



Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 14th, 2022
10:00 AM-2:00 PM
Zoom Virtual Meeting

Draft Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
December 14, 2022

Members Present via Zoom:

Bridget Washburn, Glades County
Kayton Nedza, Hardee County
Scott Perry, Hendry County
Pete Quasius, Hendry County
Nicole Johnson, Lee County
Harry Phillips, Lee County
Julie Morris, Manatee County
Debi Osborne, Manatee County
Tom Palmer, Polk County

Others Present:

Jennifer Hecker	CHNEP
Nicole Iadevaia	CHNEP
Megan Sosbe	CHNEP
Phyllis Wojcik	Charlotte County applicant
Heather Bryen	fill in for Aaron Zimmerman (Sarasota)
Dr. Emily Hall	Mote Marine Laboratory
Michelle	Conservancy new water quality policy manager
Jen Vreeland	Gulf of Mexico Coastal Observation System and Gulf Coast Acidification
Network	
Janet Reimer	SOCAN

Agenda Item #1 – Call to Order and Introductions — Debi Osborne, Co-Chair

Co-Chair, Debi Osborne called the meeting to order at **10:02 AM**. Introductions were then made.

Agenda Item #2 – Agenda Additions or Deletions — Debi Osborne, Co-Chair

No additions or deletions were made to the agenda.

HARRY PHILLIPS MOVED, SECONDED BY KAYTON NEDZA TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS AS PRESENTED. THE MOTION WAS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION

Agenda Item #3 – Public Comments on Agenda Items

No public comments on agenda items were made.

Agenda Item #4 – August 24th, 2022 Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes — Debi Osborne, Co-Chair

- a. No changes were suggested for the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) August 24th, 2022 meeting minutes.

Bridget Washburn MOVED, SECONDED BY Harry Phillips TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS AS PRESENTED. THE MOTION WAS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

Agenda Item #5 – CAC Member Applicant Introduction — Debi Osborne, Co-Chair

A short description was given by Co-chair on membership duties and there was encouragement to the present CAC committee to seek out eager and motivated members for application. Phyllis Wojcik, a prospective applicant, gave a brief introduction on herself. Phyllis was a previous high school biology teacher and has been involved in several CHNEP events including the earth echo water challenge, sea grass monitoring, and horseshoe crab monitoring. She also participates in a burrowing owl survey in Cape Coral, and volunteers in Manatee Park.

Agenda Item #6 – CHNEP Update — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP

CHNEP's Executive Director, Ms. Jennifer Hecker, presented on programmatic activity occurring since the last Citizen's Advisory Committee meeting. Highlights are as follows:

The CHNEP staff and partners continue recovery efforts from Hurricane Ian, which made landfall in Southwest Florida on 9/28 as a Category 4 hurricane. Multiple estuaries and watersheds within CHNEP area were severely impacted. CHNEP spent time at the end of September and beginning of October putting together an emergency Water Quality task force for event sampling to aid public safety efforts and information gathering and dissemination- creating a spreadsheet to coordinate where data was being collected and where data gaps existed (Note: many partners had damage to offices and equipment and were without power for up to a month afterward.) CHNEP staff also participated in sampling efforts to as an additional service to our partners. CHNEP participated in interviews post-storm for Business Insider, Sanibel Captiva Insider, and the Washington Post.

The CHNEP transferred to a new fiscal host Charlotte County on October 1. Despite these difficulties, CHNEP, City, and County staff are continuing to push forward host transfer tasks; creating the operational frameworks needed including creating new account and project codes, inputting EPA 320 and BIL grants through County grant approval process and submitting them on Grants.gov, getting all personnel set up as County employees in County systems, etc. At the September meeting, the CHNEP Policy Committee Meeting approved new CHNEP host Charlotte County Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as well as approved the amended work plan and budget for FY22 and FY23 work plans and budgets. Two CHNEP abstracts for the 2022 Florida Resiliency Conference were accepted. Finished gathering partner data for 2022 NEPORT Congressional Reporting Survey to report on their annual conservation, management, and restoration accomplishments. This was uploaded into the EPA portal by CHNEP staff in September and included over 75 habitat entries. The CHNEP received and reviewed 6 Conservation Grant Applications for the FY23 program and presented all 6 to the CAC presentation on 8/24 with a recommendation to grant a total of \$10,200 for 4 of the projects. Final reports and deliverables were reviewed for Conservation Grants due to be completed on or before September 30, 2022 and submitted requests for payment from the City for a total of \$12,690 in reimbursements. CHNEP staff recorded a presentation on moving water to restore rivers and wetlands for the Florida Climate Week 2022 virtual conference. Staff also prepared two poster presentations on both the Habitat Restoration Needs Project as well as CHNEP Hydrological Restoration Planning Projects for the upcoming Restore America's Estuary Conference.

The CHNEP 2023 Nature Calendar design was completed and went to printer, though unfortunately delayed several weeks due to Hurricane Ian affecting print company located in Fort Myers, FL (30,000 copies will be sent out to all individual subscribers, as well as shipments and deliveries to numerous

counties). The educational Harbor Happenings insert in this year's calendar features information about the blue carbon and the important role those natural systems such as seagrass meadows, mangroves, and salt marsh play. Staff has been working on the project since April to gather and vet volunteer photos and to design, print, and mail this annual centerpiece of CHNEP outreach.

CHNEP staff members attended the Restoration Aquaculture Workshop hosted by UF/IFAS at Tampa Bay Watch in St. Petersburg. During this workshop, CHNEP staff met with stakeholders throughout Florida to discuss restoration aquaculture and its growing role in Florida as a tool to improve water quality focusing on existing data gaps, as well as legal challenges around the expansion of restoration aquaculture, including permitting and policy. The CHNEP hosted an educational Microplastics Event for thirty registered participants to educate on what microplastics are, their impact on the environment, and how to reduce them. The event featured a hands-on activity where participants created a plastic wrap alternative with bee's wax for home use, as well as a Coastal Clean Up in Punta Gorda at the Ponce de Leon Park. Four new outreach banners on Mangroves, Seagrasses, Birds of Florida, and Florida Friendly Landscaping were created for outreach events and the Spring/Summer edition of the Harbor Happenings magazine with printing and distribution to 6,000 direct households via the subscription list as well as drop shipments to the ten libraries in each county CHNEP services. The PDF version was placed online.

Agenda Item #7 – New Conservation Grant Application Package - Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP

Since 2001, CHNEP has offered grants to help establish and maintain environmental education efforts and further partnerships to help implement the CCMP. Now that the CHNEP is hosted by Charlotte County, changes will be made to the Conservation Grant program and application in a continuing effort to make these funds easily accessible to community groups who are furthering the to support portions of larger projects that implement the CHNEP's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). This item was to inform the Citizen's Advisory Committee on upcoming changes so that they continue to fulfill their role in seeking out groups within their respective communities to make them aware of the CHNEP Conservation Grant program and how it can be beneficial to their projects and programs. New applications will be available on the website by February 1st, 2023. The application deadline is April 1st, 2023. Max award amount increased to \$3,000.00 to \$4,999.00. Pay by check by deliverables or outcomes, streamlined. Match will not be required but is preferred towards non-excluding programs that are not starting with many resources or funds. Projects related to permitting activities will not be eligible, CHNEP is non-regulatory. Projects that are asking for gift card sponsorship as incentives will not be eligible. There is still approximately \$19,500.00 to fund more projects.

The CHNEP does not fund the following:

- Events or services for which there is an admission fee or charge; CHNEP will consider providing support for scholarships to allow participation by those who would not otherwise be able to,
- Restoration or improvements on private property,
- Projects that personally financially benefit the applicant,
- Political action or legislative advocacy,
- Fundraising activities,
- Projects completed prior to the award of the grant,
- Items that will be sold by the grant recipient,
- Reprinting of existing material unless part of a larger educational program,
- Capital improvement or endowment funds or usual operating costs

A brief description was given of the responsibilities of the CAC membership duties include: Communicating activities of CHNEP to respective organizations, communities, and interest groups and communicate comments and concerns to the CHNEP Management Conference, participate in CAC meetings to discuss and provide input for the Management and Policy Committees to consider, recommend

and participate in public outreach on behalf of the CHNEP, provide input into CHNEP Conservation Grants applications, share opportunities with the community, and assist groups to apply for them. The CAC developed a communication strategy to depend on the members to communicate needs of their counties conservation grants program which is designed to stimulate the grassroots community idea of natural resource protection and restoration and non-profit partnerships preference given to underserved communities or new applicants.

Current Conservation Grants include:

2023 Project	Grant Deadline	Award Amount Approved	Applicant	Due Date
Educational Signage and Habitat Restoration	8/1/22	\$3,000.00	Cape Coral Wildlife Trust, Inc.	9/1/23
Pedersen Preserve Pine Restoration Area Habitat Improvement	8/1/22	\$3,000.00	Green Horizon Land Trust	9/1/23
Caloosahatchee River Drone Wading Bird Nest Survey	8/1/22	\$1,200.00	Church Environmental	9/1/23
Suncoast Reef Rovers Underwater Clean Up Events	8/1/22	\$3,000.00	Suncoast Reef Rovers	9/1/23
MRMCC Web Hosting	8/1/22	\$220.00	Myakka Wild and Scenic River Program, FDEP/FPS	9/1/23
Total This Cycle		\$10,420.00		

Agenda Item #8 – Gulf of Mexico Coastal Acidification Networks’ Stakeholder Feedback Project — Dr. Emily Hall and Janet Reimer, Mote Marine Laboratory

The Southeast Coastal Acidification Network (SOCAN) and the Gulf of Mexico Acidification Network (GCAN) were funded by the NOAA Ocean Acidification Program to create a stakeholder feedback survey to inform the acidification community on stakeholder monitoring needs. The survey draws from information collected by SOCAN and GCAN in support of the Interagency Working Group on Ocean Acidification’s Nation Coastal Communities Vulnerability Assessment. After the presentation, committee members were asked a series of questions on their understanding of acidification, their perception of the impacts of acidification on the environment, and where they think future research should focus. Website: <https://www.socan.secoora.org/gcan> with Janet Reimer After the survey one member questioned if there were any sensors placed in groundwater locations in the SOCAN network. The presenters confirmed that there are no sensors discreetly looking at the groundwater, sampling happens by funding available. Jennifer Hecker explained the challenges of introducing the topic to the public and encourages the CAC as professionals to become educated in order to educate others. She also suggests presenting field photos to the public to show the impact of acidification. SOCAN representatives explain how they as an organization raise awareness with experiments to show how acidification affects animals (sometimes even naming the process ‘osteoporosis of the sea’, time scales of what is happening even though the time scale of how it affects biota is too microscopic and minute to show to the public readily. One member shared their experience in New England with acid rain noting that it is more difficult to show acidification when it is underwater, suggesting the comparison of acidification to everyday life (car being affected by acid rain). Members collectively agree that the public doesn’t necessarily need to understand the chemistry behind it, rather they need to understand why resources they love so much (coral reefs, medicines, recreation, fishery industries) will die if conditions are not improved. CAC members were then approached with discussion focusing on how they can take this issue back to their communities and how they can encourage the public to become engaged. Members concluded that by lessening plastic use, lessening fossil fuel burning, and

increasing the public's connection to the gulf and their estuaries, the more the public will care and understand the importance of preventing acidification. Ms. Jennifer Hecker asked if there were any organizations actively talking about acidification to which one member mentioned Growing Climate Solutions who are going to create a newsletter on acidification and connect with SOCAN and GCAN for resources. SOCAN announced that lesson plans and resources to educate others on acidification can be found on their website as well as NOAA's. One member questioned whether oyster spat recruitment surveys and collecting water quality data would assist in the prevention of acidification, he also questioned what could be used to stop the process. SOCAN stated that no matter the solution, it will take a long time. NOAA is currently calling for projects focused on removing CO2 from seawater. One member questioned if incorporating a slightly basic solution into rivers would help control acidification although coastal acidification is very localized, maybe we need to work closely with reducing point sources to prevent CO2 and excess nutrients from getting into the water. Growing different algae could be another possibility similarly to practices on Long Island. Discussion of transplanting kelp from beds in the Pacific posed concerns of invasive species management and the pros and cons of transplanting and planting non-native plants to combat acidification.

Agenda Item #9 – Hurricane Ian Webpage for Community Engagement Discussion — Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP Director of Research and Restoration

The region continues recovery efforts from Hurricane Ian, which made landfall in Southwest Florida on 9/28 as a Category 4 (nearly a 5) hurricane. Multiple estuaries and watersheds within CHNEP area were severely impacted. Partnership members at local and state governments and agencies continue clean-up and rebuilding, which may last months or years. Nicole Iadevaia presented the Hurricane Ian Landing Page created by CHNEP located on the website and showed members all the features and resources that it has to offer. This presentation highlighted the importance of building partnerships and monitoring relationships to cover sampling efforts when times like these hits, assessing organizations' capacities. CAC members were pleased with the hurricane page and impressed with the volume and efficiency of how it was created. One member was pleased that agricultural land impacts were included as they were designed to be resilient and that are proving just that. The CAC also believed that the page can be a lesson used to teach and educate others for future disasters. One member agrees that there are a lot of gaps in data during post disaster events and that her organization is looking to collect the best resources to link to their webpage, the CHNEP dashboard will be included. Another member expressed their interest to see the follow up of sewage impacts from 2004 to their current status. Ms. Jennifer Hecker states that human health and safety response plans are in place, but there are little to no environmental response plans, staff, and material capacities to handle such situations. All resources were being utilized for Human Health and Safety, since there was a need in expedited services especially bacteria testing, there were also many lost samples due to preservation and transportation issues. Ms. Hecker expresses that having PO and SOW on hold for emergency responses would be extremely helpful in these times of need. Members collectively agreed that NEPs and the government need to understand that we are going to be experiencing disasters more often and there needs to be a system to fill in gaps in environmental emergency response. This time environmental organizations were able to make do with what we had but there is a need to solidify a plan to increase resiliency and efficiency.

Agenda Item #10 – 2023 Southwest Florida Climate Summit Planning — Jennifer Hecker, Executive Director CHNEP

This March 15th -16th 2023, CHNEP will be organizing the 3rd annual Southwest Florida Climate Summit to share knowledge, showcase climate action, engage leadership across sectors, and mobilize collaboration throughout the Central & Southwest Florida region. This summit will feature innovative thinkers exchanging dialogue and ideas on expanding the region's capacity to respond to climate challenges, and towards building increased community resiliency. CAC members serve as CHNEP partners in various communities throughout Central and Southwest Florida, and members have recently completed Climate

Change Needs Assessment surveys to help further understanding of the needs in each county/region when it comes to Community Resiliency in response to Climate Change. In light of this, the CAC is invited to work together with CHNEP staff to build an even bigger, better event this year and to help with planning and promotion. CAC members are encouraged to find submissions from the community to present as it is important to showcase and gather people on the issues of climate and what research and projects are being conducted. Presentations will be posted on our YouTube after the summit has concluded, will not be webcasted at this time.

Agenda Item #11 – 2023 Watershed Summit Planning — Jennifer Hecker, Executive Director CHNEP

The Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership is once again hosting the tri-annual Watershed Summit as a free public event, it will be held June 21st -22nd, 2023. This Summit was created as a way for the public, local scientists, land managers, policy makers, and resource users to come together to share and engage on research and restoration efforts and critical environmental issues in Central and Southwest Florida. The 2023 Watershed Summit will be an opportunity for our partners to share their latest findings and to network. CAC members are encouraged to help plan and promote this event as well as to share your work or to invite pertinent speakers from your area to submit an abstract to share their ongoing work in order to advance the knowledge and understanding of the natural environment in the CHNEP area. Presentations will be selected based on relevance to our Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) specifically supporting our four action points (water quality improvement, hydrological restoration, fish, wildlife, and habitat protection, and public engagement).

Agenda Item #12 – CHNEP Technical Projects Updates — Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP Director of Research and Restoration

In addition to the items featured earlier on the agenda, several other research and/or restoration projects (or phases of projects) in the program area are currently underway with CHNEP FY19- 22 funds. A brief overview was given on projects currently identified in the FY23 Work Plan (Including both EPA and FY22-23 BIL funding). Additionally, the CHNEP Water Atlas is nearing completion on several enhancements from the current year that will be beneficial to multiple users; these pages will be previewed during the discussion so that TAC members will be able to dive in and access resources easily. There will also be a brief overview of upcoming improvements on the CHNEP Water Atlas scheduled for FY23. The CHNEP is also hoping to utilize the EPA's Equity Strategy Template to provide environmental justice to all communities in the CHNEP area especially inland. Current or Recently Completed Projects include: CHNEP Water Atlas /CHNEP Water Atlas Trends Enhancements, Lower Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Hydrological Modeling Project, Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network Project, and Myakka Headwaters Preserve Restoration Project. New projects include Pine Island Flatwoods Restoration Project, Tiki Point Harbor Walk Living Shoreline Restoration Project, and County Climate Vulnerability Assessments.

Agenda Item #13 – CAC County Updates — Debi Osborne , Co-Chair

Bridget Washburn, Glades County;

Looking forward to sharing resources on website, suggested Dr. Charles Beknight for speaking at the Climate Summit on how to be resilient not only environmentally, but mentally. Resources for recovery are not always distributed in the most even way. GRIT – environmental, equity, and resiliency program.

January 17th hosting Southwest Climate and Community Summit, looking at climate challenges and resilience strategies.

Kayton Nedza, Hardee County;

City of Wauchula resiliency plan has been submitted, Peace River got extremely high during Ian. Storms are becoming more frequent, and predicts another devastating storm will come in the next 5 years. Planning to do a peace river study; similar to the one conducted in 2009, between Polk and Hardee, assessing and documenting what the river looks like now over the span of 10 days by kayak.

Nicole Johnson, Lee County;

Everglades Coalition Summit January 26-28, C-43 reservoir construction is delayed by a year hoping to expedite, Lake Okeechobee release schedule will be released by this summer. State of FLDEP updating the stormwater rule, hoping for significant improvements. The conservancy is reconstituting their ripple effect webpage to educate the public on red tide and water quality. They are also taking part in the nature is our best defense outlook. Introduced Michelle the new water quality policy manager.

Harry Phillips, Lee;

Cape Coral is still in recovery mode, labs switched from environmental to human health and safety, so testing was delayed. Developing a protocol to continue doing environmental monitoring during times of need and wants to plan a city and waterway clean up. Suggests an add to the Ian webpage natural ways to prevent storm damage and resiliency. Yacht club got destroyed and hoping to implement living seawall and engaging the public in its development. Suggests that the community are potentially behind in climate change advocacy and projects.

Debi Osborne, Manatee County;

Conservation foundation, 363-acre restoration swift mud. Purchased adjoining 69 acres (uplands), in process of acquiring 8 acres in Lemon Bay providing mainland access for boats on a canal, rural lands doing well holding water post Ian. Presented to Florida Forever, adding 900 acres to the list for potential acquisition. Passed land acquisition but have not been able to present to county commission.

Tom Palmer, Polk County;

Referendum to start the environmental lands purchase program, funding will not start until 2024, committee will review applications.

Heather Byrns (filling in for Aaron Zimmermann), Sarasota County;

Assisting with volunteer waterway cleanup, increased marine debris, Jan 14th is the next waterway cleanup, hosting HOA expo on responsible environmental water practices soon.

Agenda Item #14 – Public Comment — Debi Osborne , Co-Chair

None.

Agenda Item #15 – Future Meeting’s Topics, Location and Date — Debi Osborne, Co-Chair

Topics: TBD

Dates for 2023: 4/26/23, 8/23/23, 12/13/23

Location: TBD

Agenda Item #16 – Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 1:52 PM.

Links and Resources posted the Zoom Chat:

- SOCAN Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/socanOA>
- SOCAN Twitter page: https://twitter.com/Southeast_OCAN
- Sign up for the SOCAN newsletter, news, updates about acidification, education, and research: <https://www.socan.secoora.org/contact-us>
- Get involved with the GAN: <https://gcoos.org/gcan/join/>
- Acidification survey for others NOT present at the meeting <https://forms.gle/exsZX1fCmuncYZRU9>
- SOCAN/GCAN homepage: <https://www.socan.secoora.org/gcan>
- SOCAN educational materials: <https://www.socan.secoora.org/educational-materials>
- Everglades Coalition Conference agenda and registration: <https://www.evergladescoalition.org/>

DRAFT