sold at least one bag: ~145-148
- There are a couple of people that did not contact FWC and had no tags reported
 - o A lot of people reached out by April 30 to correct the reports
 - o Some reports were mostly complete but still had small issues – those folks are fine
 - o Folks that have eligibility issues are the folks that did not try and contact FWC and had no bags reported
 - o No hard numbers on the eligibility – has to be approved by Exec Director
 - o Had 66 letters go out, only a few left that didn't respond
- Boat SP is not relevant to the AB Oyster harvest, crew endorsement can allow people on the boat to assist harvesting
- FWC doesn't have plans to have workshops to assist folks to apply for next season, but you can contact folks at FWC office to help talk folks through it

- FWC is not sending out paper renewals for SPLs this year – sent to emails
- FWRI still monitoring right now, hoping to have info by over the summer
- Still no answer on restoration funding – will be between 2 and 20 million
- Restoration project starting in the next month to put material in the water
 - o Project has to be done by Sept 1
 - o Going with concrete
 - o Top layer of material will be 2.5-4 inches
 - o Average height is 16 inches
- Next season: no movement forward on hard decision making until FWRI monitoring is done
 - o Morgan wants to touch base with folks about mandatory landing locations – willing to update the list to make it more useful for the harvesters
 - Were there any locations that were popular that weren't on the list
- The rest of the NFWF funding will be released so FWC is starting to discuss how the money will be used and what for
- Signs marking shallow areas in restoration are posted at most of the public boat ramps
- Long-term restoration plan – still moving forward
 - o FWC needs buy-in from leadership at every step to make sure any project is useful to the state
 - o FWC led restoration plan, reassesses the timeline, including time for stakeholder feedback to dive in to all aspects of plan (general outline to specific metrics)
 - o Right now continuing discussions with Pew and making sure this is meeting all groups' expectations – likely will take longer than expected
 - o Going to touch base with DEP, ANERR staff, other groups – anyone who might use the plan for the bay
 - o Technical committee had a mini symposium at FSUCML for ongoing research that would be relevant to restoration plans
 - In convos with FWC, shifted from a Partnership-led project to a more FWC-led project with a collaborative approach
 - End of the day would be having an FWC product that would have approval from Exec folks at FWC
 - o Goal is the development of a restoration plan so that there is an action plan for when funding becomes available

1:50 Committee Updates

- Finance: No changes
- Education & Outreach Committee: Completed a 1-pager to take to the ACF meeting to discuss how the drought is affecting Apalachicola Bay – unfortunately document was not used. Presentation by Ottice at the meeting went very well and was a good representation of the area and the needs of the Bay.
- Communications: Will be meeting in the next couple of weeks to discuss information that has been talked about today
- Technical Committee: No other updates besides the discussion previously with

Gag Grouper: September 1-30

Red Snapper: June 1 - October – Longest season it has been in a very long time (for charter fishers)