

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Meeting
June 3, 2013

DRAFT Meeting notes by Elsa M. Haubold, Ph.D. & Rebecca Prado

- Dr. Perran welcomed everyone and recognized some special guests. Due to the long line at security he asked for permission to delay the meeting a few minutes. There were no objections from those in attendance. He then started back about 10 minutes later. He re-stated his welcome and then allowed Escambia Commissioner Robinson to give opening remarks.
- Escambia County Commissioner Grover Robinson made welcoming remarks and apologized for having to leave early. Comments included: Escambia County was impacted with the most oil in Florida. Habitat, marine resources, and water quality should be at the top of list for restoration. FL doesn't get royalties for oil drilling, but FL was impacted by stigma of the spill should be entitled to a significant portion of the RESTORE funds. It is important to integrate local, state, and federal efforts. Escambia shares a watershed with Alabama and will be coordinating with AL. Looking forward to working with Mimi and recognized fellow County Commissioners from other Counties, Sherry Myers Pensacola City Council. Local Restore council member Patina Perry, Alan, Harlan, Connie, appreciate you all being here. Realize the impact we took in 2010, appreciate your service.
- Dr. Perran called on Mimi Drew to provide opening remarks, and introduced Council members in attendance. Thanked Commissioner Robinson and people for taking time out to attend these public meetings. "Tonight is for you, it is a listening session. Since the Council put out the Path Forward document, spent time listening to the public. This is a Listening session on the plan, not ready to discuss specific projects yet."
- Mimi – Welcome. Thanked everyone for coming. Council has incorporated previous comments, and members will be listening for feedback specific to the Path Forward document. Reminded the group that they are not talking about specific projects yet.
- Justin Ehrenwerth, US Department of Commerce/Executive Director of the Council, thanked everyone for coming. "Nice to see familiar faces. Tonight we want to talk about the document that the Council put out a few weeks ago. Do appreciate your time. Don't want a plan that represents only the vision of the Council members. Help us get this right."
 - Began Slide presentation, notes not taken for this presentation -- see the PowerPoint
 - Completes presentation at 6:23. Reminder from facilitator to fill out a speaker card.
- Kevin Claridge, FL DEP -- The Florida Project Process. Working with FWC to develop and organize list of projects for Florida and working with many people in this room.
 - Begin slides during which notes were not taken.
 - Completes presentation at 6:33 p.m. CST.
- Dr. Perran opens public comment period. "Looking for help with the process of untangling and figure out how best to select projects. Are objectives correct or do they need to be

tweaked? How do you want to be involved? Each speaker will get 2 minutes, be concise and precise. Encourage you to submit your comments.”

- Perran welcomed Patti Powell from AL, Russell Morgan from USDA council members have arrived. Reminded everyone of the three main questions which the Council was requesting input on and the time limits for comments.

Oral Comments began at 6:40 p.m. CST:

1. William “Bill” Teehan -- Retired fisheries manager with 30 years experience. Making general comments: Document is very complex, may want to consider a simpler document that is more easily understood. Timing of this meeting with start of red snapper season is not very good to receive input from fishery interests. Concern about future fishery impacts. Did the council consider further criteria and if so how, he is a proponent of fishery stock assessment. Two and a half percent is not nearly enough to conduct these stock assessments, add more money to bucket 4 to cover these. Will require more money, more science. Needs to be long-term stock assessments of the future.
2. Dr. Gloria Horning – Exciting to have you here. This draft points out what the Act is about -- the environment. Here in Escambia County we seem to be bypassing that. Our committee doesn't have a health advisor or educator on the committee. Need to reach out to our disenfranchised communities. Need to add people they understand and trust. Asked Hispanic and Vietnamese communities if they knew what was going on related to the oil spill and they did not. They don't read the paper and don't have access to computers. Need to help them understand the long term impact on these communities in a language they understand. Thanks for this clear draft it is clear that it is about the environment.
3. Thomas Ledew with the Florida Forest Service -- Submitted packet of projects to DEP in response to the Recovery effort. DACS is requesting consideration for approval of funding that will assist with restoration and enhancement of water quality that benefits estuaries of State of Florida. Projects presented are in 4 categories. Restoration, hydrologic restoration, silt and sediment, and written recommendations to follow through on Florida Forever land acquisition projects. Here locally have GCPEP -- composed of most government agencies in the area. Take a look at that approach when looking at this area. Don't try to piece meal this. Thank you for your consideration. Have some handouts I would like to give you.
4. Doug Heatwole – Environmental consultant, speaking as a citizen. Plan should communicate well thought out strategic planning process. Focus to date has been on project submission and selection making this appears piecemeal. Setting goals, establishing objectives, determining effectiveness. Need to be thoughtfully considered and fully vetted. Need to foster state planning effort rather than a competitive grant process 3) Apply lessons learned from other long term restoration efforts across the country. Science advisory committee comprised of scientists and policy makers from these other restoration efforts. Adaptive science based framework recently released for Great Lakes restoration. Should look at this document for guidance on how to develop this program.

5. Jeff Helms -- Plan with 5 goals and 7 objectives I agree with. Appreciate you keeping plan to 20 pages and not 60. Please consider local projects as higher priorities. Kevin you clarified the "list", appreciate your comments that this isn't the real list. The 8 counties in FL will receive disproportionate funds, need your help. There are hardships on these counties, to perform pre-work on the Plans, and would like to be reimbursed for pre-work on the plans. They are already working but without funding covering engineering and permitting costs -- please ask Dept. of Treasury to include that in the Regulations.
6. James Nims, Jr. -- Request of council. p. 9 of DWH NRDA -- where is that and who is the supervisor? I am concerned; everything looks good on paper but what about the plant life and animal life in the Gulf right now. What is being done now to help these animals right now? Having juvenile dolphins float up is concerning. Why are we going through all these hoops? Local projects should be chosen first and then a number of projects on the Gulf itself. Can't ignore the Gulf. Is anyone testing the air quality right now? Allergy issues and sinus issues in this area over the past 2 years has gone up and I think it is coming from the Gulf. What are we doing right now? Want my grandchildren to see dolphins in 20 years.
7. Ralph Agnew - Thanks for having us, tough challenge ahead. I have reviewed the document. List in doc was only 45 projects, haven't seen longer list. Evaluation criteria -- projects without regard to geographical location and projects most directly impacted -- what are you going to pick here? Bucket 2 (federal money) -- Gulf Seashore, would like to see this.

Mimi -- want to clarify again that the list of projects in the draft plan are not the projects for bucket 2. Act required inclusion of all authorized but not commenced projects -- it isn't the list for bucket 2.

8. Janet Bowman -- TNC Tallahassee -- Compliment you all on identifying some wonderful restoration objectives -- big picture restoration objectives. Concern of ours -- lot of momentum in FL to develop watershed based projects. Even working across state lines. Don't see any evaluation criteria to put suites of projects that work together -- not necessarily an everglades restoration project but start in the pinelands and work your way down the watershed. Add a component that addresses these issues. We will be submitting additional comments that include this.
9. Mary Jean Yon with Audubon -- Trying to secure the future of waterbirds, shorebirds, seabirds. Goes without saying you need clean water, etc. Plan is a good start, working closely with Kevin Claridge and Nick Wiley. I will drop our comments on the project list in the plan based on clarification at meeting this evening. Echo comment of first speaker. Please look at long term perpetual management funding. Set up interest bearing accounts and use interest for management. Hope Council serves as air traffic controller to make sure projects that go forward are the best.
10. Jane Caffrey, Professor at UWF interested in water quality issues - We have a serious problem with background information for water quality and other data for the region. Monitoring is the key to evaluate success of restoration. In years since DWH have been trying to work together to bring different groups together. Have volunteer monitoring efforts

involving universities, state colleges, all groups working together to develop integrated plan so we have efficiencies and not duplications and so we have info we need to conserve our environment. Have been working in 5 watersheds and think this model can be applied across the Gulf. Thank you.

11. James Clements -- Commercial fisherman from Carrabelle, FL. Have heard from thousands of people about what projects should be funded. Haven't heard about the fish that live 2 miles off shore. Best way to help is to have good management plans to control harvest of fish. Good management requires good science. Good science requires good stock assessments. Concerned it is one of 10 items in 2.5% bucket. One stock assessment costs \$100,000. Move Stock assessments to the 30 or 35% category and provide more funding for them. Much of those funds are being spent for tourism or tourism promotion. Tourism is human pleasure. Future of finfish is our future food supply. Food is more important than pleasure.
12. Barbara Albrecht -- Recognize the uplands produce healthy waters. If we restore the ecology we will restore the economy. Have submitted a proposal for improving 5 watersheds starting in Alabama and ending in FL Gulf of Mexico. Involved with Native Plant Societies, Audubon to make sure species are correctly restored. Have a partnership with 5 contiguous watersheds. Can bridge science to our rural suburban and urban societies in the classroom. If we do things from top down. Heard about other communities we haven't reached out to such as Vietnamese -- need to include them.
13. Chip Kirschenfeld -- Escambia County and Faculty Associate UWF. Support goals and objectives and the watershed and adaptive management approaches described in the plan. Thanks for listening to public comments at previous meetings and incorporating them into the plan. Advisory committees -- scientific technical committee should be established for each watershed along the Gulf Coast. Scientists from government, NGOs, academia, industry have spent their careers working in these watersheds and they know what works and what doesn't work and they should be involved.
14. Keith Wilkins -- Escambia County and staff to RESTORE committee. DWH is acute event and RESTORE is designed to address death by a thousand cuts. Plan is good, like FL priorities. Understand included project list was required and doesn't address all priorities. I don't see reference to TMDLs, watershed plans already adopted at the state level. I feel the plan should address new and existing partnerships around watersheds. Understand you have urgency but want to make sure we address death by 1000 cuts. Data exists now to move forward. Take time to make good decisions but don't suffer from analysis paralysis. Use existing plans, move forward with adaptive leadership principles.

Called for Fred Simmons – Absent

15. Robert Turpin -- Escambia County -- For more than a decade Escambia County has recognized the problems with the Gulf of Mexico. What Escambia County has done is made an investment with over a dozen environmental staff. But partnerships are most important thing such as Project Greenshores. Take local perspective on a watershed ecosystem basis.

Have great academics and others knowledgeable perspectives that should be used. Only have one chance to get this right.

16. Christy Scally – President, EO Wilson Center -- Environmental Education is near to our heart. You will only conserve that which you love, only love what you understand..... EO Wilson Center in the first 4 years taught 25,000 students. Level of participation by 7th graders has quadrupled. Please include Environmental Education in plan. Justin, thanks for sharing the story about the student with the environmental button. We get letters from students who are now more aware of the environment. Encourage you to look at organizations that have a track record.
17. Jessica Koelsch -- National Wildlife Federation -- We are back with our stickers, and pleased to see that RESTORE act was passed with promise of restoring the gulf. Draft plan emphasizes this commitment. Pleased to see you have incorporated input from previous listening sessions. Applaud adaptive management and landscape approaches. We are interpreting bucket 3 projects that even if economic, they will be tied back to the environment. Feel that priority criteria should be refined and will submit detailed comments and projects. We support scientific advisory committee. Provide an open and transparent process. FL specific issues - -continue to support projects that get water right such as C43 and Tamiami trail. Restoration of Apalachicola River.
18. Christian Wagley --- did a great job with plan in staying true to the intent of the Act. Place emphasis and highest priority on projects that address water quality. Other projects such as oyster and seagrass restoration are depended on good water quality. If you put oyster reefs or seagrass beds out into an environment like exists now, may never experience full benefit. Restoration of ecosystems to the way they were rather than putting new reefs out where they never existed previously. Stay true to review of budgets to ensure they adhere to principles.

Called for Sherri Myers - Absent

19. Bethany Kraft -- Director of Gulf Restoration for Ocean Conservancy. Thanks for your hard work on the restoration plan. Addressing questions succinctly my answers are – yes, yes, yes, no, no, yes! Establishing science and public advisory councils are critical. Our written comments will address more on what we think the Council should be. Decisions must be available on best available science. Priority criteria in RESTORE need to include multiple benefits. Again, I will provide written comments. Objectives are correct but don't get you all the way there -- recommend you include specific information on how objectives will be achieved and best available science. Comprehensive approach to restoration is the only way to keep economy health and our communities strong. About achieving a health goal: the Council has a long way to go before submitting project list, have luxury of time in determining how goals and criteria can help select projects. You have many people waiting to help you.
20. George Willson – I appreciate you coming to FL twice. I am on board of Directors for Audubon, and agree with what they said earlier. The beauty of Audubon is ability to work with local communities. I appreciate your focus on watersheds. Universities and scientists

may also play a role and look at estuaries; we have to get the water right. As you remain invested in the GOM -- where can you make the best bang for the buck? I have some handouts. We are working as a coalition with DOD in looking at sustaining DOD missions on landscapes that are critical to ecology and maintaining the ecosystem.

21. Ninian Williams - resident of North Central FL -- Water is the most important priority -- can do many things such as build a convention center but if we don't have water quality for our wildlife, human wildlife, tourism we won't have anything. Have bioremediation projects that are EPA approved but haven't been used. Also want to look for safe ways to address oil. Thank you very much.
22. Pastor W. Williams -- Compiling training programs for at risk students. Need to train them for the future -- for example will need kids to know how to do welding underwater. I work with a bunch of kids who haven't gotten into trouble. They have to maintain grades in school. Need to train these kids in the way they should go. Kids have made every effort to not be a statistic. Will pass out some great information in training them on how to go. I hope you can develop a bucket to catch some of this water for our youth. Can't keep letting kids crawl under the rug because when they crawl out and they have attitudes.
23. Ty Kirby -- Been a resident of FL since 1982. Best way to make list more manageable is to stick to criteria and remembering how important it is that RESTORE funds be directed through local entities especially non-profits. These organizations have been taking care of wildlife since before DWH. They will continue to be there long after the money is gone and media attention fades away. Their knowledge is a wealth of knowledge that needs to be acknowledged, appreciated, and funded. Sustainable natural resources remain a magnetic place that people want to visit which feeds our local economy. Ongoing research monitoring and evaluation so projects can be scientifically based and need research and monitoring to continue far into the future.
24. Steve Shippee -- Representing Emerald Coast Wildlife Refuge, a non-profit. Rescue and care for 2,000 animals each year and are the principal response for rescue and salvage of dolphins and whales in this area. View of local wildlife response needs, overarching goal 3. Define priority criteria -- must be comprehensive restoration benefit demonstrate environmental effectiveness, consideration of implementation impacts -- mitigation of short term and long term impacts. Other objectives dynamic, adaptive and able to adjust to events such as storms and climate change over the coming decade. Prioritizing objectives. Advisory committees -- use local knowledge whenever possible. Must have transparent and collaborative methods for advisory committees.
25. Casi "KC" Callaway -- Speaking on behalf of an Environmental Group in Alabama consisting of 4500 members. Similar to a previous speaker I will quickly answer your questions with - Yes, now, no, no, and will be submitting written comments. Focus on #3 -- have been involved in this issue. Yes establish advisory committees. Wrote a letter from 70 organizations for GCERTF -- we were incredibly specific, incredibly detailed and spent a lot of time working through issues among the organizations. Set up five different groups with a specific person under each of five: Will submit these in writing. If you establish other

advisory committees they need to talk to each other. If we operate in silos, we will die in silos.

26. Admiral L. LeRoy -- Gulf County African American Chamber of Commerce -- Concerned about water quality, particularly in last several years and new flood zones. Grew up in neighborhood where it never flooded, now can have rain for one day and lots of flooding. Help environmentally clean up areas considered health hazards. Attended Health workshop a few weeks ago, and discovered Pensacola is almost at bottom of the list in Florida in regards to health of the community. Hope you will give attention to help manage health care. When we hear we are at the bottom in health for our community, which is a big concern. Health care is very important to economic development. Organizations have come together to work on their behalf. Please give these two issues consideration.
27. Capt Dave Mucci -- charter boat operator -- Will be staying informed and providing input as process evolves. Please carefully select projects that will restore the Gulf
28. Tony McCray -- Economic Development Director West Palm Beach. Quantum Inc, McRae Consulting. Represent NAACP economic development committee in Escambia County. Appreciate draft plan elaborates on requirements of RESTORE Act that 30% of the funds are for ecosystem focus. Recommend that minority and women businesses become a priority and that outreach to women and minority communities be conducted so they can understand importance of our environment. Making these recommendations can ensure that the impact that is expected out of these dollars will impact the communities that are usually left out of large dollar programs like this.
29. Michael DeRuntz -- Representing Washington County. Thanks for taking watershed approach. We were in an undesirable position of not being included. Washington County is supportive of comprehensive plan, and is included in the overall process. Washington County has 4 important watersheds that contribute to marine environment: Choctawhatchee, Econfina, Chipola, Apalachicola. Richness of natural resources in Washington County, want to preserve those and enhance water quality that contributes to our coastal region. Supported by Regional Planning Council. Suggest in evaluation and priorities may want to think about inter-state projects. For example in Washington County we have Choctawhatchee watershed, large proportion of which is in Alabama. Thank you.
30. Kirk Sanborn – I live about 30 miles away, and spend a lot of time on water. GOM is one of the most beautiful places. Towards shore it is brown, towards Mexico it is clear and pelagic dolphins come and play around you. A pilot flew a lot, on land noticed very large agribusiness often plowed right up to and through streams. Water was brown. Other areas streams were pristine and beautiful. I know someone who claims to own an estuary; don't want to call attention to them. Approach of local government is to put drainage out through the estuary. Bottom line, believe that FL has a juvenile fish division, never came to north Florida. Want more comprehensive program for juvenile fish across the Gulf. See to the health of all the animals, including the fish.

31. Michael Sturdivant -- Surfrider -- DWH continues to impact our beaches. Still need to address monitoring. Monitoring was recently dismissed by Coast Guard but needs to continue; don't believe state has capacity to do this. Oil impacting our beaches remains toxic. Long ago we requested signage with reporting numbers when oil is spotted on our beaches. Regarding criteria -- please do no harm -- make this your highest priority. Reject any project that causes harm such as dredge and fill and nourishment. Please use scientific advisory committee and for development projects use energy advisory committee. Owe our future children some review of these projects. Specific projects -- consider developing mobile testing unit. Will submit brief outline of what their group has in mind. Testing unit could also be used for educational purposes.
 32. Walter Earnest -- Director of Operations, Pelican Coast Conservancy. Provider of Ecosystem services. Draft plan p. 12 -- consideration project may be implemented through active management... conservation easements and other conservation easements. Fee simple acquisitions. Wildlife does not know state boundaries but know biogeographical regions they thrive in and require. Watershed approach is very important. Just as important to protect the uplands as it is the wetlands. Implement a citizen's advisory committee. This is critical. To exist forever, you have to have community buy in and support
 33. Bill Young -- Thank you for being here. I am a fishery biology and aquatic ecologist from Escambia County. Due to action of dispersants and other DWH impacts, haven't seen full extent of damage from oil spill. Greatest damage will likely be offshore. Impossible to address directly but can be addressed indirectly through improved coastal water quality. Our resources should be directed towards addressing ecosystem problems. Can't separate long standing pollution problems from oil spill? They both contribute to degradation of health of ecosystem. For most bangs for the buck spend money on land acquisition with wetland corridors. Worst way to spend money would be on infrastructure projects. Very costly to go back and correct problems of past. Better off spending money on riparian area acquisition rather than costly storm water retrofits.
- End of Public Comment at 7:57 p.m. CST
 - Greg Holder closing thoughts -- It is late, appreciate you came out and gave your testimony to share your thoughts and theories and views. I thank you for that and the Council does as well. Greg reviewed several themes that he heard this evening -- Number of speakers said they supported goals, objectives and criteria outlined in the plan. As we move forward collaboration is terribly important in working at local, state and federal level. Systems are spread across state and local boundaries and don't recognize the boundaries. Heard speakers talk about using best available science and how important that is in making decisions. Build committees to help aid in the decision making process. Heard about importance of looking at projects from a watershed perspective and that is important for getting good results. Important in education about water quality. Healthy environment means healthy economy. Heard several of you intend to stay engaged in the process, hope you will do this. Next Listening Session is June 17 in St. Pete. If you know people in area or you can make the trip, encourage you to participate in this as well.

- Perran closes meeting at 8:02pm. CST