



COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

Escambia County Central Office Complex
3363 West Park Place
Pensacola, FL 32505

MARINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APPROVED
RESUME OF MEETING MINUTES
February 10, 2014, 5:30 p.m.

Members Present:

| | | |
|------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Earle Rader | | District 1/Commissioner Wilson Robertson |
| Sidney Clopton | | District 2/Commissioner Gene Valentino |
| Merrick Van Landingham | Chair | District 2/Commissioner Gene Valentino |
| Eilene Beard | | District 3/Commissioner Lumon May |
| Lynn Laird | | District 3/Commissioner Lumon May |
| Dave Mucci | | District 4/Commissioner Grover Robinson, IV |
| Walt Woodfin | Secretary | District 5/Commissioner Steven Barry |
| Gabe Jackson | Vice Chair | District 5/Commissioner Steven Barry |

Staff Present

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| Robert Turpin | CED/ Marine Resources Division Manager |
| Rick O'Connor | Sea Grant Agent for Escambia County |
| Michael Rhodes | Escambia County Parks and Recreation |
| Gracie Barnes | Marine Resources |

Absent Excused

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| David Dodson | District 4/Commissioner Robinson IV |
| Ed Fish | County Interim Administrator |

Absent Unexcused

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| Cathy Watson | District 1/Commissioner Wilson Robertson |
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Visitors Present

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| Mathew Johnson | National Park Services |
| Keith Johnson | Wetland Sciences, Inc. |
| Andrew Blewer | Resident |
| Anna Clark | Coast Watch |
| Brian Clark | Coast Watch |
| Tom Bizzell | Holiday Harbor Marina |
| John Ward | Sea Tow |
| Scott Hastings | |

1. **Call to Order:** Meeting called to order at 5:35 pm by Merrick Van Landingham
2. **Attendance:** Quorum Present
3. **Minutes Approval:** Dave Mucci made the motion to approve the minutes. Earl Rader seconded the motion. All voted in favor with no one opposed.
4. **Casino Artificial Reef Site Permit:** Permit issuance expected by end of Feb 2014
5. **Bay Snorkeling Reef “Historic Shipwreck Replica”:** MRD met with UWF Archaeology faculty and Florida Public Archaeology (FPAN) network. UWF has used the site, and UWF & FPAN will assist MRD in developing the conceptual design of the site to be consistent with a shipwreck of the period 1650-1750A.D.
6. **Perdido Gulf Snorkeling Reef Construction:** Contractor will select deployment date when weather/sea conditions permit.
7. **Escambia County Southeast Artificial Reef Site:** Awaiting Army Corps permit.
8. **Mahogany Mill Public Boat Ramp Construction:** Construction proceeding according to plan, with completion expected May 2014.
 - Lynn Laird made a site visit and observed that the ramp and docks were very high in relation to the water level, which could cause limit usefulness of the docks.
 - Robert Turpin explained that the winter tide level is significantly lower than normal levels, which is the cause for the unusual appearance. The high elevation of the lot adds to this unusual appearance. The summer tides will be higher and the ramp and docks should be at an appropriate level.
 - Lynn Laird questioned who was funding the upgrades to the road in to the new ramp.
 - Robert Turpin stated that the Marine Resources Division was funding the upgrades, as the road was private. Escambia County took over the road and it had to be brought up to current standards.
9. **Perdido River Public Boat Ramp Design/Engineering/Permitting:** Storm water uncertainties remain. Consultants have submitted permit applications and expected to provide update of Army Corps feedback at March 2014 MAC meeting.
10. **Hurst Hammock Paddlecraft Access Launch Design & Permitting:** Project funding to be determined.
11. **10836 Lillian Highway:** Florida Boating Improvement Program grant period open. MRD will submit for design/engineering/permitting.
 - Andrew Blewer stated that he has identified a potential funding source for development of the Lillian Highway ramp of \$8.8 million. He also stated that the BOCC would be allocating these funds at their January 13th meeting. He has

discussed this issue with four of the five commissioners and encouraged everyone else to also discuss the funding source with the commissioners.

12. Natural Resources Damage Assessment - Oil spill Restoration & Recovery: Public meeting at civic center for Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. Public comment period open until 16 Feb 2014.

- Merrick Van Landingham spoke concerning the lack of transparency in the NRDA draft. Escambia County asked for \$10 million, \$2 million for reef modules and \$8 million for large vessel reefing. \$12 million is to be allocated to five counties. It is unknown how the \$12 million will be dispersed. It could be dispersed evenly or weighted to each county by the percentage of impact from the spill.
- Robert Turpin stated that as FWC has a reef program, the DEP saw it as a good fit to route reef monies through the FWC. The \$8 million for large vessel reefing was eliminated. Robert would like to negotiate for alternate materials on the approved list of reefing materials in place of large vessels.
- Merrick Van Landingham expressed a desire for the impacted parties to be included in the discussions and may make a public records request to obtain information if need be.
- Robert Turpin stated that the reef project would be a regional project across the five impacted counties. It was also noted that Bay County requested monies for large vessel reefing, which was also eliminated. Robert would like to see the projects organized county by county. This would prevent Escambia County projects from being delayed due to having to wait on other counties, in the planning and permitting processes.
- Walt Woodfin made a motion approve a resolution as noted below. Earl Rader seconded the motion. All voted in favor, with no one opposed.

“Whereas the coordination of a combined five county reef program, as defined in the NRDA draft, will be difficult, the Escambia County Marine Committee supports the Escambia County Marine Resources Division requesting that each of the five counties have the option to coordinate their own reef program and funding thereof.”

13. Bayou Chico Navigation Hazard: No response from Coast Guard.

14. Escambia River derelict vessels and associated debris: Contractor indicated intent to begin work in Feb 2014.

15. Waterways Access Management: MRD and Parks Director are coordinating budgetary impacts of increased ramp capitalization and improvements (e.g., webcams) diminishing existing funding (vessel registration fees) and Pensacola Fishing Bridge collections. Enforcement is critical component. MAC discussion & public input:

- Earle Rader provided statement: “Since I am interested in being the Bridge Monitor on the fishing bridge, then I recuse myself from the discussions and voting on the subject so I can apply for the position.”

- Bryan Clark supports the idea to put up dummy cameras on pay stations with signage, warning of video surveillance, to encourage honesty. If ineffective, a live camera, possibly with a monitor visible at the pay station, could be installed.
- Andrew Blewer stated that the Lillian Alabama boat ramp supposedly has a lifetime maintenance contract via NRDA/BP. He would like to see Escambia County get the same agreement on the Escambia County NRDA ramps.
- Robert Turpin stated that he believes Escambia County has an agreement of five years maintenance via NRDA/BP
- Michel Rhodes stated that the Pensacola Bay Fishing Bridge usage has not declined, but the fee collection has. He stated that the dummy cameras had no effect in encouraging fee payment. The Parks Department is investigating the possible use of a mechanical arm and receipt system for fee collection.
- Tom Bizzell stated that Harbor Bay Marina has also noticed a reduction of approximately 25% in revenue for 2013 vs. 2012, mostly due to weather. He asked if a vendor could collect the bridge fees. Robert Turpin shared that a mobile bait/snack vendor had been on the bridge, for less than a year, but closed shop due to a lack of revenue.
- Michel Rhodes stated that, when considered, the potential vendors wanted control of the fee structure, which was not agreeable to Escambia County.

16. Old Business:

- **Lionfish update:** Resolution submitted to County Attorney; placed on next available BCC. MRD and Escambia County/Florida Sea Grant (FSG) agent Rick O'Connor working together with Gulf Coast Lionfish Coalition to determine appropriate and cost-effective measures for Escambia County. Because regional factors are important in implementing effective lionfish population control on Escambia County reefs, MRD recommends and intends to host a regional Lionfish Workshop with invited marine resource managers and the public to lay out potential short term and long term lionfish solutions. MRD recommends holding this Lionfish Workshop in conjunction with the 14 April 2014 MAC meeting. MRD and FSG staff will work with Escambia County Public Information Office to publicize the meeting. Fliers will be placed at local dive shops, fishing and boating businesses and a Press Release will be sent to all media. Tracking lionfish removal and re-colonization of specific reefs is a crucial means of determining effectiveness and efficiency of lionfish removal techniques. Lionfishmap.com website (developed and operated by Bryan and Anna Clark) will be an important tool for tracking these data. MRD has requested budgetary approval to sponsor lionfish categories and include lionfish information in a number of local fishing and spearfishing rodeos and rodeo booklets.
 - Sidney Clopton stated that he watched a television program on the lion fish which claimed that there has been documented lion fish in 400+ fathoms of water.
 - Brian Clark met with officials in Alabama. Alabama has requested that their reefs be included in the lionfishmap.org database and include the functionality to document debris on the reefs. An organization in the Bahama's has also requested inclusion in the database. The GCLFC is working to create a regional effort of many organizations working together and sharing information.
 - Andy Ross stated that the GCLFC is working to obtain "not for profit" status in addition to being an LLC. GCLFC is organizing a lion fish rodeo at the FloraBama,

with lion fish on the menu. GCLFC is actively producing educational presentations and spreading the word to others in the region.

- Earl Rader suggests encouraging other existing tournaments include a lion fish category.
 - Tom Bizzell stated that he doesn't believe the lion fish issue is being taken as seriously as it should be, by those not directly affected.
 - Robert Turpin encouraged everyone to communicate with the commissioners as concerns the lion fish issue. Robert is working to have Escambia County host a regional lion fish conference, to include anyone on the Gulf and/or East Coasts to share ideas and information, possibly as part of the MAC's April meeting.
 - Dave Mucci made a motion to **“Dedicate the April meeting to the Regional Lion Fish Conference for the coordination of the North East Gulf of Mexico's effort to control the lion fish population.”** Earl Rader seconded the motion. All voted in favor, with no one opposed.
 - Brian Clark stated that this would be an opportunity for elected and appointed officials to brain storm on how local and regional agencies may assist in the lion fish control effort.
- **Local Option Sales Tax:** As directed, MRD scaled back \$50M request to \$4.65M for LOST 4.
 - Merrick Van Landingham stated that he was approached by Vince Lucido (Alabama Gulf Coast Reef Foundation) who stated that the “Titanic” was still available for reefing. The cost is estimated to be \$8 to \$900,000 to prep and deploy.

17. New Business:

18. Adjourn: Merrick Van Landingham made the motion to adjourn, with no objections. The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 pm.