

RESTORE Public Listening Session, June 17, 2013
St. Petersburg, Florida
Summary of notes from Amber Whittle and Becky Prado

Meeting Began at 5:30 p.m. EST

- 5:35 p.m. Dr. Perran Ross, Facilitator - Welcomed all and provided an overview of the evening. He then mentioned that specific areas of input are requested and asked that people fill out speaker card if they wished to speak. He asked that everyone demonstrate respect and courtesy and stated that time limits will be held for each speaker. Next the listening panel was introduced. Members of the panel included:
 - Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director of Council
 - Mimi A. Drew, Governor's representative on the Council
 - Michele Laur, Gulf Restoration Team Member USDA
 - Linda Walker, DOI
 - Ben Scaggs, Gulf of Mexico Program EPA
 - Kevin Claridge, FDEP Director of the Office of Coastal & Aquatic Managed Areas
 - Gil McRae, FWC Executive Director or FWC's Fish & Wildlife Research Institute
- 5:40 p.m. Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, gave his presentation which is not recorded in these notes. Points which were emphasized or not captured in the presentation are as follows:
 - the process for developing projects is important
 - the RESTORE act required the list of projects included in the draft comprehensive plan. It does not indicate how the council will select projects.
 - projects will be based on best science
 - want to hear public reaction to four criteria
 - law says that Council members have to carry out and bring forward projects
 - A draft funded priorities list will come out for public input. After finalized the projects will begin.
 - economic projects could qualify under the state expenditure plan but not the Council
 - comments on the draft comprehensive plan are due by 24th of June.
- 6:10 p.m. Kevin Claridge, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, gave his presentation, which are not recorded in these notes.
- 6:17 p.m. Dr. Perran Ross provided rules to limit comments to two minutes. After a minute and a half the yellow card will be held up. At two minutes a red card will be held up.

Public Comment

- Mike Colby, President of the Charter Fisherman's Association (6:20 p.m.) – “Last month I gave testimony to the congressional subcommittee on fisheries, and stated the Congressional Committee is very interested in monitoring.” Feels a need for Fisheries Data Management for

harvest and efforts. This is needed for indexes of fecundity, age distribution, spawning biomass to know what kind of populations we have. The allotted 2.5% Bucket is not enough. Need creative funding to increase FIM and FDM data. I understand the importance of watershed restoration and education centers and hypoxic zones. Need to know how to increase 2.5%.

- Mark Rachel, Audubon, Coastal Managers Sanctuary Program (6:22 p.m.) – Thank you for coming this evening. Last time I spoke about the Alafia Banks restoration plan. There is a need bird colony restoration in all of Tampa Bay. Also we have a need to strengthen the resiliency of Gulf of Mexico (GOM) and do it in Tampa Bay. Brown pelicans were taken from Tampa to rehabilitate Louisiana. We are seeing a lot of erosion on the Key islands for bird populations. One of the plans that Audubon has proposed is to restore these islands.
- Suzanne Cooper, Environmental Planning for Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC) (6:24 p.m.) - The environment has been outlined in the ecosystem plan already submitted. I have started a committee to assist local governments with RESTORE Act environmental projects. The National Estuary Program (NEP) plan is great. TBRPC can help Council with analyses, feasibility and economic (REMI model) for all 3 buckets. By asking each applicant how their project fits with the TBRPC Strategic Plan and the goals and objective of the Council. Application plan almost done.
- Patrick Stevens, Student Conservation Association (SCA) (6:26 p.m.) –SCA sees results from youth who get involved in conservation. The organization feels that youth and young adults should have strong role in gulf restoration. There is a great opportunity to train youth. Youth advisory councils would be an important part of the process here. Our organization is a 56-year-old nonprofit. I am alum and now an employee. SCA has had a profound effect on my life and others lives, by providing economic and ecological restoration. SCA has placed over 3000 individuals. These young people want to stay in GOM.
- Karen Fraley, Around the Bend Nature Tours, Owner (6:28 p.m.) – She works with the NEP environmental education as a contractor. The drafted seven objectives are great. Number 6 is environmental education, and it is important to keep this a priority. Thanks.
- John Webber, Audubon, Conservation Campaign Manager (6:29 p.m.) – Thanks for coming to Florida. I am here to talk about Gulf restoration. Growing up I vacationed on the beach with my mom. I care about wildlife and enjoy fishing and photography. I advocate for a trust fund or another mechanisms to fund conservation for birds (monitoring, predator control, posting signs) for the long term. There are many great solo projects, but a perpetual bird management fund would be a good investment. You need to consider conservation techniques, predator control, monitoring, and stewardship forever. A Fund would have an agreed-upon withdrawal rate.
- Dr. John Hood, Audubon Clearwater (6:31 p.m.) - Agree with premise if you restore habitat then the economy will come. Port infrastructure could be addressed using non-RESTORE funds. On page 14 of the draft Plan it mentions large scale projects, but we have small islands that are very important to bird species. Barrier islands bird nesting includes 10 T&E

species with chicks; don't forget about these. I would suggest having volunteers keep dogs and people away from these nests. Tampa is one of only six places in FL that breeds laughing gulls. Don't forget the small guys for the large scale projects. Thank for being here.

- David Godfrey, Sea Turtle Conservancy (6:33 p.m.) – I support the objectives. Encourage the Council to expanding the geographic scope. (provided a picture of seaturtle tracks of migration) Turtles spend most time in the Gulf, and nest on the central east coast of Florida; satellite tracking migrations of sea turtles in the Gulf is needed. Thousands of turtles were harmed, turtles that nest on central east coast of Florida. To restore this population, work needs to be done on the east coast too. Please use the best available science. Look at life history and where species actually nest. Eliminate mortality factors: artificial lights, predation
- Mark Alderson, Executive Director of Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (6:35 p.m.) – Handed out packet. Thanks for incorporating NEP plan into the state's project list. A lot of hard work went into developing this list, and fully vetting, it was approved by elected officials. Look forward to working together next few years.
- Holly Greening, Executive Director of Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP) (6:36 p.m.) – TBEP is one of seven NEPs around GOM. NEPs are 20% of GOM coast. Support goals and objectives, especially science-based, ecosystem approach, transparency. NEPs offer assistance for a strong effective platform. TBEP is prepared to assist in new estuary type programs, administration, etc. We have expertise and partnerships already established and could be used with new programs. Please consider our offer for assistance in science based restoration.
- Jim McFarland, Reef Ball Foundation (6:38 p.m.) – I am happy with the progress so far; you are heading in a good direction. The Council needs to have Advisory Committees. I am sorry to say that I am more distraught now after traveling to all Panhandle meetings, seeing what is happening in State's waters. While traveling around the state I looked for oysters, and I believe the effects are worse than originally expected. More research needs to be done. I also saw oysterman that had to close down before the season closed. I observed oyster relaying – taking oysters from freshwater and taking them out to salt and then to market. There is also a lack of crustaceans, and lesions on the fish; this is bad.
- Frank Jackalone, Senior Organizing Manger for Sierra Club (6:40 p.m.) - First you need to make sure the oil and tar balls are gone, and deal with those impacts. Create a community advisory council. Don't want to see pork projects; science needs to come first. I think this is why we need to establish an advisory council that drives restoration. Reserve funds to address future problems observed as we go along. Lastly I want bridging for Tamiami Trail, Caloosahatchee river and C43 reservoir.
- Elizabeth Fleming, Florida Representative for Defenders of Wildlife (6:43 p.m.) - Applaud overarching programs proposed. Support commitment to science based needs. The upland and estuaries are connected, so I want to see projects without geographic boundaries. I

would support citizen and science advisory committee. Take advantage of existing Florida data; there is a wealth of data already out there. FWCC has conservation blueprint, Florida Forever, Greenway have data/info that can be used. Public should have opportunity to comment on selection of projects. Want transparent process for projects. Please do not fold and fund projects that are not helpful to the environment. We will be submitting written comments.

- Bob Krakowski, Turtles Ad Lightum (6:46 p.m.) - Don't want projects that conflict with the environment. For example, Collier County has plans for dredgers to re-nourish beaches during nesting season; this is not acceptable. Since communicating with feds and there is now a slowdown the program. Too much standardization of processes; just because something has always been done a certain way, does not mean it should continue to be done.
- Janet Bowman, The Nature Conservancy (6:48 p.m.) – I will provide my comments in writing. First let me say the objectives great. Need to expand Water Quality goal to include water quantity or resources. This is so important. Other things that are needed are: elaboration of criteria...multiple benefits...increase ecosystem services (fisheries, wildlife corridors, sediment delivery). This helps existing plans or planned projects, provides lasting benefits, resilience for sea level rise, return on benefits, measureable outcomes and benefits. Concerned about Council project sponsorships—need a way to promote regional projects. Science advisory committee...regional and Centers of Excellence could be included.
- Commissioner Susan Latvala, Gulf Coast Consortium (6:52 p.m.) – Consortium asks to submit comments one day late so that they can develop comments and reach consensus at their meeting
- Patrick Barnes, President of BFA Environmental Consulting in Florida and LA (6:51 p.m.) - The Council should ensure that the final plan is very prescriptive on the inclusion of coastal restoration and job skill straining. Such framing should be required of contractors who are selected to perform the restoration to work. Contractors can partner with existing training programs that are locally based. In the absence of such programs contractors should reach out to local non-profits that represent the communalities impacted. Points should be established in the range of 10 % to 20% for a community outreach and job training planning or every significant project. Career partners for vulnerable folks should be established to link training to jobs and better training in secondary education institutions. I started a training program in NOLA to be environmental technicians. Successful coastal restoration and job training connections could lead to a more diverse group of people. Contractors and ecosystem will do well. Diversify individuals and build a stronger base for community resiliency. Need to have community buy-in.
- Lauren Day, The Conservation Fund (6:53 p.m.) – I support goals and objectives and the establishment of one or more advisory committee. Suggest high priority on projects that are permanent and provide long term protection. Look at watersheds, areas of overlap – multiple goals, community support, and protect areas that are functioning well now.

- Terry Gibson, Fly and Tackle Angler Magazine (6:54 p.m.) - Worked for 15 yrs in recreational fishing industry prior to starting a magazine. Just finishing the first year of the magazine and wants to do a story on Gulf restoration. People are getting angry, and they want to see action; I have letters. It has been three years. Not sure what to tell people. Need to see balance between marine/pelagic and coastal environments. Suggests using the Fisheries Management Councils as a model for getting public engaged. Another great thing about FMC is that they have a legal responsibility to follow best available science. If this Council had a scientific committee that had the ability to govern which projects had the biggest benefit then will be using money wisely. Life history often goes from coast to Gulf.
- Joe Walsh, Walsh Conservation Planning (6:57 p.m.) - Don't forget smaller projects, recognition of partner projects and leveraging resources between local and council. Recommend thinking about streamlining projects that take this into account.
- Dave Kondz, St. Pete Audubon and Friends of Tampa Bay Refuges (6:58 p.m.) - Grew up here and camping on Egmont Key. Egmont is half the size it used to be, with 3000 laughing gulls, brown pelican residing there. Fund Egmont Key protection plan. There is no more space for camping. Missed out on great opportunity to purchase land because we didn't fund Florida Forever. Need public access to lands and special places. That is the way people enjoy and appreciate these special places. Lastly we need to have a perpetual wildlife trust fund. Twenty years from now, you don't want to say all the money is gone. Florida's economy is the environment, so it makes sense to preserve it.
- David White, Director of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) (7:00 p.m.) – NWF has 4000 members. Thank you for limiting council allocation to environmental projects. Ecosystem scale restoration is great for estuaries. Tamiami Bridge helps the Florida Bay, Everglades National Park and IRL. National estuaries and National Parks need large scale restoration. Encourage to influence Bucket 3 on smaller scale projects, in that bucket. Knows Council has no influence in local bucket. Leverage funds...NFWF, NRDA. RESTORE Act was not pushed to Congress as an economic package. There is a \$5.5B for economic claim from the legislature for the Panhandle to address economic losses.
- Andrew Shepard, University of South Florida, Research Collaborative (7:03 p.m.) – A gulf observing system would make the nation proud. I would like to know who is in charge; there are lots of restoration projects coming through. Science based projects are needed and have plenty of models for this like the Everglades restoration. Should have an accompanying science plan. Appendix A has 8 projects offshore. Need to balance with offshore. The term Science-based, what is that? Many models like Everglades. Lastly, Appendix A has 8 offshore projects. Spill was offshore!
- Steven Webster, WM consulting (7:04 p.m.) - I represent Monroe County on Florida Association of Counties and with CSA. My firm was brought up by the Inspector General's office to explain how one could monitor projects. Do you know when rules will be available? We have data gaps. Seagrass -have limited information and can't establish a baseline. Still need to gather data to make intelligent decisions. Can do oyster relays

correctly! Can have economic improvements that can be done quickly while looking at science for longer term solution.

JUSTIN responded: We don't know when rules are coming out; we are eager to see them.

- Jim Cassick, SCUBAnauts International (7:08 p.m.) – We organize youth with a love for environmental science and partner (Mote, FWC, etc) and dive. The more kids learn, the more they want to protect what they know. Baseline data is needed to restore, replenish, enhance the environment. We have a prime opportunity to collect data...coral, sponges.
- Cathy Harrelson, Gulf Coast Restoration Network (7:09 p.m.) - Appreciate the fact that you've listened to public comments and the plan reflects that. Don't think any dollar should be spent without looking at resilience. Sea level rise and storms are a huge factor. Want to see lists for public input. Don't do projects that could have environmental harm. Beach hotel in Alabama could do harm. Support science advisory committee. Speaking of Florida, I feel that your focus needs to say water quantity as a priority. Primary objective needs to be to restore flow of springs and rivers that feed coastal ecosystems. Enforcement has been relaxed in the state.
- TJ Marshall, Ocean Conservancy (7:11 p.m.) - Presented Council with an op-ed from the Restaurant Industry Association. Project criteria: Yes, we think they should be feasible, have design standards, be cost effective, have no impacts and need threshold criteria. On the supplemental criteria: multiple benefits, root cause, changes in environment. I would like to see a points system. On your Objectives, yes; may need more. Must be an integrated, regional and balance marine and coastal resources. Yes, community and science advisory board with a senior level chief scientist that is employed by the Council.
- 7:15 Mimi Drew Closing Remarks, Governor Scott's Representative on the Council: Great to see you. Appreciate time and energy everyone put into reviewing the draft plan. I've tried to capture the big picture overview of the comments. One of the interesting things was that everyone liked the goals and objectives. The other interesting thing was the wide interest supporting environmental restoration. Appreciate that fisherman, educators and others support the same approach. We will get some decent projects out the door as soon as we can. I heard there is a need for more money on fisheries data, bird habitat protection, turtle protection, environmental education. Requests were made for a regional approach. There is support for advisory committees and establishment of a long term wildlife protection fund. Don't want to fund projects that do any harm. I thought we had water quality and quantity pulled out in the objective, but have heard otherwise, so she will try to get that edited in the plan.
- 7:20 Gil McRae Closing Remarks: This is the second meeting we have hosted. I was worried we wouldn't have a large turnout but I am happy to see that we did. Thanks for taking time out of your evening to comment.

Two cards turned in from people that did not comment:

- Dr. Chris Simoniello, Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System – I want to thank former Council/current Task Force Team for taking public input seriously. Elements lacking in the original plan are now included in the draft Implementation Plan. Specifically the Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education components were noticeably absent. Reading these added elements has made this process achieve credibility among the shrug, organized, dedicated already exist in the GOM infrastructure. GCOOS Education and outreach Council, GOMA Environmental Education Network, Sea Grant, etc. We are willing, capable and passionate!
- Susan McMillan, President of Protect Our Waters, Inc. – The disaster has done untold destruction to our environment. I am president of a grassroots organization consisting of parents, teachers, business men, recreational fisherman, lawyers, doctors, nurses, etc. We came together in response to the abuse of toxic dispersants during the spill, pushing to halt dispersants and replace them with less toxic alternatives. Now the Gulf is sick and staying with underwater plumes of oil and dispersants. You must devote all the resources necessary to address and remediate the damage, not based on man-made geographical political lines and not base on politics. Involve the small grassroots public and small groups like mine in all decision making. The damage is huge, the response must be too.