



NORTH CAROLINA
Environmental Quality

ROY COOPER
Governor

DIONNE DELLI-GATTI
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: April 28, 2021

SUBJECT: Coastal Habitat Protection Plan Steering Committee Meeting

The Coastal Habitat Protection Plan Steering Committee met via webinar at 1:00 p.m. Thursday, April 20, 2021. The following attended:

Commissioners: Martin Posey, Pete Kornegay, Larry Baldwin, David Anderson, Yvonne Bailey, Bob Emory
DMF Staff: Anne Deaton, Casey Knight, Alan Bianchi, Kacee Zinn, Jacob Boyd, Kim Harding, Nolen Vinay, Dan Zapf, Chris Kelly, Jimmy Harrison, Jason Rock
APNEP Staff: Bill Crowell, Jimmy Johnson, Trish Murphey, Stacey Feken
DCM Staff: Mike Lopazanski, Daniel Govoni, Curt Weychert
DWR Staff: Danny Smith, Jim Hawhee, Karen Higgins, Amanda Mueller, Chris Pullinger
DEMLR Staff: Brian Wrenn, Samir Dumpor
NCDA&CS: Eric Pare (S&W) Tom Gerow (NCFS)
Public: Kathy Herring (RK&K), Paul Cough (APNEP Leadership Council), Kelly Garvy (The Pew Charitable Trust) Leda Cunningham (The Pew Charitable Trust), Todd Miller (NCCF), Michael Flynn (NCCF), Melissa Whaling (SELC), Geoff Gisler (SELC), Melissa Whaling (SELC), Brooks Rainey Person (SELC), Anne Coan (NC Farm Bureau Federation), Chris Baillie (ECU), Emory Wellman (ECU), Stacy Trackenberg (ECU), Katie Warnell (Duke), Krista Early (Environment NC), Cat Bowler (Audubon NC), Corry Platt (Coldwater Consulting)



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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Martin Posey (MFC) welcomed everyone on the webinar and asked them to sign in through the chat including their affiliation and what you would like to do on Earth Day, in order to get a list of attendees.

APPROVE MINUTES FROM JANUARY 21, 2021 MEETING

Motion by Larry Baldwin to approve the minutes. Seconded by Yvonne Bailey. Motion carries unanimously.

REVIEW TIMELINE

Jimmy Johnson (APNEP) reviewed the timeline of the 2021 Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP) amendment. CHPP staff are making progress and are running on time. The committee will need to meet between this meeting and the late summer commission meetings in order to review all recommendations. The committee determined that the last week in July/first week in August would be best. Johnson will send an email out to the committee members to determine the next meeting date

REVIEW OF ISSUE PAPERS IN PROGRESS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Wetland Protection and Restoration with Focus on Nature-Based Methods

Anne Deaton (DMF) reviewed the draft issue paper and referenced a set of revised recommendations for this paper. She commented that the development of this issue paper was a group effort and thanked Chris Baillie (ECU) for his help and all the multiple DEQ staff that contributed to this paper. She reviewed the various kinds of wetlands included in the CHPP region and the estimated acres based on NOAA Coastal Change Assessment Program data analysis. Deaton discussed the important ecosystem services that wetlands serve for fisheries species and coastal communities. She also covered wetland trends in both losses and gains, though overall there has been a net loss through conversions, development, erosion, and agriculture. Deaton then discussed current and future threats to wetlands from coastal development and climate change impacting marshes with a description of coastal squeeze. Deaton then reviewed the revised list of recommended actions for mapping and monitoring, conservation, restoration, living shorelines and research needs.

Larry Baldwin (CRC) stated that he was concerned about creating another wetland mapping and monitoring program. DCM has mapping, EMC has mapping and there are so many other programs that it creates confusion. He said that consistency is important. Deaton noted that DCM is no longer mapping wetlands and that data is old.

Chairman Posey (MFC) asked for clarification on standardization. Deaton noted that at the wetland workshop it was recognized that it is difficult to standardize due to different objectives of studies. However, some minimum standard for parameters to collect would be beneficial.



Tom Gerow (NCFS-CHPP Team Member) asked through the chat box if you could stimulate funding by private ecosystem services markets to finance these types of activities that are recommended. He also stated that he saw a research need for forested palustrine wetlands since there is concern about their loss and function and will provide some recommendation language. He further suggested that we might want to cross reference the work the USACE is doing on coastal storm risk management strategies.

Baldwin commented that a lot of these recommendations require a lot of funding and that mitigation banks are a huge success. You do see problems on the coast because credits are too expensive. You could create a carrot, for instance, put money out there for conservation buy-backs. He would love to see the public go this way with voluntary credits.

Yvonne Bailey (EMC) asked for some clarification on the restoration recommendation #3 and why by 2023. She stated that was only two years away and wondered if this was achievable. Deaton explained that this recommendation is to establish and implement policies and not rules, to promote and incentivize. This could be done possibly through the NC Resilient Coastal Communities Program in DCM. They are working with local government to plan for increased resilience. It is possible that this could be incorporated in that effort.

Chairman Posey asked about the plastics research objective. Deaton explained that plastics and debris gets trapped in wetlands and accumulates. Chairman Posey asked why other contaminants were not included which Deaton explained that we really need more information on plastics and how they impact wetlands.

Bailey explained that she sees areas that were flooded and debris remains in the creeks and stuck in trees and in mud. Chairman Posey agreed that the research need should stay in.

Motion by Pete Kornegay to support in principle (with the understanding that there will be some revision) the recommended actions of the Wetland Issue Paper. Seconded by Yvonne Bailey. Motion carries unanimously.

Habitat Monitoring to Assess Status and Regulatory Effectiveness

Casey Knight (DMF) presented a summary of the Habitat Monitoring to Assess Status, Trends, and Regulatory Effectiveness issue paper including a brief overview of the status of the six coastal habitats (Water Column, Shell Bottom, Submerged Aquatic Vegetation, Hard Bottom and Soft Bottom). She then reviewed the recommendations by each habitat.

Chairman Posey asked about the current microbenthic monitoring program and what was the spatial extent. Do they only focus on the headwaters and in freshwater streams? He thought that there used to be an estuarine program in the past. Knight said that there was. Kathy Herring (public) stated that when she was with DWR there was an estuarine microbenthic program but the program lost funding.

Baldwin commented on the salinity maps included in the draft and that they would be important for future restoration and management decisions. Knight agreed that maps like



the salinity maps which were interpolated from 30 years of data, as well as projected conditions, will be very useful moving forward. With no other questions, Chairman Posey asked for a motion to approve the recommendations acknowledging that the wording may be modified, but not the intent. The motion was approved without dissent.

Motion by David Anderson to support in principle (with the understanding that there will be some revision) the recommended actions of the Mapping and Monitoring Issue Paper. Seconded by Pete Kornegay. Motion carries unanimously.

UPDATE ON NCCF AND PEW OUTREACH EFFORTS AND RESEARCH EFFORTS

Chairman Posey updated the committee on the water quality workgroup that the Pew Charitable Trusts and NC Coastal Federation (NCCF) requested. This workgroup will convene a group of stakeholders and meet over the next several months to develop recommendations and comments that will be submitted to the steering committee and DEQ as part of the public comment process for the CHPP. The focus of this group will be to identify actionable strategies to address cross-cutting concerns about water quality as related to nutrient enrichment and sedimentation. Pew and the NCCF would like to have two CHPP Steering Committee members as direct observers of the stakeholder discussions.

Baldwin volunteered and suggested Bob Emory as well. It was suggested that someone from EMC would be good since it is related to water quality. Baldwin added this group will discuss where major watershed alterations have occurred and what can we do. He stated that it is a diverse group of stakeholders.

Todd Miller (NCCF) added he has received interest from some potential stakeholders including Farm Bureau, mitigation banks, etc.

Johnson added that DEQ is supportive but after discussing with DEQ leadership and council, they decided it would be best to go in this direction.

REPORT BACK FROM COMMISSION MEETINGS

Chairman Posey stated that the update was well received by the MFC as did Baldwin for CRC. EMC members provided no input.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

ISSUES FROM COMMISSIONERS

Baldwin commented that the lack of sanitary conditions at boat ramps bother him. He noted that there should be bathrooms and that when trash is not picked up, it leads to marine debris.

Deaton explained that most are Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) boat ramps and they would be responsible. Pete Kornegay (MFC) stated that WRC is aware of the issue and at heavily used sites at certain times of year, they place some port-o-potties at those heavily used ramps. Baldwin requested to discuss how best to address the problem.



ADJOURN

Motion by Larry Baldwin to adjourn. Seconded by Pete Kornegay. Motion carries unanimously.

/plm

DRAFT

