



NORTH CAROLINA
Environmental Quality

ROY COOPER
Governor

ELIZABETH S. BISER
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

TO: Coastal Resources Commission
Environmental Management Commission
Marine Fisheries Commission
Coastal Habitat Protection Plan Steering Committee

FROM: Jimmy Johnson
Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership
Anne Deaton
Division of Marine Fisheries

DATE: January 30, 2023

SUBJECT: Coastal Habitat Protection Plan Steering Committee Meeting

The Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP) Steering Committee met in person in New Bern and via webinar at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, December 6, 2022. The following attended in person:

Commissioners: Larry Baldwin, David Anderson, Bob Emory, Pat Harris (Not a committee member)
DMF Staff: Anne Deaton, Casey Knight, Jacob Boyd, Jimmy Harrison, Charlie Deaton
APNEP Staff: Jimmy Johnson
DCM Staff: Daniel Govoni, Mackenzie Todd, Rebecca Ellin
NCCF: Eliza Wilczek

The following attended virtually:

Commissioners: Yvonne Bailey, Doug Rader, Donald Huggins
DWR Staff: Karen Higgins, Tammy Hill, Michelle Raquet, David May, Holley Snider
DEMLR Staff: Samir Dumpor
NCDA&CS: Eric Pare (SWCD)
APNEP Staff: Bill Crowell, Tim Ellis
DMF Staff: Kelly Brannigan, Kim Harding, Brandi Salmon, Dan Zapf, Chris Stewart
Public: Reid Corbett (ECU-CSI), Tom Caggiano (TNC), Kathy Herring (NCDOT)



North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality

217 West Jones Street | 1601 Mail Service Center | Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1601

919.707.8600

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Jimmy Johnson (APNEP) welcomed everyone to the CHPP Steering Committee (CSC) Meeting. He noted that Donald Huggins and Dr. Doug Rader were new members of the CSC representing the MFC. Johnson asked that everyone introduce themselves, those attending in person and those attending virtually. Johnson noted that the CSC no longer has a chairman since Dr. Martin Posey was not reappointed to the MFC. A chair will be selected either in between meetings or at the next meeting of the CSC. The Steering Committee elects its own chairperson.

APPROVE MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 25, 2021 MEETING

Motion by Larry Baldwin to approve the minutes. Seconded by David Anderson. Motion carried unanimously.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Johnson reviewed the roles and responsibilities for the members of the CSC and for the CHPP Team members. A handout was distributed with the responsibilities of the members.

CHPP BACKGROUND

Johnson gave a PowerPoint presentation on the history and purpose of the Coastal Habitat Protection Plan. He noted that the CHPP was part of the Fisheries Reform Act of 1997. The first plan was enacted in late 2004 when all three regulatory commissions voted to adopt the plan. Since 2004 the CHPP was rewritten in 2010 and 2016 and amended in 2022. The legislative goal of the CHPP is: *The long-term enhancement of coastal fisheries associated with coastal habitats.* The CHPP identifies six critical habitats which fish utilize at different stages of their life cycle, and which are critical to protect. The 2022 Amendment focuses on five key issues to better concentrate efforts and hopefully make more significant strides in improving water quality and the habitats mentioned.

CHPP IMPLEMENTATION

Anne Deaton (DMF) reviewed implementation progress of the 2021 CHPP Recommended Actions for the five priority issues.

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Protection and Restoration

This priority issue has 13 recommended actions. Eight are targeted for 2022. A key action is establishing water quality standards for light penetration. DWR staff is working with a Science Advisory Committee to do this through a Nutrient Criteria Development Plan. Dr. Nathan Hall at UNC's IMS has been collecting water quality data to enhance a bio-optical model needed to determine nutrient and sediment thresholds. Three recommended actions are to begin in 2023 and two are already underway. Larry Baldwin suggested that it may be of benefit to utilize recreational fishing routes to track seagrass expansion and contraction. Bill Crowell, APNEP Director, noted that DWR would be requesting funding for additional ambient monitoring along with additional funding to continue Dr. Hall's work.

Wetland Protection and Enhancement with Nature-based Solutions

This priority issue has 17 recommended actions of which five are due to begin in 2022. Four of the five are underway. The one that is not underway is the recommended action for prohibiting



oyster harvest on living shorelines. DMF and DCM staff determined there is no statutory authority to deal with this issue and it may not be as significant of an issue as first thought. DEQ will be seeking funding to map coastal wetlands in 2023. A workgroup is developing a Greenhouse Gas Inventory for coastal wetlands and SAV, which are currently not included in NC's Greenhouse Gas Inventory. A final report is due in a few months. Rebecca Ellin (NERRS) noted that an America the Beautiful Grant was awarded to DCM to study marsh migration corridors on some NERRS sites.

Environmental Rule Compliance

This issue has five recommended actions, two of which are to begin in 2022. One action was a website that would post the names of all offenders. Samir Dumpor (DEMLR) noted that there may be some legal issues with trying to shame the culprits. DEACS already has a site for compliance information. Dumpor also noted that transfers of stormwater permits are a large challenge for stormwater management education and compliance. There will be some free stormwater workshops coming up in 2023.

Reducing Inflow and Infiltration associated with Wastewater Infrastructure

Deaton noted that there are seven recommended actions for this issue, and none are to begin in 2022. David May (DWR) gave a brief update on the recommended actions about smaller wastewater systems, requiring annual cleaning and having an "Operators in Responsible Charge" available. This may be a good place to utilize some stimulus funding or BIL money.

Habitat Mapping and Monitoring

This key issue has five recommended actions and 2 are slated to start in 2022 and the other three in 2023. One item of note is the recommendation to update standardized procedures for algal bloom investigations, as this may present an opportunity to cross-train other divisions and therefore increase interagency cooperation.

Overarching recommendation 9.1 calls for several things. The one major action is the formation of a Public Private Partnership. That is well underway, and the formation of the PPP will initiate several other actions called for in 9.1.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

UPDATE ON PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP AND THE WATER QUALITY SUMMIT

Eliza Wilczek, with the NC Coastal Federation, was invited to give the committee a report on the recent Water Quality Summit held in New Bern and how that would be used as a kick-off of the Public Private Partnership. She reported that 111 people participated in the Summit representing 13 stakeholder categories. After a morning of presentations from stakeholders and shareholders, along with DEQ leadership, the gathering broke up into four subgroups – Living Shorelines and Salt Marsh Conservation, Working Lands and Waters, and two subgroups centered around Resiliency Planning. After the meeting, it was decided to merge groups one and three into one Conservation and Resilience Planning. The Working Lands and Waters subgroup was to meet before the Christmas break and begin working on a resolution seeking more funding for the Agriculture Cost Share Program that funds BMPs to improve water quality.



ISSUES FROM COMMISSIONERS

Doug Rader (MFC) would like to look at river flows and the effects on fisheries, primarily striped bass. He noted that we would need the WRC at the table for this discussion. Rader noted that the SAFMC jurisdiction went further inland than the CHPP has historically. He noted that the CHPP is where everything comes together regarding this issue.

Rader also asked that we begin looking at climate change-related weather patterns and planning further into the future to increase coastal resiliency. He asked about the effects that weather has on fish habitat suitability.

Bill Crowell noted that the CSC would benefit on hearing from the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative (SASMI).

Larry Baldwin (CRC) had several issues he would like to see discussed and addressed in future meetings. He would like to see improvements in the hydrology of the coast. Baldwin noted that mitigation credits for coastal improvements were very difficult to obtain. One example of hydrologic restoration was filling mosquito ditches since they increase flooding and reduce water quality. He suggested investigating incentives for restoration, such as allowing mitigation credits for that work and would like to see more public/private mitigation banks. A second example from Baldwin was to restore flow in waterbodies that have been impacted by road crossings and causeways. In coastal counties some of the older roads performed as dikes, which is can be observed by the different vegetation on each side of the roadway. He emphasized that this has a tremendous effect on water quality. He would like to see some work done on the sizing of culverts and make sure they are correctly sized to help with the movement and flow of coastal waters.

Three other issues Baldwin would like to see discussed in the future were marine debris and salvage, basic sanitary facilities at public access points, and minimum building standards for docks and piers.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 pm

/jaj

