



CHNEP Management Committee Meeting
Friday January 9th, 2026, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm
Charlotte County Centennial Park
Large Multipurpose Room
1120 Centennial Blvd., Port Charlotte, FL 33953

AGENDA

1. Call to Order and Introductions — Melynda Brown, Co-Chair
2. Agenda Additions or Deletions — Melynda Brown, Co-Chair
3. Public Comment on Agenda Items — Melynda Brown, Co-Chair
4. Management Committee September 5, 2025 Meeting Minutes — Melynda Brown, Co-Chair
5. TAC Report — Arielle Taylor-Manges, TAC Co-Chair
6. CAC Report — Harry Phillips, CAC Co-Chair
7. CHNEP Update — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP
8. CHNEP FY26 Call for Projects and Amended Work Plan – Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP
9. Finance Strategy Updates — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP
10. Blue Green Mitigation Strategies and Technologies — Dail Laughinghouse, Ph.D, University of Florida
11. Red Tide and Lake Okeechobee Management— Lenny Landau, P.E.
12. CHNEP Technical Projects Update — Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP
13. Management Committee Member Updates — Melynda Brown, Co-Chair
14. Public Comment — Melynda Brown, Co-Chair
15. Future Meeting Dates and Topics — Melynda Brown, Co-Chair
 - Upcoming Meetings: May 8, 2026, & September 4, 2026
16. Adjourn — Melynda Brown, Co-Chair

DIRECTIONS TO OUR MEETING LOCATION

[1120 Centennial Blvd, Port Charlotte, FL 33953](#)



Coming from the North:

1. Take I-75 S to Sumter Blvd (exit 182) in North Port.
2. Follow Sumter Blvd for 8 miles to US Hwy 41 S, then Turn left onto US Hwy 41 S
3. Follow US Hwy 41 S for 4 miles to Centennial Blvd., then Turn right onto Centennial Blvd.
4. Follow Centennial Blvd. ½ mile down, turn **LEFT** into Centennial Park/Pool Parking Lot.
5. Check in at Front Desk and they will direct you to the Large Multipurpose Room

Coming from the South:

1. Take I-75 N to Kings Hwy in Charlotte County (exit 170)
2. Use the left 2 lanes to turn left onto Kings Hwy (signs for Port Charlotte/Charlotte Sports Pk)
3. Follow for ½ mile, then Use the right 2 lanes to turn right onto Veterans Blvd.
4. Follow for 7 miles, the Turn right onto US Hwy 41 N
5. Follow for 2 miles, then Turn left onto Centennial Blvd.
6. Follow Centennial Blvd. ½ mile down, turn **LEFT** into Centennial Park/Pool Parking Lot.
7. Check in at Front Desk and they will direct you to the Large Multipurpose Room

In-person Management Committee meetings have resumed.

If you are unable to attend in person or to arrange for an alternate do so, please email Jennifer Hecker at jhecker@chnep.org or call (941) 833-6580.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

The CHNEP Management Committee Co-Chair will call the meeting to order and then members will introduce themselves, followed by CHNEP staff and any members of the public who are participating.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS

If any Management Committee member would like to make an addition or deletion to the agenda, this item is the time to suggest such.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

Each participating member of the public is afforded up to 3 minutes total to speak on agenda topics only at this point in the meeting.

4. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 5, 2025 MEETING MINUTES

This item is to review, offer any potential revisions, and approve final meeting minutes from the previous September 5th, 2025 Management Committee meeting.

Recommendation: Approval of the minutes from September 5th, 2025

Attachment: Draft September 5th, 2025 Meeting Minutes

5. TAC REPORT

The TAC meeting held on December 4th, 2025 was chaired by Arielle Taylor-Manges. The agenda and prior meeting's minutes were approved. The meeting agenda included presentations and discussions on the following topics:

- CHNEP's Director of Research & Restoration, Nicole Iadevaia presented on updates made to the **Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network (CCHMN) Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and Quality Assurance Protection Plan (QAPP)**. The Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network (CCHMN) is a surface water quality monitoring program that collects monthly samples at multiple stations throughout Lemon Bay and Charlotte Harbor estuaries. Partners include agencies, counties and cities. Data is submitted to the Watershed Information Network (WIN), managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). The CCHMN partners meet annually to discuss the program and revise the Standard Operating Procedures to keep them up to date as necessary to meet all necessary quality assurance protocols. At the 2025 annual meeting, CCHMN partners reviewed and agreed to several updates to the Standard Operating Procedures. These edits were also made in the EPA-required Quality Assurance Project Plan for the CCHMN.

All these technical documents were brought to the TAC for final review and approval at the December meeting. Committee members discussed the proposed CCHMN updates and agreed with those already made in the following sections: general descriptions, figures and tables & project background, project design & data use sections, long-term monitoring strategy section, partner roles, data management crosswalk tables, references, light attenuation section and appendices. TAC also came to a consensus regarding additional updates. Edits suggested by committee members were 1) ensuring links and descriptions were up to date for the City of Sanibel in the long-term monitoring strategy section; 2) ensuring data crosswalk tables had complete information; and 3) adding an additional note in the *Light attenuation* section

“Collection of light attenuation data was suspended in 2023, understanding partners would focus on other measures that capture water clarity including chlorophyll-A, color, turbidity, and Secchi depth.” The Committee then unanimously approved the Updated CCHMN Standard Operating Procedures and Quality Assurance Project Plan with these final minor edits.

- CHNEP’s Research & GIS Coordinator, Sarina Barnard, presented on updates made to the **CHNEP Monitoring Strategy**. This is an EPA-required supporting document to the CHNEP CCMP and gives greater detail for strategies, partners, and potential funding sources to enhance implementation of the Partnership’s monitoring, data collection, and analysis goals for the region. Revisions made to the 2025 CCMP were carried into the Monitoring Strategy. Committee members reviewed edits and agreed with those already made, which included references to new studies or best management practices, and adjustments to responsible entities overseeing various projects. An example of this is the addition of information on clam monitoring projects that have launched over the past few years in the ‘Fish, Wildlife, and & Habitat Protection Indicators’ section and changing section on “oysters” to “oysters and other shellfish”. A column of current funding sources was also added to each of the three sections, which are: 1) Water Quality Improvement Indicators, 2) Fish, Wildlife, and & Habitat Protection Indicators and 3) Hydrologic Restoration Indicators. Committee members then proposed and came to consensus on additional minor edits. These were: 1) to add language in the ‘Water Quality Improvement Indicators’ table that the CCHMN and CHEVWQMN monitoring projects support the Clean Water Act and 303(d) impaired waters listing process; 2) to add partners that are conducting monitoring for Hydrobiological Monitoring Programs (HBMP) and City of Cape Coral to ‘Responsible Entities’ in the same ‘Water Quality Improvement Indicators’ table; 3) copy edits to the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves name throughout; 4) addition of information on quarterly seagrass monitoring in Matlacha Pass and San Carlos Bay by FDEP-DEAR in the ‘Fish, Wildlife, and & Habitat Protection Indicators’ table; and 5) changing “DBHYDRO” to “DBHYDRO Insights” in the Hydrologic Restoration Indicators’ table. The Committee then unanimously recommended Policy Committee approval of the updated CHNEP Monitoring Strategy with these edits included.
- Dr. Eric Milbrandt of the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation presented on the **Loss of Seagrass in Matlacha Pass and the Distribution and Abundance of Macroalgae**. The SCCF recently launched a project focused on enhancing the monitoring and prediction of Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) events in the lower Pine Island Sound and Caloosahatchee estuaries. It is focused on the role of macroalgae and nonpoint source pollution in freshwater discharges and nutrients in groundwater as potential causes of seagrass decline, to inform a seagrass restoration strategy for the Caloosahatchee. This project aligns with the CHNEP Water Quality Improvement goals, emphasizing the need to address anthropogenic nutrient pollution as a key driver of HABs. Seagrass in these estuaries was largely unchanged from 2008-2014 but show large losses in Matlacha Pass in 2021. Project objectives are to: 1) Evaluate macroalgae as the main cause of seagrass declines by conducting quantitative sampling of the benthic community in the Tidal Caloosahatchee and Matlacha Pass; 2) Use stable isotope analysis to track nitrogen in macroalgae and particulate organic matter (POM) samples; and 3) Inform projects that would reduce runoff from the watershed flows and loads through BMPs. This presentation shared the results from the initial seagrass and algae biomass analysis, nutrient concentrations after rain events and stable isotope analysis of the macroalgae. Afterward, members asked if SCCF has seen that the Matlacha Pass Bridge appears to be a significant geographic or hydrologic divide between upper and lower estuary regions, Dr. Milbrandt answered that their data supports that and shows variation in biodiversity and abundance patterns above and below

the bridge. Members also asked if ammonia levels were included in the suite of nutrients analyzed along with Total Nitrogen. Dr. Milbrandt affirmed this was the case and highlighted the importance of monitoring ammonia levels, noting that most values were at detection limits with no significant patterns observed. He also pointed out a gradual increase in ammonia concentrations at specific sites, potentially linked to sediment interactions and the presence of a particular species of algae that has been of interest in the region: *Caulerpa fastigiata*. Further investigation into long-term ammonium data is planned. Other members observed that seasonal changes affected those algae populations, and Dr. Milbrandt indicated that the study involved installation of temperature loggers to help inform outcomes as well.

- Dr. Rachel Rotz from Florida Gulf Coast University presented on **Understanding Nutrient Loading in a Hydrologically Sensitive Coastal Watershed: The Peace River Watershed, Florida, USA**. The presentation focused on a study conducted by Florida Gulf Coast University examining nutrient loading in the Peace River Watershed. It highlighted how human-induced nutrient pollution negatively affects both freshwater and estuarine ecosystems, particularly contributing to harmful algal blooms in Charlotte Harbor. Utilizing the Watershed Assessment Model, researchers analyzed annual discharges of nitrogen and phosphorus, identified critical pollution sources, and established a water quality baseline. The study's findings aim to guide effective strategies for reducing nutrient levels in critical areas of the watershed and similar coastal regions. Members discussed the importance of collaboration with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to ensure the data and findings are actionable. Dr. Rotz emphasized that the study was initiated in response to legislative demands for timely action on nutrient pollution. She highlighted her team's willingness to adapt their approach based on FDEP feedback, with the goal of creating valuable information that could facilitate decision-making. Other members commented on the necessity of expanding data sources, particularly regarding wastewater management and septic systems, to enhance the model's effectiveness and accuracy. Other members noted that there is continued interest in the region to address nutrient pollution in the Peace River Watershed and emphasized the need for constructive engagement with regulatory bodies like FDEP. The next steps involve formulating actionable recommendations based on scientific findings, which will be crucial for informing policy and investment decisions. Stakeholders recognized the need for effective communication of the study's results to maximize their impact and ensure that public funds are allocated to the most effective solutions for improving water quality in the region and Dr. Rotz noted the team's interest in collaborating with the CHNEP TAC members to inform data use and next steps.
- Carter Oleckna on behalf of Charlotte County and the University of Florida presented on **Tracking Nutrient Dynamics and Habitat Change: The Role of Participatory Science in Florida's Seagrass Meadows**. In 2021 following large-scale seagrass declines region-wide, a collaborative group involving universities, municipalities, agencies, NEPs and NGOs held a Macroalgae Summit focused on the challenges posed by marine cyanobacteria and macroalgae blooms in Southwest Florida estuaries. They evaluated research requirements and identified gaps in data necessary for improving research and management and public outreach strategies related to macroalgae. Afterward, the Eyes on Seagrass community science program was created and backed by UF Sea Grant to fill a data gap- collecting and analyzing algae samples in the region. This presentation shared some of the initial results from these ongoing efforts using algae data collected from 2019-2024. The collaborative efforts represent an essential step toward enhancing data collection and management practices in the region. By integrating

multiple data sources and fostering community involvement, the initiative aims to support effective conservation strategies amidst environmental challenges.

Afterward, members discussed the significance of timing and location in data collection for the potential to improve data consistency to align with data collected by ongoing agency monitoring programs. Members also asked questions on what samples were used for the isotopic analysis, Mr. Oleckna confirmed that all algae collected at each station was identified and analyzed, not just selected species. Members noted that future analyses in the region stands to benefit from the data enriched by community efforts, ensuring a more holistic understanding of the estuarine ecosystems and guiding future conservation actions.

The TAC also heard the CHNEP Program Update and Technical Projects Update presentations and shared updates with each other on their respective counties and communities regarding natural resource-related activities and projects. Recordings of presentations at the meeting can be found on the Committee page on the CHNEP website. The recommendation formed by the TAC that will pertain to a Policy Committee agenda action item this cycle was their unanimous recommendation of Policy Committee's approval of the Monitoring Strategy with their suggested edits.

This presentation will be given by Arielle Taylor-Manges, TAC Co-Chair.

6. CAC REPORT

The CAC meeting held on December 16th, 2025 and was chaired by Harry Phillips. The agenda and prior meeting's minutes were approved, the meeting agenda then included presentations and discussions on the following topics:

- Members introduced themselves and welcomed 3 new **CAC Applicants**: 1) Ms. Ashley Cook is a new applicant for the Charlotte County alternate seat. She is the Director of Conservation of the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, dedicated to environmental education, recreation, and conservation. She runs an oyster garden initiative to help restore oyster populations to improve water quality, educating participants along the way of the importance of water quality. Ashley created a program called animal neighbors which teaches people the benefits of wildlife and informs them on how to peacefully and safely coexist with wildlife. She runs a mangrove education and restoration project on palm island as well, to help protect shoreline and provide wildlife habitat; 2) Ms. Suzanne Lindsey is a new applicant for the second Polk County seat. Ms. Lindsey comes from Winter Haven and spends a lot of her time volunteering in the community. She was part of an initiative to help fund the environmental lands program in Polk County and is currently a member of the Citizen Oversight Committee for the comprehensive plan update for the county; 3) Mr. Steve Buczynski is a new applicant for the second Hendry County seat. He comes from the Clewiston area and is the president of Hendry/Glades Audubon Society. He originally participated in research on citrus, but his focus has since shifted to water quality, where he conducts water quality tests of water leaving farms heading towards the Everglades, specifically the phosphorus levels. Executive Director Jennifer Hecker explained that the applicants have already completed the first steps in the membership application process by submitting applications and attending the CAC meeting. The next step will be to bring all three applications to the upcoming Policy Committee meeting (1/22/26) for approval.
- Members then reviewed final Updates to **CHNEP Citizen's Advisory Committee Bylaws**. CHNEP's Executive Director, Ms. Jennifer Hecker, gave a brief history of the CHNEP CAC and went over previously reviewed edits made to the Bylaws made to align with 2025 Updates to the CHNEP CCMP. Ms. Hecker then walked members through final edits made to the

Bylaws carrying consensus items discussed at the CAC August Workshop throughout the text. She then asked CAC members for any additional comments or consensus on the edits made. One member pointed out a numbering error, located under Article III: Membership, Section 3: Classes of Membership. He suggested to change it from “b” to “c”. Another member had a general question asking for clarity on a section of the Bylaws related to the Policy Committee’s ability to remove CAC members. Ms. Hecker explained that it is a blanket ruling of the Policy Committee as they are the ones to appoint the members, but it is a power that has not previously been used. The Committee then unanimously approved the updated CHNEP Citizen’s Advisory Committee Bylaws with these final minor edits included.

- Next CHNEP’s Director of Research & Restoration, Nicole Iadevaia presented on updates made to the **Communications and Outreach Strategy**. This is an EPA-required supporting document to the CHNEP CCMP and gives greater detail for strategies, partners and potential funding sources to enhance implementation of the Partnership’s communication and outreach goals for the region. Revisions made to the 2025 CCMP were carried into the Communications and Outreach Strategy. She emphasized that the purpose of the document is to reflect changes to projects and strategies used to further environmental education in the communities served by the Partnership. The CAC then went over previously reviewed edits made to the document that were made to align with 2025 Updates to the CHNEP CCMP as well as new edits made to carry consensus items discussed at the CAC August Workshop throughout the text. Committee members reviewed edits and agreed with those already made, which included 1) language added throughout document to provide clarity to readers; 2) improved descriptions of all community groups for collaboration and the role of CAC in outreach; 3) descriptions of new outreach tools and removal of retired strategies and tools; 4) updated examples of outreach events in the region; 5) added budget information and language about Conservation Grants.

Members asked questions related to federal funding for the CHNEP, and Ms. Hecker explained that changes to funding for new restoration projects would not impact the communications and outreach work of the CHNEP which is budgeted for in the clean water funding that CHNEP continues to receive. Another member commended the communications strategies that CHNEP uses, especially the Water Atlas and described them as seamless and well organized. The work that CHNEP has done to make the enormity of information accessible and digestible for anyone to use is a helpful resource for the CAC. Members also shared their experiences of seeing CHNEP-developed fact sheets used in presentations to governing boards as evidence of the effectiveness of having the information in hand ready to distribute, educate and inform. A member commended the calendar as an outreach tool that leads people to spend more time with the educational insert within, especially in the context of families she sees in the libraries looking at the calendars, and how much of a difference it is making in the community.

CAC members then reviewed all suggest edits and agreed with those already made and then came to consensus on one additional minor edit to carry the term “fisherperson” on page 3 throughout all sections of the document for uniformity purposes. The Committee then unanimously recommended Policy Committee approval of the updated CHNEP Communications and Outreach Strategy with these edits included.

- The CAC then heard a presentation given by CHNEP’s Research & GIS Coordinator, Sarina Barnard, on the **CHNEP ‘Resources’ Guide**. CAC members serve as the CHNEP environmental outreach ambassadors within their communities and CHNEP created resources are intended to support this work. To keep up to date with the resources offered, members requested this presentation at the August Workshop so they could make sure to utilize the full

scope and scale of what is provided by the CHNEP Office. With that in mind, CHNEP staff provided printed copies of the updated resource guide, technical project fact sheets, economic valuations by county, funding opportunities, CCMP brochures in both English and Spanish, kids activity books and more to provide members with hard copies that they could take and distribute as needed. Ms. Barnard then walked members through each resource outlined in the guide, giving context for the purpose of each as an educational tool. A member asked if the information about past summits is available on the website, which Ms. Barnard answered yes and pointed out the hotlink. Another member asked if the 'Harbor Happenings' magazines are still in print, to which Ms. Hecker explained that this educational information is now included as an insert in the annual nature calendar. CAC members showed excitement and appreciation to receiving the physical materials to be able to take back to share with their communities.

- CHNEP Conservation Specialist Michelle McGill then presented on **Conservation Grant Applications** received this funding 'cycle'. She gave the CAC a background and budget on each application and presented the CHNEP staff recommendations for each application, asking for CAC input afterward.
 - The first new Conservation Grant application was from Keep Lee Beautiful for the "Great American Cleanup 2026", requesting \$5,000 to engage volunteers across Lee County to remove litter and debris from shorelines, waterways, parks, and neighborhoods. CHNEP staff recommend to fully fund the project with the added terms: provide a final report with volunteer attendance numbers and hours, weight of collected debris/other data as collected, photos from events, signage with CHNEP logo, and documentation related to obtaining permits, preparing materials, supplies, and cleanup site. The applicant will be asked to provide event dates and locations of cleanups of at least 3 events at least a month in advance and tag CHNEP in social media posts. CAC members agreed with the staff recommendations and asked some clarifying questions related to the number of clean up events and locations. A member also asked how volunteer hours values are determined by applicants. CHNEP staff explained that this is a nationwide value estimated by Independent Sector that applicants use to estimate their cash-match/in-kind time. CHNEP has a hotlink in the application to the site so interested parties can click on it to view the most up to date value of volunteer time.
 - The second new Conservation Grant application was from Sarasota Bay Watch for the "Expansion of Youth Leadership and Marine Camp" requesting \$3,315 to provide additional educational materials to an array of students attending the marine camps to learn more about the marine stewardship with the help of engaging hands-on activities, at no cost to the students. CHNEP staff recommend to fully fund the project with the added terms: Produce a final report with volunteer attendance numbers and hours, number of students attending free of charge, dates and times of all camps, including additional ones in expansion, description of how educational resources/tools were used with the students, and post camp surveys. The applicant was asked to share photos from camps and tag CHNEP in social media posts. CHNEP also recommends (but doesn't require) adding a pretest to measure learning success against the post-test. CAC members agreed with the staff recommendations and asked some clarifying questions related to the recommendation (rather than requirement) of a pre-test. CHNEP staff explained that any additional deliverables not already indicated by the applicant could be a barrier to completing the project and leave it in the purview of the grant recipient to measure knowledge gain. Another member offered a link to their own survey as a

resource/example. CHNEP staff agreed to include this example in a response to the applicant.

- The third Conservation Grant titled “Restoration of the Chipley Sand Patch” from Calusa Land Trust, requested \$9,999 to remove invasive plants/trees, trash, and debris to restore the property to its native habitat to maintain the sensitive historical and ecological assets of the land. CHNEP staff recommend funding a total of \$8,971.54, excluding funding the mulching task as there could be time constraints on project completion by the deadline due to the severity of clean-up required. Staff also require the added terms: Produce a final report with volunteer attendance numbers and hours, weight of collected debris/other data as collected, share photos from clearing and trash removal events, before and after aerial images, before and after fixed point photos, and photo of signage with CHNEP logo and tag CHNEP in social media posts. A member asked for clarification on which deliverables CHNEP is not funding, where staff explained to exclude deliverable 4, the forestry mulching, to allow them the best opportunity to complete the project within the timeframe to get reimbursed by CHNEP. CAC members agreed to the staff recommendations.
- The fourth new Conservation Grant application was for the “City of Cape Coral Water Ways Science Festival”, requesting \$9,999 to expand resources for the Festival. CHNEP staff find that this application is better suited for a sponsorship from CHNEP, where the applicant will provide sponsorship levels and staff will review to decide the most appropriate level (note that CHNEP sponsorship will not exceed \$1,000 total based on benefits provided to the organization). Also note, this project has already been initiated prior to the application date, rendering it ineligible for funding based on CHNEP restrictions. CAC members agreed to the CHNEP staff recommendation, with one member asking for clarity on the \$1,000 maximum for sponsorships.

One member asked how the invoice process works for Conservation Grants. Ms. Hecker explained that grants are deliverable-based and that applicants are asked to provide a final report with an invoice. CHNEP pays based on the final report with associated deliverables and does not require grant recipients to keep every receipt to streamline the process and increase access to community-led initiatives.

Finally, the CAC heard the CHNEP Program and Technical Project update presentations that are also coming before Management Committee today and shared updates with each other on their respective counties and communities and natural resource related activities and projects. The recommendation formed by the CAC that will pertain to a Policy Committee agenda action item this cycle was their unanimous recommendation of Policy Committee’s approval of the Updated Communications & Outreach Strategy with their suggested edits. Following the meeting, the CAC conducted a site visit at Babcock-Webb of the Charlotte Harbor Watershed Initiative project that CHNEP and its members and partners are working on.

This presentation will be given by Harry Phillips, CAC Co-Chair.

7. CHNEP UPDATE

The following represents program activity highlights since the beginning of the last Management Conference cycle to the beginning of this one.

Program Administration

- Planned and executed both the Technical Advisory Committee Meeting (8/7), Citizens

Advisory Committee meeting (8/20), Management Committee meeting (9/5), and Policy Committee meeting (9/25) including lining up presenters, drafting agenda packet, updating Committee webpage, creating PowerPoints, drafting minutes, etc.

- Sent on-boarding materials to new Policy Committee member/co-chair, Craig Hesterlee, representing the EPA (new Policy Committee member), Commissioner Petrina McCutchen representing the City of Fort Meade (new Policy Committee member), Rebekah Harp representing the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (new Management Committee member), County Manager Paul Carlisle representing Glades County (returning Management Committee), Christina Rimes representing the City of Venice (new Technical Advisory Committee member), Kris Ramon representing Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority (new Technical Advisory Committee member), Thomas Behlmer representing South Florida Water Management District (new Technical Advisory Committee member), and Ryan Ellis representing Polk County (new Technical Advisory Committee member).
- Reviewed Draft [Program Evaluation](#) Letter, providing feedback responses as requested, and received [Final Program Evaluation Letter](#) indicating CHNEP is “proficient” and will continue to be eligible to receive federal funding.
- Drafted 2026 Amended Master Work Plan and Budget, 2025 ED Annual Evaluation with combined Policy Committee Responses, and CHNEP Legislative Priorities, which were approved by CHNEP Policy Committee at 9/25 meeting.
- Welcomed new team member- Conservation Specialist, Michelle McGill who will lead on planning and representing CHNEP at outreach event. Held HR and CHNEP onboarding meetings on start date of 9/10. CHNEP updated outreach onboarding and resource documents in preparation.
- Completed annual staff appraisals and held appraisal meetings with all CHNEP staff.
- Sent fall FY26 invoice letters to CHNEP member counties and cities with the appropriate project and informational fact sheets relevant to their community.

Finance and Grants Management

- Updated the [funding opportunities fact sheet](#) and sent out historic funding opportunities notification to all CHNEP Committees about a number of special large state and federal funding opportunities of interest.
- Prepared and submitted FY25 annual End-of-Year reports for both EPA 320 and EPA IIIA grants.
- Did FDEP final report and reimbursement request, closing out FY25 grant and receiving full \$75,000 payment.
- Finalized edits to Amended FY2026 CHNEP Work Plan & Budget, these were approved by CHNEP Policy Committee at 9/25 meeting.
- FY26 Agreement for annual programmatic support funds from Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) received CHNEP’s host board approval with partial execution on 10/28/25. It was then sent to SWFWMD for full execution.
- Provided Charlotte County grants and finance staff with summary of project expenses remaining for FY2025 annual projects to assist with fiscal year close out.
- Prepared and submitted Q4 Report and deliverables for FY25 Agreement for annual programmatic and project support from Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD).
- FY2026 Agreement for annual programmatic support funds from Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection was finalized.
- Reviewed and approved FY25 Conservation Grant deliverables and processed final invoices.

- Letters of acknowledgement provided for the NEP Coastal Watersheds Grant opportunity for Bonefish & Tarpon Trust, Polk County, Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation and Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC) and J.N. ‘Ding’ Darling National Wildlife Refuge.
- Drafted requested Letters of support for University of Central Florida, Florida Atlantic University, and Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation for EPA Region 4 Grant Funding, Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation RECON and West Florida Coastal Ocean Model (WFCOM) for GCOOS and SECOORA funding, USDA Forest Service Trust for Public Land’s Florida Forest Service’s 2027 Forest Legacy grant funding for *Peace River Longleaf Pinelands* land acquisition project, and for Florida legislative funding for the Glades County NE Service Area Wastewater Treatment Plant Facility Feasibility Study.

CHNEP staff participated in the following meetings:

- ANEP External Affairs Meetings (multiple)
- ANEP Director’s Meetings (multiple)
- ANEP Communications Working Group Meetings (multiple)
- Hardee County-CHNEP Coordination Meetings (multiple)
- DeSoto County-CHNEP Coordination Meetings (multiple)
- Highlands County-CHNEP Coordination Meetings (multiple)
- Polk County-CHNEP Coordination Meetings (multiple)
- CHNEP-Central Florida Regional Planning Council Meetings (multiple)
- Charlotte County Vulnerability Assessment Monthly Meetings (multiple)
- Science & Environmental Council (SEC) Meetings (multiple)
- CHNEP Water Atlas Monthly Meetings (multiple)
- Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative Meetings (multiple)
- GOAA and Gulf Estuaries Collaboration Meetings (multiple)
- One Water Commission Monthly Meetings (multiple)
- Southwest Florida Regional Ambient Monitoring Program (RAMP) Meetings (multiple)
- WQ Monitoring Project (CCHMN) Field Audits (multiple)
- Lemon Bay Community Workshop Meetings (multiple)
- Southwest FL Estuary Restoration Team (SWERT) Meetings (multiple)
- SW FL Regional Planning Council Meetings (multiple)
- Tiki Point Project Meetings with City of Punta Gorda and FDEP (multiple)
- Silver Jackets Post-Flood Hazard Awareness Project Meetings (multiple)
- Suncoast Waterkeeper Meeting (7/3)
- Big Cypress Basin Board Meeting (7/7)
- SWFWMD Environmental Advisory Committee Meetings (multiple)
- FDEP Grant Reimbursement Back-Up Meeting (7/8)
- GOAA Data & Monitoring Quarterly Meeting (7/8)
- CHNEP – Sarasota County Scope of Work Discussion Meeting (7/9)
- SWFL Resiliency Summit Presentation Discussion (7/14)
- SFWMD Resiliency Partners Flood Information Resource Training (7/14)
- SFWMD C-43 Reservoir Ribbon cutting Event (7/15)
- CCHMN Q3 Deliverables Review Meeting (7/16)
- CHAWG Meeting (7/25)
- CHNEP CAC Calendar Photo Contest Meeting (7/28)

- Glades County initial CHNEP-funded Project Scoping Meeting (7/29)
- CHNEP- Hendry County Vulnerability Assessment Project Meeting (8/8)
- CHNEP Meeting with Lee County Commissioner Brian Hamman (8/8)
- Myakka River Management Coordination Council (MRMCC) Meeting (8/8)
- FLERA Water Resources Committee Meeting (8/12)
- Charlotte County Finance Quarterly Business Meeting (8/22)
- Corkscrew Watershed Initiative Meeting (8/27)
- Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network (CCHMN) Annual Meeting (8/29)
- Florida Sea Grant Advisory & Algae Working Group Meeting (9/2)
- SFWMD Resiliency Coordination Forum (9/3)
- NEPORT IJA Reporting Webinar Meeting (9/3)
- Resilient Florida Rulemaking Workshop Meeting (9/5)
- Florida Wildlife Corridor: Mind the Gaps Workshop Meeting (9/10)
- Hosted 2025 Southwest Florida Resiliency Summit (9/16-9/17)
- Florida Resiliency Conference (9/17-9/19)
- HOBO Data Loggers Meeting (9/18)
- Water Quality Trend Analysis Meeting (9/22)
- FY26 Technical Projects Planning Meeting (10/6)
- Wildlife in Resiliency Plans with Peace River Audubon (10/7)
- CHNEP – Cummins Cederberg Meeting (10/8)
- Bivalve-Seagrass Restoration Consortium Quarter 3 Meeting (10/10)
- SE CASC Bridging the Gap: Steering Committee Meeting (10/10)
- FDEP Acquisition and Restoration Council Meeting (10/10)
- Pine Island Flatwoods Reserve Restoration Project Meeting (10/16)
- Lake Hicpochee Project Phase II Groundbreaking Event (10/21)
- Water Atlas Partners Meeting (10/21)
- Punta Gorda City Council Meeting (presentation) (10/22)
- City of Lakeland & Polk County Coordination Meeting (10/22)
- Southwest Florida Regional Forum Meeting (10/24)
- Data & Monitoring Midyear Meeting (10/29)
- Big Waters Land Trust-Volo Foundation Reporting Meeting (10/28)
- 2025 Living Shorelines Tech Transfer Workshop (10/29-10/30)
- C-43 Water Quality Treatment & Testing Facility Project Site Visit (10/29)
- 2025 Florida One Water Summit Meeting (10/30-10/31)

CHNEP Staff Presentations

- Presented on the *CHNEP* and *CHNEP Water Atlas* to the Suncoast Reef Rovers.
- Presented on *Leveraging conventional partnerships with novel tools for holistic water quality and ecosystem management* at the 28th Biennial Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF) Conference in Richmond, VA.
- CHNEP was the Event Host for the 2025 Southwest Florida Resiliency Summit and staff presented on: *Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessments to Protect Critical Community Assets*, in SESSION 6: New Community Resiliency Initiatives in the Region.
- Presented on the work of CHNEP and co-funded project at the 10/22/25 City of Punta Gorda Council meeting.

Publications and Outreach Initiatives

- As a follow up to the 2025 Resiliency Summit in September, CHNEP shared the Summit [playlist on YouTube](#) and the updated [Southwest Florida Resiliency page](#) which now features resources from all past summits, including agendas, speaker biographies, and videos organized by tags for easier public access.
- Sent out monthly Constant Contact emails to subscribers about relevant upcoming public engagement events in the CHNEP area.
- Created a new [speaker request form](#) for those interested in having CHNEP present under a host-preferred software.
- Worked with CHNEP volunteers to host an educational outreach booth at the Wildcat Tailgate Festival, a community event held to kick off the school year in Hardee County. Shared educational materials with over 80 families.
- Held the Photo Contest Voting Meeting with members of the CAC to gather input on selections for the calendar, selecting final photos for the 2026 Calendar design.
- The CHNEP Citizens Advisory Committee meeting included a committee workshop that CHNEP staff planned and facilitated. The workshop was to gather member input on the Role of the CAC, CHNEP Outreach Resources, and to review proposed updates to the CAC Bylaws and the CHNEP ‘Communication and Outreach Strategy’ Documents. CHNEP followed up with members to share resources and coordinate upcoming outreach assistance with committee members.
- Hosted and organized the [2025 Southwest Florida Resiliency Summit](#) held Sept. 16th-17th, 2025.
 - Approximately 150 attendees, including members of the public, scientists, experts from industry, academia, and government with information and ideas on building increased resiliency in Central and Southwest Florida.
 - Created and facilitated interactive question and answer sessions after each panel for audience to interact with the presenters.
 - Advertised through NGOs, WGPU radio ads, and other partners leading up to the event. [Made social media posts before, during and after event.](#)
 - Sent out personalized invitations to all city and county councils/commissions and managers/administrators, as well as federal and state senators and representatives.
 - Coordinated to provide Continuing Education Hours (CEHs) to professional engineers and geologists who attended the Summit. CHNEP created and filled out certificates for each of the attendees who signed up to earn CEHs and sent certificates out to those individuals to self-report their hours to the Florida Board of Professional Engineers or Florida Board of Professional Geologists.
 - News coverage: [Conferences: Safety in communities tomorrow relies on building resiliency today](#)
- Participated in [National Estuaries Week](#) across CHNEP social media, a collaborative effort led by the National Estuarine Reserves, Restore America’s Estuaries, National Estuary Programs, and National Environmental Education Foundation.
- Provided educational content at a booth at the Miakka Hootenanny in Sarasota County, FL. Over 50 kids and adults stopped by the booth to play games and learn about different fish species adapted for different environments, how to properly measure a fish, and how objects can break down into microplastics.
- Designed new educational activity involving sorting different types of everyday items into the types of microplastics they break down into to be used at future outreach

events. Microplastics are a common water quality pollutant in the CHNEP area based on prior CHNEP microplastic sampling, so working to enhance education on the topic to advance our CCMP goal to improve water quality.

- Provided CHNEP educational materials, including estuary and seagrass informational posters, to Gasparilla Island State Park staff to be placed in their parking lot of the park for interpretive purposes.
- Edited and finalized CHNEP 2026 Nature Calendar design with designer. Met with printer to review scope of the project. Reviewed and approved electronic and hard-copy proofs in advance of printing and mailing.
- Refreshed and reposted CHNEP project factsheets with updated language, organizations, funding sources, and activities as outlined in the new 2025 CCMP.

Digital Outreach Insights

- 5,809 subscribers for CHNEP educational mailings
- 3,551 unique visitors and 4,742 page views of CHNEP website since last cycle
- 19 new Instagram followers for a total of 637
- 14 new Facebook followers for a total of 2,055
- YouTube: 18,090 Views (+2.1k), 107 Subscribers (+6), 368 Videos (+17)

Media/Press

- [Conferences: Safety in communities tomorrow relies on building resiliency today | WGCU PBS & NPR for Southwest Florida](#)
- [Nicole Iadevaia believes ‘Water connects everything’ - NewsBreak](#)
- [Opportunities for Resilience of Southwest Florida's Salt Marsh Ecosystem | US EPA](#)

This update will be given by Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP Executive Director.

8. CHNEP FY26 CALL FOR PROJECTS AND AMENDED FY26 MASTER WORK PLAN

CHNEP received its FY26 federal 320 funds and also has some unspent carryover 320 funds that were not needed in their original FY25 budgeted category so are now available for projects. As a result, CHNEP issued a call for projects, mailing out to CHNEP members and County administrators. CHNEP received 19 proposed projects from 6 different counties, created evaluation criteria, and undertook an in-depth staff evaluation to prioritize the projects with regards to breadth of CCMP implementation, logistics, ability to complete in funding timeframe, etc.

Below are the results of that evaluation with the projects listed in prioritized order (with proposed currently selected project titles in larger green font):

Project Names and Description	Clear Project Implementation Pathway: (25 points)	Project Budget Range: (20 points)	Project Timeline: (20 points)	Project Approach : (25 points)	Project Outcomes (10 points)	Different CCMP Actions Furthered	Requested amount	Total Points	Location by County
SEASCAPES - Artificial Island in Tidal Lakes Within Cape Coral Canals System Project - habitat creation design	25 (2 steps procurement and project)	20	20	25	8	3 actions furthered (WQ, FW, and PE)	\$100,000	98	Lee
Warm Mineral Springs Habitat Restoration and Education Initiative Project - invasive removal, native plantings and educational signage	25 (2 steps of procurement and project work)	20	20	25	7	4 actions furthered (all)	\$300,000	97	Sarasota
John Yarbrough Linear Park Reforestation Project - planting design, exotic removal, and native plantings	25 (2 steps of procurement and project work)	20	20	25	7	3 actions furthered (WQ, FW, and PE)	\$200,000	97	Lee

Pollywog Creek Stabilization Phase I Project - Stabilization Design, permitting (application preparation), and public outreach	25 (2 steps of procurement and project work)	25	20	20	7	1 action furthered (HR)	\$200,000	97	Hendry
Lake Idyl Sediment Inactivation Project - application of agent to bind Phosphorus in impaired waterbody	20 (3 steps permitting, pre-monitoring, 2 applications 9-12 mos. Apart, post-monitoring)	20	15	20	7	1 action furthered (WQ)	\$230,000	82	Polk
Charlotte County Exceptional Ponds Initiative Project - Pond ID, prioritization, and enhancement	20 (3 steps, procurement, permitting, and project work)	20	15	20	7	3 actions furthered (WQ, FW, and PE)	\$251,000	82	Charlotte
Lake Lulu Wetlands restoration/ Water Quality Education Project - exotics removal, planting, and educational signage	20 (2 or 3 steps of procurement and project work, permitting possibly needed)	25	10	20	7	4 actions furthered (all)	\$300,000	82	Polk
Expedient Sinkhole Protection by Aquifer Nutrient Diversion (EXPAND) - design and engineering evaluation of scenarios to divert polluted runoff from direct discharge to aquifer through sinkhole	20 (3 steps of procurement, planning, permit application prep)	20	20	15	7	3 actions furthered (WQ, HR, and PE)	\$147,000	82	Lee
Hardee Lakes Park Habitat Enhancement & Conservation Education Initiative - habitat restoration and education signage	20 (3 steps in plan then procurement and then project work)	20	10	20	8	3 actions furthered (HR, FW, and PE)	\$300,000	78	Hardee
Adaptation Plan Focus Area 4 Stormwater Drainage Improvements and Water Quality Enhancement - H&H modeling and Stormwater Retrofitting Design Plans	20 (3 steps of procurement, modeling/design, permit application prep)	20	20	15	2	2 actions furthered (WQ, HR)	\$130,000	77	Lee
Adaptation Plan Focus Area 15 Stormwater Drainage Improvements and Water Quality Enhancement - H&H modeling and Stormwater Retrofitting Design Plans	20 (3 steps of procurement, modeling/design, permit application prep)	20	20	15	2	2 actions furthered (WQ, HR)	\$120,000	77	Lee
Adaptation Plan Focus Area 16 Stormwater Drainage Improvements and Water Quality Enhancement - H&H modeling and Stormwater Retrofitting Design Plans	20 (3 steps of procurement, modeling/design, permit application prep)	20	20	15	2	2 actions furthered (WQ, HR)	\$120,000	77	Lee
Feasibility Study for a Resiliency, Walkable MidCape Project - creating a plan to increase mobility with LID and education features	25 (2 steps procurement and project)	10	20	10	5	3 actions furthered (WQ, HR, and PE)	\$315,000	70	Lee
PLANTWISE Planting Low-Impact Area Native Trail System - exotics removal, native plantings, and interpretive sign	5 (4 steps of procurement, planning, permit application prep, and project work)	20	15	10	7	4 actions furthered (all)	\$300,000	57	Lee
Payne Creek Bridge Hydrological Restoration Project - sediment removal	5 (4 steps in permitting, procurement, project work with plans, sediment removal, and site restoration)	15	5	20	5	3 actions furthered (WQ, HR, FW)	\$300,000	50	Hardee
Steve Roberts Bridge Hydrological Restoration Project - sediment removal	5 (4 steps in permitting, procurement, project work with plans, sediment removal, and site restoration)	15	5	20	5	3 actions furthered (WQ, HR, FW)	\$300,000	50	Hardee
Sweetwater Bridge Hydrological Restoration Project - sediment removal	5 (4 steps in permitting, procurement, project work with plans, sediment removal, and site restoration)	15	5	20	5	3 actions furthered (WQ, HR, FW)	\$300,000	50	Hardee

Lake Parker Habitat Restoration and Flow Re-Establishment Project - tussock and exotics removal	5 (4 steps of procurement, planning, permitting, and project work,)	10	10	10	3	3 actions furthered (WQ, HR, and WQ)	\$325,000	38	Polk
Freshwater SAV Cultivation Program and Education Facility - creating facility for growing SAV and educational tour	5 (unclear and multiple steps)	10	10	10	3	3 actions furthered (WQ, FW, PE)	\$310,000	38	Polk

Based on the amount of unbudgeted FY26 320 funds budgeted and now awarded (\$703,000), as well as the previous carryover 320 funding (\$330,368), there is a total of \$1,033,368 available for new projects. Additionally, Hendry County Vulnerability Assessment project is delayed (due to baseline VA data still being gathered and analyzed) so the \$200,000 previously budgeted for that is available to be allocated to the Pollywog Creek Stabilization Phase I Project in Hendry County. Similarly, the \$200,000 for the budgeted Lee County Vulnerability Assessment Enhancement project (that has been delayed) is available to apply to a related Lee County resiliency project to do Adaptation Plan Focus Areas 15 & 16 Stormwater Drainage Improvements and Water Quality Enhancement Projects (proposed award \$200,000).

This would accommodate CHNEP to be able to use the unbudgeted 320 funds to fund all or the vast majority of the top ranked projects from each of the six counties who submitted [SEASCAPES (Lee, proposed award of \$100,000), Warm Mineral Springs (Sarasota, proposed award of \$230,000), Lake Idyl (Polk, proposed award of \$230,000), Exceptional Ponds (Charlotte, proposed award of \$230,000), and Lakes Park (Hardee, proposed award of \$240,000)] such that each of the six counties would have a new project funded this fiscal year.

Additionally, it should be noted that this action to incorporate projects into the work plan does not guarantee project funding but rather authorizes staff to begin conversations with those partners to explore the details of logistics, procurement, project management and other factors more thoroughly. Should issues arise with those aspects that preclude the project from meeting CHNEP funding requirements, CHNEP would bring amendments to redirect those funds to the next highest scoring project in the same county. Also, if and when the FY26 IJA funding award comes in, this would provide \$530,800 of added funds in addition to projected IJA carryover of \$3,869, \$368 of the remaining unallocated 320 carryover, and FY26 Programmatic Funding TBD funds still available in amount of \$3,000 for a total of \$538,037 of additional project funding to fund some of the additional submitted project proposals.

These proposed projects are being carried into the CHNEP FY26 Master EPA320 Work Plan and Budget as named projects in lieu of the previous Clean Water Research & Restoration TBD Project(s). Below is a list of all of the amendments being proposed this cycle:

- Added new amendment date to cover
- Updated Table of Contents based on changed section titles and new added sections
- Updated Table 1 to include the FY25 EPA 320 (\$330,368) and IJA (\$3,869) Carryover Funding in Revenue section and applied that funding to Personnel and the Research and Restoration rows, making the new total FY26 revenue and expenses \$3,049,978.
- Updated Table 6 to change CHNEP Publications from \$50,000 to \$40,000 based on actual calendar costs from this year, resulting in total changing from \$104,500 to \$94,500.
- Updated Table 7 in:
 - Changed Lee County Vulnerability Assessment to Lee County Adaptation Plan Focus Areas 15 & 16 Stormwater Planning,
 - Added \$11,550 of 2024 IJA funds to Pine Island Restoration Project and removed that same amount from Water Quality Trend Assessment and Dashboard Tool – resulting in that going from \$70,667 to \$59,117,

- Changed Hendry County Vulnerability Assessment to Hendry County Pollywog Creek Stabilization Project in both places mentioned with funding kept the same,
- Changed CHNEP Water Atlas Maintenance from \$87,821 to \$78,720,
- Added Lee County SEASCAPES project in amount of \$100,000, Sarasota County Warm Mineral Springs (WMS) Habitat Restoration initiative in amount of \$230,000 and Clean Water Research & Restoration TBD in amount of \$368 to use EPA 320 FY22-25 carryover funds,
- Added Clean Water Research & Restoration TBD funded with EPA IJIA FY22-25 carryover funding in amount of \$3,869,
- Changed CHNEP Water Atlas Improvements from \$50,000 to \$31,697
- Added Polk County Lake Idyl Sediment Inactivation Project in amount of \$230,000, Charlotte County Exceptional Ponds Initiative in amount of \$230,000, and Hardee Lakes Habitat Enhancement Conservation Initiative in amount of \$240,000, making new FY26 EPA 320, SWFWMD, & Local FY26 Total \$754,697 and the new FY26 Total Research & Restoration Project Budget total \$1,664,497.
- These changes were then carried through the following narrative task sections accordingly.

This is an action item where Management Committee input is sought, with a vote as to its recommendation as to whether the Policy Committee should approve the Draft Amended FY26 CHNEP Master Work Plan.

This presentation will be given by Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP.

Attachments: Draft Amended FY26 CHNEP Master Work Plan

9. **CHNEP FINANCE STRATEGY UPDATES**

The 2025 update to the CHNEP Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) was approved by the Policy Committee, with EPA sending its approval letter on December 17, 2024. Appendices to the CCMP include Monitoring, Finance, and Communications & Outreach Strategies. The EPA indicated in its letter approving the 2025 CCMP, that it also acknowledged CHNEP would review the CCMP “associated documents in 2025” to determine if they needed updating. CHNEP did so, bringing the updated Monitoring Strategy to TAC on December 4th for finalization, updated Communications & Outreach Strategy to CAC on December 16th for finalization, and is now bringing the updated Finance Strategy to the Management Committee to finalize at this meeting. With Committee edits and recommendations incorporated, these three strategy documents will be brought to the CHNEP Policy Committee for their review and approval at their upcoming January 22, 2026 meeting. Once approved, the three updated strategy documents will be sent to EPA and posted on the CHNEP CCMP webpage (replacing the current versions online).

The updates are as follows:

- Updating CCMP date throughout to 2025
- Updating CHNEP address
- Updating CHNEP base funding level
- Updating and clarifying CHNEP federal match information
- Updating annual funding support table, removing last 2 columns
- Updating and adding information about CHNEP administration costs
- Removing section on CCMP Projects and Activities as subject to change annually based on approved annual work plans and budgets
- Added language under Partners Project Support to clarify and update

- Removed itemization of CCMP activities under Long-term and Short-term Funding to streamline as funding needed for all CCMP actions and activities
- Added language to further explain the large scale, complexity and costs associated with multi-partner, multi-phase and multi-year projects
- Removed Short-term funding priorities as those are subject to change frequently based on legislative appropriations and priorities at both state and federal level.
- Removed references to CHNEP expansion area as now part of service area since 2019.
- Changed City/County funding agreements to reflect both for providing and receiving CHNEP funding for projects
- Removed language under Grants, Donations, and In-Kind Funding that is too temporal and detailed given this being overarching 5+ year finance strategy, and to reflect current funding opportunities/limitations
- Added language about CHNEP providing sponsorships, letter of support for partners seeking funding of CCMP-related activities, etc.
- Under Dedicated Recurrent State and Federal Funding sections, modified and updated to reflect current CCMP metrics and customary policymaker outreach CHNEP practices
- Under Local Governments, changed presentations every 3 years to as requested to make more realistic and achievable, removed minimum contribution levels reference as voluntary, added annual fact sheets provided (which are mailed with fall invoice letters), and removed multi-year funding agreements as those require a lot of work to set up and provide no organizational benefit in added assurances
- Under Private Sector and Individual Donation section, updated and modified language to reflect current practices in focusing on targeted solicitation of sponsorships rather than general fundraising solicitation at events, removed volunteer base as based on new approved CCMP – CHNEP is focusing on supporting partner volunteer opportunities with Volunteer opportunity monthly newsletter rather than continuing to cultivate its own volunteer base and events, as well as removed Conservation Grants as though there are sufficient funds presently to continue this initiative – it is anticipated there likely will not be within the 5 year timeframe this strategy is written for.
- And other minor editorial non-substantive changes

This is an action item where Management Committee input is sought, with a vote as to its recommendation as to whether the Policy Committee should approve.

This presentation will be given by Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP.

Attachments: Final Updated 2025 CHNEP Finance Strategy

10. BLUE GREEN MITIGATION STRATEGIES AND TECHNOLOGIES

Cyanobacteria (also called blue-green algae) are plant-like organisms that primarily live in freshwater bodies such as lakes and rivers but can also live in marine waters as well. They can quickly grow out of control, or "bloom." Some of these algal blooms can produce toxins (poisons) that make people and animals sick; thus, are called 'harmful algal blooms' (HABs). Central and Southwest Florida has been afflicted periodically with such blue green algae blooms and in response, Governor DeSantis created a [Blue Green Algae Task Force](#) of experts who met 19 times between June 2019 and June 2024 – forming [Consensus Recommendations](#). Of note from this document, it concludes "Increased delivery of nutrients to Florida's water bodies is widely recognized as the primary driver of algal proliferation and subsequent degradation of aquatic ecosystems. Major sources of nutrients include, but are not limited to, agricultural operations, wastewater treatment plants, onsite sewage disposal systems and urban storm water runoff. Legacy

nutrients, i.e. nitrogen and phosphorus sequestered in soils, groundwater and sediments, contribute also to excessive nutrient loading of surface waters throughout the state. Nutrient effects, as they relate to the formation, magnitude and persistence of blue-green algae blooms in Florida's waters, are expected to be exacerbated by regional changes in land-use, associated alterations in hydrology as well as climate change, specifically increases in temperature and pronounced variability in precipitation patterns." While most of the recommendations focused on proactive strategies to prevent the increased delivery of nutrients from human sources, there was also an acknowledgement on the broad suite of promising "innovative technologies that could aid in the cleanup and mitigation of harmful algae blooms" with a recommendation to invest in a "diverse portfolio" of them that are "cost-effective, environmentally-safe, and scalable."

The CHNEP Policy Committee added a new activity to the 2025 [CHNEP Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan](#) (CCMP): Water Quality 5.2 to "Reduce Harmful Algal Blooms – Support development of methods for early identification of HABs, as well as best practices and technologies to reduce or mitigate their harmful environmental, social, and economic impacts." This presentation will be sharing some of the latest research findings regarding cyanobacteria mitigation techniques, including what has been found to work, not work, and some technologies that are promising but need more research to ensure they are effective at controlling blue green algae as well as to ensure them being cost-effective, environmentally-safe, and scalable.

This presentation will be given by Dr. Dail Laughinghouse, Associate Professor of Applied Phycology (study of algae, including their biology, ecology, and uses in industries and environmental systems) at the University of Florida.

11. RED TIDE AND LAKE OKEECHOBEE MANAGEMENT

Karenia brevis is a microscopic dinoflagellate algae that commonly causes red tide harmful algae blooms on the Gulf Coast of Florida. These algae can produce brevetoxins, which often harm marine life, kill fish and release airborne aerosols that irritate human respiratory systems. The red tide event that lasted from October 2017 to January 2019 had a huge economic toll on the region, with an [economic study](#) putting the losses at \$2.7 billion total. As mentioned above, CHNEP members have added Water Quality 5.2 to "Reduce Harmful Algal Blooms – Support development of methods for early identification of HABs, as well as best practices and technologies to reduce or mitigate their harmful environmental, social, and economic impacts" to the 2025 CHNEP CCMP.

Lake Okeechobee discharges/releases to the Caloosahatchee River are governed by *the Lake Okeechobee Service Operating Manual (LOSOM)*. A recent published [scientific journal article](#) co-authored by the presenter Lenny Landau, CHNEP staff, and others demonstrated that the loading (pollutant concentration and volume of water) from the Caloosahatchee into the Gulf is the highest of area rivers and has been found to have contributed to longer, more severe red tide events. It underscored how increased Nitrogen contributes to Red Tide and how inversely, decreased Nitrogen reduces red tide (see [article fact sheet](#)). This presentation is to share updated research findings related to the recently adopted and implemented LOSOM protocols and possible benefits to reducing conditions favorable for long, severe red tide events.

This presentation will be given by Lenny Landau, a retired engineer and data analysis guru working to find solutions for improving water quality and reducing harmful algae blooms.

12. CHNEP TECHNICAL PROJECTS UPDATE

In addition to the items featured earlier on the agenda, updates will be provided on recent progress, or completion of other CHNEP-funded research and/or restoration projects will be given as part of

these CHNEP Technical Project Updates. Project fact sheets are available online at:
<https://www.chnep.org/resources>.

This update is by Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP Director of Research & Restoration.

13. PUBLIC COMMENT

Each participating member of the public is afforded up to 3 minutes total to speak at this time.

14. FUTURE MEETING DATES AND TOPICS

Upcoming CHNEP Management Committee meetings in 2026 will be held on May 8, 2026 & September 4, 2026, in the same location as this meeting. Please hold these dates on your calendar, with other details including the agenda being sent via email at least one week in advance. If you have ideas for future meeting topics, please send to jhecker@chnep.org.

15. ADJOURN