

Partnership for a Resilient Apalachicola Bay
Meeting #23
Wednesday, June 24, 2026
Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve
108 Island Drive, Eastpoint, Florida

Facilitator: Betty Webb

Members Present: Ottice Amison, David Barber, Cameron Baxley, Shannon Hartsfield, Roger Mathis, Bruce Millender, Gayle Johnson, Ken Jones, Steve Rash, Chad Hanson (Online)

Advisory Members and Visitors: Alejandra Rios, Portia Sapp, Owen Golden, James Banks, Huey Page, Holden Foley, Adam Alfasso

Online: Jon Creamer, Bruce Ritchie, Chad Handson, Sandra Brooke

1:00 *Call Meeting to Order and Welcome – Ottice Amison*

Introductions – New Meeting Participants, Agency Representatives, and Visitors

- Adam Alfasso, PhD student from FSU CML presenting research
- Hughey Page, Oysterman
- Owen Golden, Oysterman
- Holden Foley, FloridaCorps

Review Agenda – Betty Webb

1:00 *Organizational Business*

Meeting Minute Approval – Motion: Shannon, Second: Steve, Approved

1:10 *Seasonal variations in larval connectivity of Crassostrea virginica in Apalachicola Bay*
Adam Alfasso, Florida State University

- Overview of oyster life cycle
- Research focuses on larval dispersal and distribution
- Environment influences larval growth and survival, and the goal is to create a bio-physical model of larval growth and mortality to understand the environmental impact.
- Results are used to calculate larval survival and dispersal patterns.
- Climate scenarios used is normal conditions in 2019, Drought in 2012, and Flood in 1998.
- Modeled seasonal survival (Spring versus Fall) and extreme climate survival (flood versus drought)
- Results:
 - Connectivity Spring versus Fall – larva move northeast in spring and larva move west in fall

- Connectivity Spring Normal versus Drought – overall larva loss, but east reefs improve slightly
- Connectivity Matrices Normal versus Flood – slight shift west and slight connection from east
- Connectivity Fall Normal versus Drought – overall shift to middle and west reefs
- Connectivity Fall Normal versus Flood – overall loss of larva, more loss in the east, strong shift to west reefs
- Implications are that oysters settle near home in Spring and increased western reefs in Fall. Floods impact Fall survival and connectivity, and drought impacts Fall survival and connectivity.

1:36 Committee Updates

- Communication Committee: Shannon is waiting to see the FWC management plan
- Education and Outreach Committee: Betty Webb gave update on behalf of Anita. January- February 2026 Harvest Season Overview is released. Working on a release on the restoration within the bay.
- Finance Committee: Ken Jones has not spent any money. More than \$4k and less than the starting \$5k. Betty Webb mentioned the application to renew funding for this
- Technical Committee: Chad Hanson has not had a meeting and is waiting to hear restoration plan. Has a meeting planned with the governor to talk about funding allocated to Apalachicola Bay restoration. Betty Webb asked about the FWC Management Plan versus Restoration Plan, and Chad clarified that they are the same.

1:42 *Betty Webb is revising the committee roles* – will be calling a meeting with the committee chairs to get input into the roles. Betty is also working on a flow chart to understand committee roles – reduce overlap and improve organizational operation.

1:45 *Office asked about any announcements or comments.* Ken Jones mentioned that the ACE is meeting with the 6 counties about land disposal and dredge material from 12 pm to 5 pm. Public meeting with ACE will be held from 6 pm to 8 pm. at the Jim Woodruff Dam. It will be identical to the one in Bristol.

1:53 Break

2:09 FWC Updates – Morgan Eason

- Restoration Projects Status – two barges out and deploying 2-300 cubic yards per trip, 60 days of work for 26000 cubic yards total. 6.2 acres each for a total of 12 acres. 5 -8 inches of concrete for base layer and 2.5 to 4 inch rock on top layer. 2 sites aimed to have 2-3 feet water depth above reefs. Expected to be done by September 1st with potential for extension. Restoration will not occur during the weekend. Coastline Clearing and Development has been conducting the restoration work.

- 2026 Harvest Season Opening – still waiting for numbers from FWRI. Monitoring has been completed but the analysis is still being done. 153 harvesters but can increase based on the number of successful appeals. There will be a lottery in October 2027 but not October 2026. Lottery will be open in May (exact date is to be determined). There has not been more discussion in changing the 60 lb bag to the 100 count bag.
- 2026 Bay Restoration Funding Request Status – has not been signed. No change from last month. Could potentially be signed by the end of the week. Currently at 10 million over 5 years for Apalachicola Bay – waiting for governor to sign. FWC also has 15 million in NFWF funding – could potentially do something innovative in Gulf County and Indian Lagoon.
- Other Discussion Items – FWC is monitoring East Hole and the mass mortality. Shannon states that water quality has been consistent. Sandra Brooke put 3 hatchery experiments (cages on the seafloor of juvenile oysters) out last Fall – East Hole this Spring in April has a 33% mortality compared to other sites that have 2% mortality. Data demonstrates that mortality is increasing linearly and has not plateaued. There is concern because mortality is impacting juvenile oysters. Steve and Shannon mentioned the drainpipe near East Hole as a potential cause of mortality. Betty mentioned having FWRI to test the area. Shannon noted mortality in October and has increased from there.

2:57 Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting Wednesday, July 22nd, 2026