

RESTORE ACT LISTENING SESSION
28 Feb 2013
Held at Gulf Coast Community College, Panama City
Notes (not a transcript) by E.M. Haubold

Opening by Dr. Perran Ross at 7:00pm. Ground rules and introduction of Panel.

Program opening with Mimi Drew to provide background. Here to listen to you and understand what interests and concerns are. We have a unique opportunity with the RESTORE Act. Council charged with providing comprehensive plan for restoration of GOM. <Did not take notes during this presentation as I assume it is already captured elsewhere>

Justin Ehrenworth, Dept. of Commerce. Appreciate that you are here. There have been a lot of meetings on this over the past few years. Process around RESTORE has been around a short time. Input tonight is tremendously important. Have a unique and unprecedented opportunity. All are closely monitoring what is happening in New Orleans (with the trial). <See presentation, notes not taken during the presentation>. Council concerned with 2 of the 5 "buckets" -- 30% to comprehensive plan, other 30% for state plans.

8:26 turned over to Kevin Claridge of DEP. <See Presentation notes not taken>
End at 8:33 and move to the public program.

Michael J. DeRuntz – Senior Planner WA County. Located in Panhandle but not identified as one of the 23 counties. Washington County is within 6 miles of the GOM, integral to 3 major riversheds, Choctaw, Econfina, Chipola drains into – Apalachicola. Appreciate Mimi Drew's watershed approach. Feel they (Washington County) have been excluded but they should be a part of this. Have some of the finest waters in the state and need to do our best to protect them. Will submit written notes. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak. Want to be a part of the process.

Bill Teehan – consultant -- try to be as brief as he can. Retired state govt employee for 32 years. (FWC Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council). Thanks for opportunity to comment. Will address 3 primary issues the council is interested in. Long term outcomes – based on professional experience, should be an overreaching goal of focusing on the marine environment. Knows there was extensive economic impacts to the coast but there could be future in the marine environment. Believe there has been the potential for extensive damage for future damage to fisheries stocks where the spill occurred and other ecosystems in the GOM. 2.5% is not sufficient to do the kind of stock assessment research that is necessary. Suggests VM log books, independent monitoring needs to be permanent. Also suggests electronic log books and electronic data collection. Comments will be submitted.

Kennard Watson, directs turtle watch on Panama City Beach. St. Andrews Resource Management Association. FWC permit. Have protected and documented turtle nests for 2 decades. Loggerheads, leatherback and green turtle nesting. Was part of the nest movements in 2010. Almost 300 nests were moved to the East Coast. Huge undertaking, remarkable situation. Making the most of a bad situation. Eggs were damaged in the movement and hatchlings will not likely return to the Gulf. Even though oil wasn't a direct hit turtles suffered a severe profound impact. Important that the plan address this impact specifically. Need to protect Gulf of Mexico (GOM) turtle population. Implement beach front

lighting protection of sea turtles along the coast. Government in Bay County has adopted lighting ordinances. This is an important measure that could be undertaken.

Ron Houser – President, Bay County Audubon, 400 members and families. St. Andrew Bay Recovery Task Force member. The group has been discussing projects. Agree with projects presented by Dr. Linda Fitzhugh. Proposal for acquisition of west bay sector lands, 15,000 acres. Mitigation and conservation lands were set aside for future purchase but that hasn't happened yet, may not be another chance to do this. Within watershed of St. Andrew Bay, related to health of the Bay. Proper management (mgmt) of these lands is essential. Public benefit would be to open up the area for public recreation. Please don't let this opportunity slip by. Thank you.

Eric Draper – Director of Audubon of FL. Handed out written comments. Outcomes – FL Gulf coast be treated as an intact ecosystem. Have a well developed list in the Florida Forever, scientifically vetted. 3 FWS National Wildlife Refuges could benefit St. Marks, St Vincent and would like to see a new refuge in West Bay. Habitat conservation -- have submitted projects through NRDA for restoring coastal bird habitat, particularly in Hillsborough Bay and Tampa Bay. Everglades projects we greatly favor – Tamiami Trail park, Cape Sable, and Caloosahatchee. Long term -- invest money in managing coastal wildlife, not enough to protect habitat but also need to study and monitor wildlife.

David Godfrey – Sea Turtle Conservancy. Sea turtles were one of the most visibly and significantly affected species of wildlife harmed by the spill. Egg relocation already mentioned, 100,000 turtles or more were actually harmed by the spill, most of which were never recovered, don't know exact numbers. Sea turtles are highly migratory species and many are not actually from the Gulf. Doing conservation for sea turtles in the Gulf will require doing work for turtles in other areas such as the Atlantic coast. Have scientific evidence to show Atlantic turtles were in the Gulf during the spill. Good science on project. Have submitted comments and would like you to consider those.

John Roberts – Chairman of TNC. TNC has done as much as anyone to conserve lands in FL. Restoration of lands is one of the most essential things that can be done in FL. Can also be used to restore watersheds on which the environmental integrity of the Gulf depends. Apalachicola provides 2nd most amount of water to GOM. Lake Wimico provides water quality. Lake Wimico watershed drains into the Gulf of Mexico. Washington County have TNC properties. Bay County has 41,000 acres in the Western Bay project (not 16,000). Have other comments but I will turn them in.

Linda Fitzhugh – Pres of St. Andrew Bay Resource Management Association (RMA) Work to restore turtles, scallops, seagrass, and water quality. Professor of biology. Have a doctorate looking at water quality impacts on seagrass productivity. Environmental groups in Bay county have been meeting on projects. Funds should focus on projects that have an ecological outcome. Propose an endowment be set aside for the 8 counties to conduct water quality monitoring and restoration. Could continue local monitoring and work together on regional issues with other NGOs.

Mike Eller – Capt. And Co-president Destin charter boat association. Need to be able to monitor fisheries for at least 20 years. For fisheries restoration we are talking about a long term plan. These include fisheries independent monitoring, electronic log books for dive boats, charters, etc. Juvenile habitat restoration – artificial reef for juvenile stocks. Unpublished artificial reefs. Stabilization of Norriego Point. Build historic ship in bay. Beach access points for kayakers and paddleboarders. Have to have long term view of fisheries monitoring, one or two years won't do.

Scott Robson – Co- president Destin charter boat association. Focus on same thing as Mike Eller stated -
- Artificial reefs to protect juvenile fish in nursery habitat and Federal waters. Will go a long ways to rebuilding stocks. Electronic log books to monitor fisheries. Destin – stabilization of Norriego Point, maintaining dredging of Destin Pass.

Allen Jelks – Gulf County Working with friends of St. Andrew Bay Recovery Task force. Several key points have emerged. This is a lifetime opportunity to restore the Gulf of Mexico devastated by the spill. The Council plan should focus on ecosystem restoration, monitoring, species conservation, etc. Boondoggle projects must not waste funds – if project does not address ecosystem monitoring it should not be given funding. Economies of scale should be encouraged – best accomplished on larger scale to do turtle, sea grass, water quality monitoring etc. Third - much of this work must continue in perpetuity. Great wisdom in establishing endowments to ensure work can be done in perpetuity in addressing problem areas to head off crises. Will give you written comments on the rest.

Jim Clements – commercial fishermen from Carrabelle. Need more stock assessments, cost more money. NMFS required by Magnuson Stevenson Act to base assessments on best available information. Need more data, get this from stock assessments. These are done 5-6 years in a row on certain species, some don't even have stock assessments. Need to know how many are there so they can set annual catch limits. Need to use the best science available. Fish are cyclical regardless of fishing pressure. If down, can't catch many fish. If up, can catch more but if red tide comes, or cold, then can't. Need sustainable fisheries and more money for stock assessments.

Johnathan Ullman, National Sierra Club, Everglades Representative. Passed out two docs from 57 state, national, and local organizations of Everglades coalition for Tamiami Trail Bridge project through the Everglades which will restore C43 reservoir for Caloosahatchee River, will restore salinity levels and natural water flow. Creates the land that we need here in FL. We are headed into a new era with climate change and sea level rise. A document has just come out with new sea level rise projections. Sea level is predicted to rise 3 feet by 2060. It will mean disaster for FL. Need to restore natural systems to build up the land, restore our aquifers, and preserve our watersheds. Ironically this was caused by burning of fossil fuels. Continuation of burning of fossil fuels is one of biggest threats to FL. Money is needed to protect Florida and Gulf waters.

Yvonne Steiger – Everglades Foundation – one of signatories to Everglades Coalition letter so support C43 and Tamiami Bridge. Both large scale projects \$580 million for C43, \$320 million for Tamiami and both will create hundreds of jobs. Will provide for environmental restoration. Develop integrated process and talk to counties and Consortium. Projects could be completed through this. Ask that a thoughtful process be followed.

Dawn Paradies – I have a dream, a horrible nightmare, a category 5 comes in and picks up everything from the bottom. I watched all that sludge, Corexit, the oil coating the bottom. This money should not be paid out until every inch that is under the sea is mapped. What is under there? It causes me so much anxiety to think about it. Needs to be completely assessed before anything else is done. Because later after it is all paid out, we could have such a problem. If it has to be vacuumed up we should vacuum it up some how. 2.5% for research doesn't seem like much.

Jessica Koelsch – National Wildlife Federation -- Outcomes, have high level of confidence this will focus on environmental outcomes. Give preference in your plan that will use funds from other sources as a match. Can get a lot more bang for your buck by leveraging these funds against each other. Critical to

get the water right. Apalachicola bay – need to get it right, storm water improvement projects and Everglades projects. Process – appreciate you listening to us. Will we be able to listen to your deliberations? That is important.

Christy Scally – EO Wilson Biophilia Center – LT outcome – more environmentally informed public, sustainable projects. Environmental education through schools – water quality, flora and fauna, fund conservation of lands. Public participation -- enjoyed conference calls and webinars – how about a facebook page. Will there be correspondence among the different pots of money? Important dates. April 2 EO Wilson and Tony Hiss (author) presenting at Freeport High School. April 20 will have an Earth Day celebration at EO Wilson center.

Kathleen Reed – Shalimar FL. I am 51 and have lived here almost that whole time in FL, mostly in Shalimar. Tried to bring the big picture tonight. NOAA map July 4 2010. One third of GOM was closed because it was poisoned with oil. Was an act of mass destruction. I am a volunteer that collects dead fish. After seeing the way these were being handled, us waiting while perpetrators clean up the mess is going to allow the GOM to continue to decline. Need to hire a legal team to defend us. No one was doing this for FL when Gov. Jindahl was complaining about jobs. Since spill, BP has opened a HQ in Miami, working on our AG commissioner to open a distillery in FL. Want to open drilling in Blackwater Forest. We need legal defense.

Billy Archer – 3rd generation charter captain. Thank Congressman Southerland and people here who made this happened. Agrees with conserving habitat and marine environment, echo cohorts in Destin, want a long term monitoring program, need to see trends. Fisheries Independent monitoring, electronic log books, artificial reefs published and unpublished, fish Oyster restoration is a great idea. If you could leverage 2.5% for research with other funds, that would be great. Doesn't seem like a lot.

Dr. Neal Lamb – like Ron Houser represent Bay County Audubon. Just celebrated 50th year work in the community. Conservation chairman. Consider purchasing conservation and mitigation lands associated with West Bay Sector plan. Part of a long range large scale to protect vital estuary to contribute to health of entire GOM. Completion of this was a condition of developing the airport. Will maintain productivity of St. Andrews Bay. Purchasing them and making them available for low impact public use would be great. Thousands of birds use this area. Economic benefits of this will be a strong ecotourism.

Steve Shippee – Thanks for opportunity to speak, Ft. Walton beach. Studies marine mammals. Important to offset project impacts. Maximizing overall benefits without causing harm. Increase of dead wildlife due to interaction with recreational angler fishing gear. Specific projects should be considered that will mitigate harm caused by increasing recreation fishing if projects for increasing fishing are considered. 1) support rescue centers. 2) wildlife conflicts 3) support industry to develop gear that is less harmful. Will provide job opportunities. Please implement process that requires rigorous scientific study.

TJ Marshall – Ocean Conservancy – Big overall objective focus on marine environmental restoration. Agreement with NRDA and NFWF. Ground in science is fantastic but 2.5% will no where near go far enough. Council will have to address this with their funds. Need habitat mapping, give fishermen confidence in the data that is coming out. Fishery independent data collection is important. Process – Fishery mgmt council have a bi-monthly meeting across Gulf, this is what they do, public will see it and be able to comment and get to each state. Use this as an avenue to vet projects.

George Wilson – board member of Audubon, consultant. Thank you. Watershed approach, appreciate you talking about that. Getting the water right is key. Need quantity and quality. There are teams of us that have been doing this for years. Have an opportunity to work through Landscape Conservation cooperatives and Natural Resource Conservation Service. All looking at watersheds, can look at working landscapes like Everglades Headwaters. Economies of rural coastal counties are tied to fishing, ecotourism, and forestry – sustainable activities. Round out Suwannee refuge with 60,000 acres. Tied to local economies.

Lynn Sherry – local business owner. Create within comprehensive plan that encourages collaboration across watersheds rather than competition. #2 goal – encourage and incentivize multiple watersheds to bundle their reports and programs across watersheds. #4 create community based resilience programs that can be enjoyed by all Floridians. Another big thought, bring at least the 8 FL panhandle counties together and incentivize the foundation for working together. 1) Within comp plan, incentivize collaborations among many watersheds. 2) Support foundation for the 8 panhandle counties.

Susan Forsythe -- Thanks for asking for input. Testing program for Surfrider Foundation. Have received many worthy suggestions. Concern is we are continuing to have BP oil impact. Over past 1000 days have opportunity to cooperate with numerous agencies sharing our findings. Volunteered with Audubon and others. Early in disaster water testing was primary goal of Surfrider Foundation. Surfers were sickened beginning in May 2010 and these symptoms linger. Have documented impacts. 100s of shorebirds. Can we consider a robust monitoring and testing program for the long term.

John Brown – Florida Forest Service of Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Exciting opportunity, unprecedented in his lifetime. Florida Forest Service manages 1 million acres. Have 450,000 acres of uplands. Are developing very specific projects of the uplands related to watersheds. Tates Hell swamp – is to Apalachicola Bay what Everglades are to Florida Bay. Area was channelized extensively, want to restore the hydrology. Build resilient ecosystems. Things are going to happen, need to be resilient. Agree with Eric Draeper about including Florida Forever projects. FFS is developing a portfolio package and plan to have that submitted in next 10 days.

Janet Bowman – TNC, 5th generation Floridian, Gulf important to my life. Following up on John Brown, overall goal of effort is coastal resiliency. Long-term resiliency through our restoration efforts. Have used occasion of this meeting as impetus to bring together a dozen local, state govts in Perdido, Escambia watersheds to start from bottom up to bring individuals together starting with living shorelines and developing comprehensive projects. Need to look across states as well in developing projects. Believe watershed approach will produce larges outcome. Stormwater, watershed protections, etc.

Alec Macbeth – Geologist in Ft Walton beach. More personal approach and perspective. Strikes me oil spill and its potential effects in the Gulf strikes me hard. GOM is a huge ecosystem. What one observes does not always reflect reality. Amazing release, amazing opportunity, would encourage wisdom. Projects for shoreline integrity -- shoreline projects seagrass, habitat buffers are great that allow tourists to come in, could see more people in the area. Need to figure out if there is a relationship between Apalachicola oysters and the spill.

Jack Rudloe – President of Gulf Specimen Lab in Panacea. Collecting marine life for 50 years. Effects of spill were catastrophic. Particularly interested in invertebrates that no one notices. Coquinas have almost vanished. We go out to schools. Brochure I handed out is about our sea mobile. Bring these to

classrooms and festivals and try to encourage people to understand what is going on in the Gulf. Have one of the oldest sea turtle projects in the state. Everything eats trees (sea turtles, etc.) as they decompose, contribute to productivity. Have to protect these areas but imperative that you focus on education and outreach.

Grover Robinson – Escambia County Commissioner and Chairman of 8 county consortium. State clearly understands its economy is based on its resources and environments. Pot had FL very much in mind. Need to look at watershed projects. FL is the state that understands what environment means to our economy.

Kelly Davis - -manage local business Better Bottom Time dive charters. Money is supposed to benefit tourism, ecorestoration and economic development. I have a project that hits on all three areas. People come here to dive. Vandenburg sunk in Key West, draws 10,000 people to dive wreck. Artificial reef is one of their biggest draws. A ship the size of the Oriskany or Vandenburg would have positive environmental impact but also economic impact that will be felt for years to come.

Barbara Albrecht – president of oldest water quality citizen's group in Panhandle, Audubon Conservation Chair, and Native Plant Society. Five interstate watersheds – begin in Alabama and end in GOM. Healthy waters include healthy wetlands. The way we grow things causes stressors, nutrient loading, pathogens, toxic chemicals, etc. NW FL and S AL is a biological hotspot, have a lot of diversity in plants and animals and we need to maintain that. Have partnered with many other organizations. Have a regional approach, supporting our natural areas, minimizing duplication by meeting quarterly to discuss stressors facing watersheds. Stressor of dioxins and PCBs.

Mark Alberson – Executive Director of National Estuary Program (NEP) in Sarasota. Have been working hard over last 6 months, have developed a master plan with 106 projects we will present and expect to be approved on March 8. Have gone through a competitive solicitation process. Used goals in Strategy to develop these. Will recommend to board to fund \$220 million worth of projects. All of us were affected by spill and had low visitation. Working with Kevin's staff to incorporate our process into state solicitation program. Please consider our process.

Paul Johnson – coordinator of FL coastal and ocean coordination – emphasized implementation of ecosystem approach. 1000 friends of FL, Sea Turtle Conservancy, Surfrider Foundation, TNC. <didn't capture some of this> GCERTF strategy support broad watershed seascape approach. Projects that combine water quality with habitat preservation should be given preference. Have written comments and will provide those. Appreciate recent spending of MOEX funds for land acquisition. Look forward to looking at projects and reviewing them as they come in.

Carol Tebay – Santa Rosa County – look at Blackwater State Forest and state owned lands of Yellow river. Have been timbered, causing a lot of dirt roads to be put in and causing a lot of erosion. Look at Florida Forever projects. Perdido Pitcher Reserve is under threat from development. Would like to see that property purchased. UWF land on Santa Rosa land. Because of budget cuts they have looked at developing this or selling it. Yellow River Aquatic Preserve office was closed due to budget cuts, need this opened back up. They were the go to folks during the spill.

Jim McFarland – Representing Reef ball association. Want to emphasize a few things, don't know how to help the govt locally. We support education and research through reef ball program. Restoring estuaries is a big thing. Wes made a statement, have to emphasize this is the most unique estuary

system in the world. Have studied GOM – was sick a decade ago, now it is in critical condition. Emphasize Breakwaters, oysters, snorkeling reefs bring economic value.

Manley Fuller – Florida Wildlife Federation – Have heard many good suggestions from public today, will provide supplementary comments. In addition to fishery research, deepwater environment needs additional treatment because drilling is expanding into deeper waters. Support C43 and Tamiami Bridging projects. Written comments have prioritized watershed projects. Protection of watersheds, restoration of our ecological communities should begin at headwaters down to the Gulf. Support oyster restoration but water quality has to be right. Projects heard already this evening – West Bay system could make a great addition to Wildlife Refuge System. St. Marks refuge system should be expanded. Work with willing landowners to conserve watersheds that feed into the Gulf

Christian Wagley – live in Pensacola, on Escambia County Restore Act committee. Thinks process of setting vision then choosing criteria of where we want to be is a good one. Water quality is important. Many places where restoration can't happen yet is because water quality isn't there yet. Project longevity is important and should be included in the criteria to get most efficiency for money. Part of money will be spent on infrastructure. Need smart infrastructure. Would not want to have projects that increase our dependence on fossil fuels

Chip Kirschenfeld – Escambia County – identified living shorelines in Pensacola Bay system. 4th largest estuary in FL, received 90% of oiling in FL. Comprehensive, multi-faceted approach. Watershed approach. Living shorelines need to be an important component of that. They address most of the priorities identified. These are labor intensive. Project shown (on a large extended sheet of paper) represents 20 miles of living shoreline projects that have been identified and \$40million in construction costs. Need to get the water right. Living shorelines are just one component of restoring water quality. Wastewater, stormwater, oyster reefs, all go into a thorough comprehensive water shed approach

Vernon Compton – Longleaf Alliance – restoring the Gulf, taking a watershed approach just makes sense, recognized link between watersheds and Gulf. Impossible to have a healthy Gulf without health uplands. Dominant system in FL is longleaf. 2009 conservation plan for longleaf pine by America's longleaf restoration initiative. Priority actions identified. Prescribed fire, controlling invasive species. Partnerships were recognized as mechanisms to implement. Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership manages 1 million acres with 11 landowners. Recognize these existing partnerships. Will provide comments related to these.

Kim Bodine – Executive Director Gulf Coast Work Force Board. Ask that you remember the crisis in Franklin County. Governor requested fisheries failure back in Sept. 1800 and 3000 jobs of 18,000 citizens of county dependent on oyster fishery. Trying to determine what has caused mortality event. Thanks for being here, please keep Apalachicola bay and Franklin county in your thoughts.

Andrew Shepherd – GOM University Research Collaborative. Take lead in coordinating many research programs coming out of this. Ocean and Coastal monitoring with endowment. Increase in outreach efforts, FL has a portal for submittal, what do other states do. What about using the GCERTF Sciecn plan and strategy. Want to see citizens from GOM engaged in all these projects. Interested in education and next generation of work force.

Bob Fullford – private citizen – maybe we can parlay this into combating pollutants in Leon county. Pleased to hear that is what Mimi said, about watershed approach. And cooperation of Florida agencies like DEP.

Marion Cook – Eglin Air Force Base Community Planner – Acquisitions accomplished in MOEX helps to sustain mission at Eglin and protect land of panhandle. Additional lands that support military are part of Greenway. There are existing FL Forever projects in corridor. Shoal River buffer and Nokuse Plantation (severance creek). Thanks for coming.

Dutch Petro – Good to see progress being made. We are looking at a critical time in the Gulf. 4% of tuna stocks in Atlantic are left, we have 2% of population we used to have. You want a vision, I have spent years working on aquaculture, pens, open water, habitat improvement. Want to see fish stocks put back to where they were in the 1920s. Instead of seeing Mote sending Cobia to Belize, want to see that part of the economic engine for FL. Educational mecca for FL where students don't come out with \$150,000 debt. Want to see profits from business sustain them. We can do this profitably, you have the seeds to start it.

Commissioner Mariano – Pleased to tell you FL Gulf Coast Consortium is working well. Great group that has come together. Short amount of time to put together projects. Have heard some good ideas. Haven't yet heard the idea of replacing septic systems. Re-funding FL submerged vessels program. Look at value of each project – some may have been sitting on the shelf for a reason, some may just need funding. BP oil spill has affected all of the Gulf. Important to get the <.....missed this> Impressed with the RESTORE act, it was well thought out. Rules will be important, 20% skim off the top, make them hold onto that money so that we can put value back in to the communities that were hurt the most.

Comments ended at 9:17.

Gil McRae wrapped up. Thanked the audience and told them their input was not only informative but also inspiring to us.