

PARTNERSHIP FOR A RESILIENT APALACHICOLA BAY

MONTHLY MEETING #25

Wednesday, August 26, 2026 – 12 Noon to 3:30 PM EST

Apalachicola National Estuarine Research
Reserve 108 Island Drive, Eastpoint, Florida

Facilitator: Betty Webb

Members Present: Ottice Amison, Rickey Banks, Dave Barber, Cameron Baxley, Holden Foley, Anita Grove, Shannon Hartsfield, Roger Mathis, Huey Page

Advisory Members & Visitors: Joel Trexler, Capt. Mitchell Mimms, Bruce Ritchie, Matt Davis, Doug Brown, Carrie Jones, Betsy Mansfield, Alejandra Rios, Grace Lawhorn, Morgan Eason

Online: Jenna Harper, Portia Sapp, Andy Kane, Kim Miller, Cameron Jaggard, Katie Konchar, Matt Chasse, Hannah Bleth

1:00 - Call Monthly Meeting to Order - Ottice Amison, President

1:05 - Meeting Welcome

Introductions - New Meeting Participants and Visitors

- *Review Agenda: Betty Webb, Facilitator*

1:10 - Organizational Business:

- 1. Meeting Notes Approval Decision - July 22, 2026 Meeting*
 - Rickey motion, Roger second – Meeting Notes Approved
- 2. Review DRAFT Organization Chart and Committee Task Outlines*
 - Committee chairs will share with committee members for approval
 - Changed communications to local fisheries committee*
 - Purpose: to engage and initiate conversations with FWC, FWRI, and Partnership Technical Support Committee
 - Changed technical to technical support committee*
 - Purpose: to provide technical support to the Partnership and all other committees
 - Proposed: Change Education and Outreach to Communications and Outreach Committee*
 - Will vote next month on organization chart
 - Review chairperson and committee members for each committee
- 3. Other Organizational Business*

1:15 - Cameron Baxley, Apalachicola Riverkeeper

Presentation will focus on work accomplished, continuing efforts, and how Apalachicola Riverkeeper work benefits the bay

- Apalachicola River – Largest forested floodplain in FL, FL's largest river in volume, highest species diversity of any river system in N. America
- This floodplain is what feeds the bay
- Compared to rest of state, Apalachicola River supplies a lot of organic matter (silt, clay, etc.)
- Huge nutrient input and chlorophyll plumes that run down the peninsula and over gag grouper spawning sites
- Stagnant conditions develop when sloughs are isolated and disconnected from river system
 - Number of trees in swamps has declined dramatically from this disconnection and lack of water
- 300 miles of sloughs flank the Apalachicola mainstem
- Slough restoration wrapped at the end of June to reconnect sloughs to mainstem
- Healthy floodplain helps everything else downstream thrive
- "Is there a budget for continued monitoring?"
 - No NFWF maintenance budget for slough restoration or monitoring
- There's already new logs blocking East River
- Shannon: "If I got up and move the trees that have fallen will I get in trouble?"
 - Capt. Mimms – We don't get anyone in trouble for clearing things for navigable purposes

1:50 - 20 Minute Break and Networking

2:15 - Morgan Eason, FWC - UPDATES:

1. October 2026 Harvest Season

- Handing out permits and tags in person again this year. Dates are not yet confirmed but will be mid to late Sept.
 - Team will likely be in person for 4 days to answer any questions
- Shannon - "Will it be more restrictive than last year?"
 - Morgan: There will be another date with FWC to go through reporting app updates, ask questions, go through enforcement process, etc.
- Shannon - "What about issue with undersized tickets getting thrown out?"

- Capt. Mimms: Haven't been issues with this, if anyone got theirs thrown out it had to do with other cases and legal issues going on
- Andy - "Will there be a report on AB opening impact to fishery"
 - Matt: Nothing specific is set to come out.
- Joel - "Is there data on the impact of recent drought on the oysters?"
 - Matt: Doesn't seem to be much change from 2025 for number of legal-size oysters
 - Number of predators also seems to remain largely similar to last year
- Roger - "Why can't we change the parameters for setting number of bags?"
 - It's not that easy to change. FWC uses standard sampling, so they're able to compare statewide, across species. We can't just change sampling methods to give us the results we want.
 - There will be a chance next season to reassess this and if the number of oysters seems to be going up, bag number may increase as well
- Complaints about tag system and difficulty with wholesale dealers managing them as they come in
 - When two people would help fish on one tag, they'd ask to get paid on separate checks but for the same tag, and it confused things
- Rickey – We're basing data off assuming everyone is following the rules and harvesting the number of bags they're supposed to, but we know for a fact that a lot of people are harvesting way more than they reported
 - FWC knows this and takes this into account. It isn't perfect, but they account for discrepancies

2. *Current Bay Restoration Project*

- The current project is almost complete! Done in next ~2 weeks (3,000 cubic yards left to put out)

3. *Funding – Plans? (State and NFWF)*

- \$14.5 mill. from NFWF and \$10 mill. from legislature to use over the course of several years. Looking for feedback and recommendations from Partnership
- Plan for a summer 2027 project. Project design will be exactly the same as current project, just to the East of Cat Point. Exact material size will be up to contractor after bid
 - Not out to bid yet, still going back and forth internally

4. Other discussion items

- What are the dates for the next season?
 - Oct. 1 – Feb. 28
- Beatriz is working on updating the map of the bay for us. She should have all the shapefiles she needs now, just waiting on updated version.

3:17 - Committee Updates

- 1) *Agency Communication Committee - Chair Shannon Hartsfield*
- 2) *Education and Outreach Committee - Chair Anita Grove*
 - a) Money approved for logo, someone is working on it
 - b) Experimenting with tag lines that will be circulating
 - c) Talk in Sept. With Eastpoint Civic Association
 - d) Seafood Festival in Nov.
- 3) *Finance Committee - Chair Ken Jones (Friends of the Partnership)*
 - a) \$3,522 in account
- 4) *Technical Committee - Chair Chad Hanson*
 - a) No updates

3:20 - Other Business / Announcements / Comments from Board Members & Attendees

3:25 – Meeting Adjourned