



CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

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Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program

Strategic Communications Plan

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Working together to protect the natural environment of Florida from Venice to Bonita Springs to Winter Haven

Acknowledgements

In 2006, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Estuary Program (NEP) issued a call for proposals to provide NEP communications support. A \$15,000 grant was awarded to the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP) to develop a strategic multiyear communications plan for communicating with, educating and engaging the public that accounts for the unique characteristics, structure and goals of the CHNEP. This document is that plan.

The strategic communications plan supplements the program's *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan* (CCMP).

Select steps taken to complete the strategic communications plan include:

- A request for proposals was released in 2006, with three companies responding. One was selected but the contract was then canceled because deadlines were not met and it became clear that the product that company planned to produce would not be to the level anticipated.
- At its February 2009 meeting, the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) reviewed the history of the CHNEP outreach projects, which has also been referred to as public information and education. (See Appendix A.)
- At its July and October 2010 meetings, the CAC participated in a brainstorming session with Christine Wright-Isak, Ph.D.
- A style manual was developed by Janice Sylvain in 2010 to help provide consistency in all materials produced on behalf of the CHNEP.
- An audit of select CHNEP outreach products was completed by Christine Wright-Isak, Ph.D. in 2010.
- The directory of environmental educators, first created in 1997, was updated by Barbara Gugliotti in 2010. Posted on the CHNEP website, the directory is in a format that allows others to contribute.
- A bibliography of resources for the interested public that describes the natural environment and issues of southwest Florida was developed by Claire Miller in 2010.
- A social media audit and plan were developed by Carla Ulakovic in 2010.
- A report that provides evaluation tools and methods was developed by Responsive Management in 2010.

These materials are referenced in this plan. The final reports or products are available on the program website (www.CHNEP.org), as are references and a bibliography.

The strategic communications plan was adopted by the CAC at their meeting in February 2011. Updates will be done on the same schedule as the CCMP, which is now updated every five years (2001, 2008, 2013).

NOTE: This plan describes its communication in several ways: education, outreach, public information, etc. While these words aren't interchangeable, they are for this plan.

National Estuary Programs and Charlotte Harbor

The National Estuary Program was established in 1987 by an amendment to the Clean Water Act to identify, restore and protect estuaries along the coasts of the United States. On Dec. 27, 1994, Governor Lawton Chiles submitted an application to designate the estuarine system around Charlotte Harbor. The application was accepted by Congress and the CHNEP was created. There are now 28 “estuaries of national significance” within the National Estuary Program.

In 1996, a decision-making team of local citizens, elected officials, resource managers and resource users, known as the Management Conference, set to work to develop a 20-year CCMP that identifies the region’s common priority environmental issues as well as the actions needed to solve them. The CCMP was accepted in 2001. It was updated and accepted again in 2008 and again in 2013. (An update of the 20-year CCMP is initiated every five years. Minor changes can be made at any time.) The acceptance of the plan in 2001 marked the beginning of action to protect and restore the estuary and its watershed.

Issues identified in the 2001 CCMP include fish and wildlife habitat loss, water quality degradation and hydrologic alterations. A fourth issue, stewardship gaps, was added in the 2008 CCMP.

- **Fish and Wildlife Habitat Loss**
Degradation and elimination of headwater streams and other habitats caused by development, conversion of natural shorelines, cumulative impacts of docks and boats, invasion of exotic species, and cumulative tank system loadings, atmospheric deposition and groundwater.
- **Water Quality Degradation/Nutrient Enrichment**
Including but not limited to pollution from agricultural and urban runoff, point-source discharges, septic and future impacts.
- **Hydrologic Alterations**
Adverse changes to amounts, locations and timing of estuarine and freshwater flows.
- **Stewardship Gaps**
Promote programs and methods to educate the public and enhance personal responsibility for ecosystems of the Charlotte Harbor watershed.

In both the 2008 and 2013 editions, 64 priority actions describe the necessary management activities to attain the 15 quantifiable objectives which, in turn, address the four priority problems.

The specific purpose of the CHNEP is to ensure that the CCMP is implemented. The CCMP is the plan to protect the natural environment in Florida from Venice to Bonita Springs to Winter Haven through a partnership by engaging and empowering local citizens, elected officials, resource managers and resource users.

In all that it does, the CHNEP recognizes that:

- Estuaries cannot be protected if the land that drains into the waters isn’t also protected; therefore, the CHNEP focuses on the estuaries *and* their watersheds.
- CHNEP is a *partnership* program.

The region of concern includes the Myakka River, Peace River and tidal Caloosahatchee River watersheds. The 4,700-square-mile watershed includes Lee, Charlotte, DeSoto and Hardee counties and portions of Polk, Manatee and Sarasota counties.

According to the Bureau of Economic and Business Research's *Florida Estimates of Population 2009 and 2012*, approximately 2.1 million people, 11 percent of the state's residents, reside within the seven counties that participate in the CHNEP. Between 1980 and 2009, the population increased 46 percent. The population remained fairly stable through 2012. Among Florida counties, Charlotte County had the greatest percentage (34 percent) of population that is 65 or older. It is now ranked second.

The CHNEP's federal parent is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). EPA reviews CHNEP's progress every three years. The Program's local host is the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council. Many government agencies, counties and cities provide financial support to the CHNEP. Some outreach projects are also supported by sponsorships and donations from foundations, conservation organizations, businesses and individuals.

The CHNEP partnership is directed by the Management Conference of four committees and the Program Office. The program Management Conference is composed of the Management, Policy, Technical Advisory (TAC) and Citizens Advisory (CAC) committees and the Program Office. Each committee serves a specialized role in supporting the program goals and objectives. The Policy Committee is the final authority over the CHNEP. The Management Committee oversees program operation. The TAC guides technical decisions. The CAC represents the interests of the public.

The CAC members represent public concerns and transfer information back to their local communities, including distributing information to the public. The CAC provides a mechanism for citizens to advise the CHNEP and may introduce issues for the Management Conference's consideration. The CAC works closely with staff to reinforce and maintain public support for the CHNEP, develop public participation strategies and provide input on public education programs.

The CHNEP takes public involvement very seriously. It supports an active and meaningful CAC, which is well-respected by the other committees. It developed an advocacy and review procedure to allow everyone the opportunity to bring issues to the CHNEP Management Committee for their action.

CAC membership is open to anyone interested in furthering the work of the CHNEP; however, those interested in having voting rights must first submit an application to the CAC. The CAC can then nominate applicants to the Policy Committee, which appoints members with voting rights.

The CHNEP has undertaken a diverse range of outreach efforts, ranging from conferences, festivals, trainings, publications, website and grants. These are listed in Appendix A.

Strategic Communications Plan Development

In 1999, an education strategy was drafted by the CAC, adopted by the Management Conference and then included in the CCMP. This strategy includes four public education goals, four objectives, target audiences (everyone) and activities, including a newsletter, grants, displays, website, events and media relations. This strategy does not include an assessment of existing programs and products or a process to determine identification of more specific target audiences, prioritization of issues or prioritization of behaviors to change for the greatest impact.

Outreach Principles

Over time, outreach principles were developed to help guide communications efforts. These are:

- Increase awareness and understanding of the natural environment of southwest Florida and increase awareness and appreciation of the CHNEP.
- Further partnerships with those who are helping to protect the environment.
The CHNEP seeks to identify ways to support its partners. Examples of support include grants, professional development opportunities and support of umbrella organizations such as the Peace River Environmental Education Network (PREEN), the Myakka River Management Coordinating Council and the Estero Bay Agency on Bay Management.
- Fill in the gaps to successfully fulfill the CCMP.
Examples of how this has been done include coordinating Florida-friendly programs for residents of Hardee and DeSoto counties and coordinating the Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival, which is a regional event held in Charlotte County. The CHNEP does not try to compete with the good works of its partners.
- Be fair and equitable so that efforts are supported throughout the CHNEP study area, particularly within the seven counties that participate in the CHNEP Management Conference.
- Develop cost-effective products and programs that appeal to a broad base.
Web-based surveys are a commonly used tool.
- Be as efficient as possible.
For example, since 2005, the CHNEP website has been a repository of all documents created as a result of CHNEP involvement.
- Strive to change behavior, not just provide information.
Studies have documented that education alone often has little or no effect upon sustainable behavior. Community-based social marketing has been shown to be very effective at bringing about behavior change. Its effectiveness is due to its pragmatic approach. This approach involves identifying barriers to a sustainable behavior, designing a strategy that utilizes behavior change tools, piloting the strategy with a small segment of a community and, finally, evaluating the impact of the program once it has been implemented across a community.

Applying these principles means that the CHNEP must target audiences throughout the region, generating or strengthening awareness and understanding among a diverse range of stakeholders and constituents, and support a diverse range of programs.

Goals of the education strategy include:

- Increase number of partners and strengthen linkages with each partner.
- Influence partners to implement the CCMP.
- Strengthen partners' capability and the quality of implementation efforts; develop partners' skills.
- Increase the awareness and knowledge of the CHNEP and issues of concern in the CCMP and change behavior to help others so their actions help implement the CCMP.
- Increase the relevance, connectedness and quality of the partnership system.

This Strategic Communications Plan is an important component of the overall CCMP, helping to facilitate fulfillment of the entire CCMP. The priority actions that are primarily communications based are provided in Appendix A. *Stewardship gaps* is defined in the CCMP as “programs and methods to educate the public and enhance personal responsibility for ecosystems of the Charlotte Harbor watershed.”

“Communications activities must add up to more than a series of isolated events, such as the dissemination of an occasional publication or press release. Being *strategic* requires more organizations to be deliberate, innovative, savvy and less reactive in their communications practice.” Strategic Communications Audits, Communications Consortium Media Center

The quantifiable objective that this plan directly implements is SG-1:

By 2025, a minimum of 75 percent of all residents will have recalled attending a watershed event, reading watershed material or hearing watershed/estuary information on radio or TV. A minimum of 50 percent of all residents in the CHNEP study area can recognize estuaries and watersheds. A minimum of 10 percent of all residents will be able to claim personal actions that protect the estuaries and watersheds.

There are four problems identified in the CCMP of which stewardship is one. One quantifiable objective and 19 priority actions help address that problem. Within the other three problems, 11 priority actions also address stewardship. The 30 priority actions are provided in Appendix B.

Staff

Since August 2003, the CHNEP has employed four full-time employees. Since December 1996, one CHNEP staff person has been responsible to fulfill outreach responsibilities and to staff the CAC. This person was Melissa Upton until November 1999. Since January 2000, this person has been Maran Brainard Hilgendorf.

Budget

The CHNEP develops a workplan each year (fiscal year begins October 1). This workplan prioritizes the issues, projects and audiences to address in the upcoming year.

The schedule for developing each workplan is as follows:

- October: Finalize expenses and prepare report of status of projects (completed, contracted, continuing, etc.) and snapshot of budgets as of September 31.
- February: Prepare initial draft of new projects to undertake in the new year.
- April: Complete workplan based on budget and priorities.

Each step of the workplan development is considered by the CAC, and the full workplan is considered by the entire Management Conference. The workplan must be submitted to EPA in June.

With the generosity of its partners, the CHNEP has been able to creatively use the outreach funds available to leverage its success. For example, Carol Mahler received nominal payment and donated days of her time and her talent to write the popular CHNEP children's book *Adventures in the Charlotte Harbor Watershed*.

While funding varies from year to year, approximately \$180,000 is spent each year on outreach projects. In general, these funds have been spent as follows:

- \$42,000 on grants: \$30,000 on public outreach grants and \$12,000 on micro-grants
- \$25,000 on newsletter
- \$25,000 on calendar
- \$20,000 on children's book
- \$23,000 on events
- \$25,000 on projects that reach a target audience, internship or collateral
- \$20,000 on a special project, such as the Charlotte Harbor Watershed Summit and videos

Most of the financial support for events is provided by sponsors. Some of the budget for publications and target audience projects has been provided by sponsors and donations.

In 2010, the CHNEP reactivated Friends of Charlotte Harbor Estuary, Inc., its not-for-profit support organization. The CHNEP Friends are able to accept donations, registration fees and sponsorships by credit card and PayPal.

The CHNEP has begun applying for grants to help support additional outreach projects.

Highlights of Findings From Contracted Work

Complete reports and products produced are available on the CHNEP website (www.CHNEP.org), with highlights provided in this plan.

Situational Analysis: Chris Wright-Isak

This analysis determined that there are a great number of strengths in the outreach work conducted by the CHNEP and that the CHNEP "brand" is viewed positively. The weaknesses are the absence of diagnostic baseline data and a relatively modest budget.

Brainstorming Sessions With the CAC and Others: Chris Wright-Isak

The best approach to communications identified by the CAC at two brainstorming sessions (July and October 2009), in priority order, are:

1. Talk about the need to preserve and protect the estuary
2. Appeal to love of nature
3. Show how individual behavior affects the health of the estuary
4. Talk about the importance of the estuary to the economy

Social Media Audit and Plan: Carla Ulakovic

In order to build upon and strengthen its brand and reach new audiences, the CHNEP should incorporate social and digital media platforms into its traditional communications plan. There are a variety of social and digital media platforms to choose from to best suit program needs. Once platforms are selected, a commitment of at least weekly updates must be made to retain interest.

Evaluation Tools and Methodology: Responsive Management

This document provides recommendations on:

- Market Inventory Evaluation Tool to survey partners' outreach efforts and their success.
- Management Plan Survey Instrument to collect general population data regarding attitudes, knowledge levels and anticipation rates relevant to the needs and goals of the CHNEP.
- Needs Assessment Implementation Methodology provides planning, sampling and data collection guidance of "the way things are" and "the way things ought to be."
- Information Recommendations and Pertinent Data Sources outlines available knowledge resources.

The results of the contracted work show that the CHNEP outreach efforts have been strategic — even without a written plan — because of the power of the CCMP, the Management Conference and experienced staff. The CHNEP has been effectively working together as a team to achieve its purpose to fulfill the CCMP in order to protect the estuaries and watersheds. In addition, evaluation has been a key component of each project so that the *next* one is improved, based on lessons learned.

The CHNEP will continue to decide how to initiate new efforts, in part, as opportunities present themselves. The CHNEP does not have enough staff or funding to justify developing a matrix to answer "how to decide how to decide."

Next Steps

During the development of this plan, several needs were identified. (These are not in priority order.)

1. Further analyze and update newsletter and website to be certain the entire CCMP is featured in these programmatic tools, that information is easily available and that readily available technologies are used.
 - Use newer website software that will allow the program to take advantage of features such as RSS, which allows people to subscribe to receive updates as they are made to the website.
 - Post information in a way that allows others to update their information, including the directory of environmental educators and the directory of special places.
 - Provide information so it can be more easily found and so the reader doesn't need to know the funding source to find the information.
2. Develop an inventory of outreach needs similar to the one created for research and restoration. While several attempts have been made to begin this effort, none have produced worthwhile results. This inventory will help ensure the CHNEP does not duplicate someone else's good work and would allow the CHNEP to provide additional support by providing grant notices and grant-writing services.
3. Ensure that partners' initiatives, including those of EPA, are shared with others through the committees, newsletter, etc.
4. Consider memberships.

Many people consider themselves to be a member of the CHNEP because they receive the newsletter.
5. Consider partnerships.

Partners, especially those who receive support from the CHNEP, should be reviewed to be certain they all provide as much service to the CHNEP as the CHNEP provides to them. Increase the relevance, connectedness and quality of the partnership system.
6. Further the Friends of Charlotte Harbor Estuary, Inc., the not-for-profit organization that supports the work of the CHNEP.
7. Develop baseline understanding of people's perceptions.

A public opinion survey to provide a baseline random-sample survey of residents' awareness, preferences and actions related to estuarine and watershed health. Public outreach effectiveness is difficult to ascertain without the use of surveys and other methods. By conducting random sample surveys, baseline information will be established regarding familiarity and actions regarding estuaries and watersheds. Respondents will report their awareness of the program(s), understanding of the differences between an estuary and watershed, and identify recent behavioral changes associated with protecting our estuaries and watersheds.
8. Establish social media accounts that are updated at least weekly. Initially this might only include Facebook and Twitter.

Embrace technology because it helps reach new audiences.
9. Further develop all aspects of the CHNEP brand.

While the program name isn't helpful because it contains words most people don't know and is initially misunderstood by many to be a Charlotte County program, it is well-known and perceived positively.

10. Increase understanding of target audiences so that appropriate messages and products can be developed to reach these groups. Audiences currently being researched include:
 - Elementary students, their teachers and school district staff: children's book
 - College students: CHNEP assistance opportunities
 - Residents who haven't understood the natural environment of southwest Florida: new residents guide, special places guide, citizens academy
 - People who are on the water either recreationally or commercially to boat, fish, sightsee, etc.
 - People who don't speak English as their first language
 - Homeowners associations (HOA): Several attempts have been made to reach residents through their HOA; only in a few instances have these efforts been successful
 - Media
11. Remain involved in regional and national issues, concerns and programs. A few include:
 - Environmental Literacy, Ocean Literacy
 - Gulf of Mexico Networks, including Alliance, Sea Grant, etc.
 - State Committee for Environmental Education (SCENE), Stormwater Education Taskforce (SET), etc.
12. Education and Planning
 - Continue to learn as opportunities present themselves and needs arise.
 - Continue developing this Strategic Communications Plan.

Appendix A

CHNEP Outreach Initiatives History

Additional information is included in the annual workplan and the committee meeting packets. The workplans may reflect revised budgets but the projects themselves haven't been modified. These budget changes may have caused projects to be postponed or reduced in scope.

- 1996 Began outreach program that included a speakers program with a volunteer speakers bureau, media relations, display and general materials about the CHNEP.
- 1997 Began publication of quarterly newsletter, *Harbor Happenings*, to provide information about the “happenings” in the CHNEP study area that help implement the *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan*. The issues are typically distributed in January, April, July and September. Since spring 2000, all issues have been 12 pages. Since 2005, each subscriber also receives a calendar of donated images that depict the beauty of the natural environment. Since the winter 2007 issue, the newsletter has been printed in full color. Since spring 2009, most issues have been 16 pages and most include a 11x17 inch poster as the centerfold. As of the 2012, the publication is now referred to as a magazine, not a newsletter. Subscriptions increase approximately 2 percent with each issue, with approximately 9,800 mailed as of the fall 2010 issue and 13,000 as of the summer 2013 issue. At least 3,000 are distributed through libraries, nature centers and at events. With the summer 2013 issue, those who have been receiving *Harbor Happenings* since before 2009 will be asked to renew their subscription. With the winter 2014 issue we will begin requiring renewals every other year. The fall 2013 issue will be distributed with the 2014 calendar. Each issue is posted on the website as a PDF file but, as of the fall 2013 issue, subscribers may elect to receive it by email; however, they will not be mailed the calendar.
- 1997 Held Charlotte Harbor Public Conference & Technical Symposium. Changed name to Charlotte Harbor Watershed Summit and now hold every three years. Held in 2002, 2005, 2008 and 2011.
- 1997 Developed directory of environmental educators. Updated in 2010.
- 1997 Awarded first grants as Early Action/Demonstration Projects. Awarded annually until 2000.
- 1998 Created website and established email addresses for staff. The website has been redesigned to incorporate additional information and new software.
- In 2000, began posting Management Conference meeting agendas and minutes on website.
 - In 2005, made all CHNEP documents available online from the website, including PDF files of presentations made at CHNEP events. Began requesting registration for conferences and workshops via website. Relied more heavily on Internet to promote events, helping to reduce paper usage associated with events.
 - In 2012, added speaker's voice to presentations posted after events on website.
- 1998 Created first poster with art by Diane Pierce. Printed in 1998, 2002 and 2006.
- 1998 Created educational poster by Shelley Castle for use in classrooms and for the general public. Printed in 1998, 2002 and 2005.
- 1998 Published *Story of the Greater Charlotte Harbor Watershed* to help residents further their understanding and awareness of the natural environment of southwest Florida.

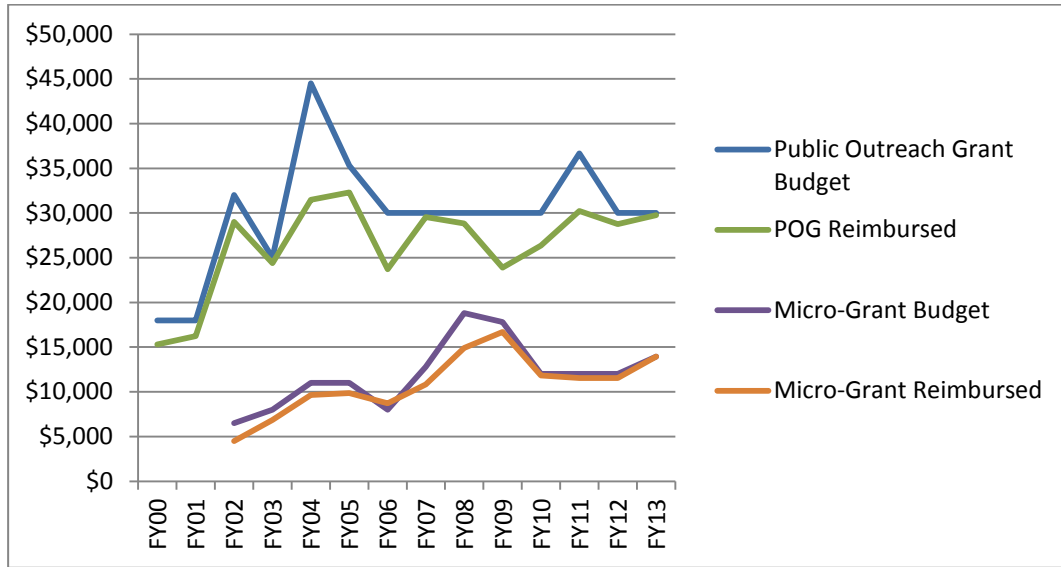
- 1999 Supported production of boater’s guide to Charlotte Harbor produced by Sea Grant and Charlotte County (1999, 2004, 2006 and 2008) and Lee County (2006).
- 2000 Awarded first public outreach grants (known as mini-grants from 2000 to 2003). Funds available annually. The number of projects supported with a public outreach grant has varied from 7 to 17 a year. See chart at end for contracted and expended funds.
- 2000 Initiated partnership with Florida Extension Program to offer Florida-friendly programming to residents of Polk, Hardee and DeSoto counties where programs such as Florida Yards & Neighborhoods had not yet been developed.
- 2000 Supported the development of the Peace River Environmental Education Network. PREEN was created as a partnership of businesses, government agencies, educators, citizens, and nonprofit organizations who joined together as an information-sharing network to forge cooperation and foster relationships regarding the environmental integrity of the Peace River watershed. The goals of PREEN has been accomplished so the network was disbanded in September 2011.
- 2001 Held first annual Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival. The festival is organized by many people representing several organization but the CHNEP assumed the lead responsibility in 2004. As of 2007, CHNEP served as the fiscal host. As of 2012, the Friends of Charlotte Harbor Estuary, Inc. serves as the fiscal host. The event is free, thanks to the generosity of many sponsors and proceeds from an on-site raffle of items donated primarily by the exhibitors. Since 2004 it has been held at the Charlotte Sports Park and, since 2008, it has been held on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. The Festival has had as many as 70 exhibitors and more than 4,000 people attending. From one review of the cars we know visitors traveled from 13 counties in Florida, 17 states and Canada.
- 2001 Began asking partners to celebrate annual National Estuaries Days. Changed to “Estuaries Day, Every Day” in 2008.
- 2001 Created Myakka River State Park poster from image donated by Clyde Butcher. Printed in 2001 and 2006.
- 2002 Created CCMP Summary as a concise, easy-to-read version of the CCMP. Revised and printed again in 2008 and 2013 (in development).
- 2002 Created Lake Hancock poster from image donated by Clyde Butcher. Printed in 2002 and 1996.
- 2002 Created video “Network of an Estuary” (27- and 8-minute versions) to explain CHNEP and video public service announcement “Keep It Picture Perfect.”
- 2002 Created workshop for environmental educators, held September 9, 2002. They asked that CHNEP offer affordable professional development workshops, which were begun in 2003. The Environmental Educators Workshops were re-convened on Dec. 2, 2011, April 12, 2012 and Sept. 6, 2013. The goal now is to offer these workshops or the trainings twice a year.
- 2002 Began offering micro-grants, which are small grants that are available year round. The number of projects supported with a micro-grant has varied from 19 in the first year to as many as 53 a year. See chart at end for amounts.
- 2002 Began holding conferences to address specific concerns:
- 2002: wetlands on clay settling ponds 2003: submerged aquatic habitat restoration
 - 2004: water budget 2004: land change and land monitoring
 - 2007: colored dissolved organic matter 2009: reservoirs
 - 2012: conservation lands 2013: conservation lands

- 2002 Initiated partnership with City of Cape Coral to offer Florida-friendly programming to residents. This grew to become Lee County's Florida Yards & Neighborhood Program.
- 2003 Began offering affordable professional development opportunities for partners to help them further their efforts in protecting the natural environment. All trainings were provided by NOAA Coastal Services Center except one. EPA provided the 2006 training.
 - Project Design and Evaluation Course: Dec. 8–10, 2003
 - Navigating in Rough Seas—Public Issues and Conflict Management: Dec. 7–9, 2004
 - Web Content Design and Evaluation: Aug. 18, 2005
 - Community Culture and the Environment: A Guide to Understanding a Sense of Place: May 10–11, 2006
 - Project Design and Evaluation Course: Dec. 12–14, 2006
 - Coastal Community Planning and Development: Dec. 4–5, 2007
 - Building a Foundation for Smart Growth in Manatee County: July 30-31, 2008
 - Public Issues and Conflict Management: Dec. 16–17, 2008
 - Planning for Meaningful Evaluation: May 12–13, 2010
 - Introduction to Coastal GIS: May 1-3, 2012
 - Public Issues and Conflict Management: Dec. 5-6, 2012
 - Public Issues and Conflict Management: Jan. 16-17, 2012
 - Project Design and Evaluation, Dec. 12-13, 2013
- 2003 Began sponsoring wading trips until 2012 led by several local environmental organizations to provide hands-on opportunities for the public to experience the environment. Wading trips were supported in 2001-2002 through grants.
- 2003 Began holding annual public conferences focused on a smaller region within the CHNEP study area:
 - 2003: Caloosahatchee River 2004: Lemon Bay
 - 2005: Cape Coral canals 2006: Peace River
 - 2007: Estero Bay 2008: Everglades
- 2003 Began offering internships and hiring assistance to help implement outreach initiatives.
 - 2003: Cheryl P. Graffam
 - 2004: Alexis Johnson, Hardee County Outdoor Classroom, Ernesto Lasso de la Vega, Sandra Scaramuzzi
 - 2005: Bonnie Harper
 - 2007: Sue Scott
 - 2008: Shabnam Farhadi
 - 2009: Sarah Larsen, Sunny Diver, Carla Ulakovic
 - 2011: Anne-Marie Miles, Julianna da Frota
 - 2012: Sarah Leong
 - 2013: Kharli Rose
- 2004 Established relationship with WVCU Public Media.
 - 2004: Each year since 2004, WVCU has sponsored the annual Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival by donating radio spots.
 - 2005: *Florida Landscape* television series broadcast by WVCU.
 - 2005: Three workshops in Hardee and DeSoto counties focused on Florida-friendly yards. These workshops continued under the leadership of the CHNEP.
 - 2006: *We're All Interconnected* virtual classes for Curious Kids Club.

- 2006: Five 2-minute interstitials on estuaries, watersheds, animals, mangroves and seagrasses, and one 7.5-minute video to help boaters understand the importance of seagrasses, how to spot them and how to minimize damage to these valuable plants; interstitials are broadcast by WGCU.
 - 2007: Revamped Curious Kids Club to focus on natural environment of southwest Florida and update technology/features.
 - 2008: *Neighbor-to-Neighbor Florida-Friendly Landscaping* video series featuring a 27-minute video and 10 one-minute interstitials. Between 2008 and 2011, the videos produced in 2006 and 2008 were broadcast by WGCU a total of 2,405 times!
 - 2011: *Sea life in Southwest Florida Estuaries: Animals in the fresh and salt water mix* videos series features the animals that live in the waters of our estuaries in eight "virtual wading trips." Estuaries — where fresh and salt water mix — are important habitats for a variety of sea life. The longest video features 18 experts and nearly 50 animals. Seven other videos range from 1 to 3 minutes in length and feature megafauna, sharks eye, univalves, crabs, creeks in fish, sea hairs and invertebrates. In 2012, WGCU broadcast these videos a total of 470 times.
 - 2012: Sponsored Curious Kids. As a benefit of sponsorship, a radio and television public service announcement about CHNEP was created and broadcast.
 - 2013: A series of short videos are being produced for the CHNEP Citizens Academy to explain difficult concepts and to motivate.
- 2004 Held four “EcoEconomy: Benefiting Guests and the Natural Environment” workshops for hotel staff and others who work with visitors in Lee County. Partnered with Lee County Visitors Bureau and Parks and Recreation.
- 2005 Produced first annual calendar depicting the beauty and diversity of the natural environment using donated images submitted each year by 42 to 180 people. People can submit up to three photographs or paintings, which are posted online for the public to help select. Since 2005, the number printed has grown from 10,000 to 34,000 with the 2014 calendar. Since 2008, donations have helped offset costs and, since 2012, sponsors have supported the calendar. The calendar is mailed to *Harbor Happenings* subscribers and are distributed by our partners.
- 2005 Began holding conservation landscaping workshops in Hardee and DeSoto counties at least once a year. See entry in 2000 and 2002. Other five counties in study area each have active programs, such as Florida Native Plant Societies and Florida Yards & Neighborhood, offering similar opportunities in their counties.
- 2006 Began translating into Spanish select CHNEP materials, including the *Harbor Happenings* newsletter, through 2012.
- 2006 Began sponsoring annual Sustainable Communities Conference. Serve as fiscal agent.
- 2006 Created a temporary tattoo for children.
- 2007 Began giving three-power binoculars to children who attend select events and who learn the word estuary.
- 2008 Created children’s book *Adventures in the Charlotte Harbor Watershed: A Story of Four Animals and Their Neighborhoods* and distributed free to approximately 18,000 children through seven school districts. Books were distributed to children since the 2007–8 school year. Curriculum was developed. The art was converted to line art. Lee County School District created a series of read-a-long videos with the author, educators and a team of *Adventurers*, who were fifth grade students.

- 2009 Created CHNEP1995 channel on YouTube and posted all CHNEP videos as they were completed. The videos are also available on DVD. In 2013, the videos will be added to Vimeo.
- 2010 Partnered with Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in 2010 and 2011 to sponsor their successful summer ecotour operator series in Lee County.
- 2010 Hosted the Association of National Estuary Programs fall 2010 meeting in Punta Gorda.
- 2010 Reactivated the Friends of Charlotte Harbor Estuary, Inc., a 501(c) 3 support organization for the CHNEP, to accept donations, registration fees and sponsorships.
- 2011 Developed a communications plan (this document) so that outreach efforts strategically help fulfill the CCMP.
- 2011 Received grant from National Geographic through the University of Miami to develop *Understanding Valued Ocean Resources and Their Protection through E-Learning*.
- 2011 Lee County Northwest Regional Library invited CHNEP to develop exhibit that will be open for the first 6-8 weeks of 2012.
- 2011 Recognized students at five science fairs held in the CHNEP study area whose project helps fulfill the CCMP. In 2011, one student from Edison Science Fair was selected. In 2012, a student from each of the five fairs was selected. In 2013, an additional student project was selected at the Edison Science Fair because of the number of students involved.
- 2013 Published special places map of 35 state parks, nature centers, children's museums, aquarium, forest, wildlife management area and national wildlife refuge, in summer 2013 issue of *Harbor Happenings* to help people know where they can go to learn about the natural environment of southwest Florida. Will create an online map of the more than 500 special places in the study area.
- 2013 Created a song writing contest. Each person may submit up to three entries by August 1. This contest is open to amateur and professional songwriters of any age. There is no fee to enter. Ownership is retained by the creator of the songs submitted. By entering this contest, the CHNEP is allowed to use the songs in its materials and at events and allow others to perform your song for CHNEP purposes.
- 2013 Created a program to reach up to 100 select high school students from Lee, Charlotte, Sarasota, Manatee, Polk, Hardee and DeSoto counties who want to learn more about the natural environment and related careers. Students will learn from experts on habitat, water quality, water flow and stewardship. They will then represent the CHNEP by sharing findings with classmates and serving on an advisory committee to improve how we reach students and others through social media and in other ways. Students will convene on Friday, Sept. 20 at "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel.
- 2013 Initiated a social media outreach program, including YouTube, blogs, Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr.
- 2013 Created a Citizens Academy, an online e-learning site for the public to learn more about the natural environment of southwest Florida. The site will include games, quizzes, videos and articles. As funds are made available the topics covered will expand and a guide to help citizens implement best management practices to protect the natural environment will be published.
- 2013 Articles in the program magazine, *Harbor Happenings*, will be tied to concerns identified in the CCMP to determine if all are addressed in the magazine.

Snapshot of Public Outreach and Micro-Grants Awarded by the CHNEP



Sometimes the applicant isn't able to accept the grant or is unable to take on the project proposed. In many cases, the amount reimbursed is less than the amount contracted. FY13 details are as of June 15, 2013. One project for \$3,500 approved in FY11 will be completed by August 31, 2013.

Appendix B

CCMP 2013 Priority Actions that Help Fulfill Stewardship Objectives (These did not change from 2008.)

Priority actions

- SG-A Gauge public involvement.
- SG-B Provide people with opportunities to be involved in research, monitoring and restoration activities.
- SG-C Identify underrepresented populations and develop methods to include them in estuary and watershed protection.
- SG-D Produce watershed and estuary communication tools.
- SG-E Offer grants to broaden participation of individuals and groups in implementing the CCMP.
- SG-F Provide events that involve people in the stewardship of their local natural resources and opportunities to connect them to their watershed.
- SG-G Implement target audience programs.
- SG-H Incorporate estuary and watershed protection in educational curricula.
- SG-I Conduct new resident programs to inform and encourage environmental stewardship.
- SG-J Identify and showcase accomplishments and excellent examples including research findings, restoration, legislative changes and outreach successes using a variety of methods.
- SG-K Present scientific information in a form readily understood by the majority of people.
- SG-L Implement the Advocacy and Review Procedures.
- SG-M Vigorously pursue the Long Range Funding Strategy and funding mechanisms to implement watershed and estuary protection.
- SG-N Update comprehensive inventories of research, restoration, legislative and outreach needs.
- SG-O Create incentives to protect desired ecosystem resources.
- SG-P Incorporate into federal, state and local permits and public works improved standard practices that better protect estuaries and watersheds.
- SG-Q Build capacity for communities and their local leadership to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change through joint efforts.
- SG-R Track and present monitoring data according to CHNEP adopted targets in Environmental Indicators.
- SG-S Post raw data, geographic information system (GIS) and technical analysis on the Internet under the data management strategy.

Other priority actions

- WQ-K Implement conservation landscaping plant programs throughout the CHNEP study area, including the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods program.
- WQ-L Increase the use of personal and home best management practices by consumers throughout the watershed to reduce nonpoint-source pollution.
- WQ-M Support public involvement programs addressing water quality issues.
- HA-P Support public involvement programs addressing watershed management issues of hydrology, water resource issues, water conservation and water use.

- FW-H Bring environmentally sensitive land under protection through ownership and/or management and expand conservation areas, reserves and preserves, including undeveloped platted lots.
- FW-I Advocate land acquisition and conservation easement programs.
- FW-J Provide information on the economic, social and environmental benefits of protected land.
- FW-K Acquire as much of Babcock Ranch as possible for public stewardship and promote conservation management of the entire ranch.
- FW-N Provide education programs on the impacts of invasive exotic plants and exotic nuisance animals.
- FW-O Provide multifaceted environmentally responsible boater education programs.
- FW-P Support public involvement programs in habitat and wildlife issues.