



CHNEP Policy Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday May 26, 2022
Charlotte Harbor Utilities Environmental Campus,
Training Room A, 25550 Harbor View Rd.,
Punta Gorda, FL 22980

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING DRAFT MINUTES
May 26, 2022

Members Present:

Brian Smith

Don McCormick

Jennifer Codo-Salisbury

Jack Bispham

Phil Flood

Ken Doherty

Ramon Iglesias

Sandy Meeks

Scott Kirouac

James Satcher

Gaye Sharpe

Ron Cutsinger

Laura Carr

Keith Long

Bill Read

Alice White

Debby Carey

Mike Miller

M.J. Carnevale

Bill Veach

Katy Errington

James Evans

US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 4

Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC)

Central Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC)

Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD)

South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)

Charlotte County

Hendry County

Hardee County

Highlands County

Manatee County

Polk County

Sarasota County

City of Bonita Springs

City of Cape Coral

City of Lakeland

City of North Port

City of Punta Gorda

City of Sanibel

City of Winter Haven

Town of Fort Myers Beach

Village of Estero

Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF)

Others Present:

Jennifer Hecker

Nicole Iadevaia

Sarina Weiss

Jessica Scott-Dunda

Mike Elfenbein

Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership

Public Attendee

Agenda Item #1 – Call to Order and Introductions — Brian Smith, Co-Chair

Co-chair Brian Smith called the meeting to order at 9:03 am. Introductions were then made.

Agenda Item #2 – Agenda Additions or Deletions — Brian Smith, Co-Chair

Change in the order of agenda items 7 and 8. Motion to adopt agenda with amendment.

RAMON IGLESIAS MOTIONED TO ADOPT THE AGENDA WITH THE CHANGE IN THE ORDER OF AGENDA ITEM 8 PRECEDING 7, SECONDED BY LAURA CARR. THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED WITH NO ABSTENTIONS OR OBJECTIONS.

Agenda Item #3 – Public Comments on Agenda Items – Brian Smith, Co-Chair

Mr. Mike Elfenbein, of the Charlotte County Soil and Water Conservation District, spoke on the value of utilizing a mechanical aqua harvesting system to remove harmful algae blooms and legacy nutrients from Lake Okeechobee.

Agenda Item #4 – Policy Advisory Committee January 27, 2022 Meeting Minutes- Brian Smith, Co-Chair

No edits were made to the January 27, 2022 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes.

KEN DOHERTY MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED, SECONDED BY BILL VEACH. THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED WITH NO ABSTENTIONS OR OBJECTIONS.

Agenda Item #5 — Management Advisory Committee Report — James Evans, Management Committee Co-Chair

James Evans, Management Committee Co-Chair, provided a briefing on the last Management Committee Meeting on May 13, 2022. Highlights are as follows:

The Technical Advisory Committee reported from the April 14, 2022 meeting that the Place-Based Fishery Conservation in Charlotte Harbor Project is progressing. Dr. Chris Anastasiou detailed the Hangover Effect from Red Tide in Charlotte Harbor with a substantial increase in seagrass decline. Mr. Roger Copp provided the two-year update of the Lower Charlotte Harbor Watershed Initiative including the creation of a comprehensive hydrological model including historic and present day mapping scenarios. Dr. Miles Medina spoke on the correlation between red tide and anthropogenic drivers with a focus on the recent increase in intensity in our local areas. The Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast highlighted the CHENP project ‘Gateway to Myakka Restoration’ to which removal of invasive species and planting of natives throughout the Myakka River Corridor were completed. The annual Technical Advisory Committee elected a new co-chair, Mark Walton, along with existing co-chair Ernesto Lasso de la Vega. The Citizens Advisory Committee did not meet this past cycle due to the time they devoted to a special resiliency and climate survey with their respective city and county leaders for the comprehensive vulnerability assessments for future funding in the ten counties served by CHNEP. The Management Committee heard on May 13 the same four presentations you will hear today on Blue Green Algae and discussion among participants were centered on solution-based strategies. The annual Management Committee Co-Chair election was held and Jennifer Codo-Salisbury was elected, along with existing Co-Chair Corey Anderson. The Management Committee reviewed the draft Fiscal Year 2022 Amended Work Plan and Budget and Proposed

Draft Fiscal Year 2023 Work Plan and Budget and recommend both be approved by the Policy Committee.

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

CHNEP's Executive Director, Ms. Jennifer Hecker, presented on programmatic activity:

CHNEP continues to conduct Technical, Management, Citizens, and Policy Committee Meetings to disburse program information through presentations, dialogue, and collaboration. Multiple grants were prepared and initiated including the submission of the EPA's Final Grant Performance Report for projects spanning from 2014-2019. Draft letters were completed for the South Florida Geographic Program and for the study of Harmful Algae Blooms in Tampa and Sarasota Bays. The finance and grant management report noted the successful city audit of the CHNEP EPA grant, and Charlotte, Manatee, and Sarasota funding agreement drafts submitted to the respective City Councils for approval. FY22 annual partner contributions were processed and customized budget and project overviews were sent to CHNEP partners. Q1 and Q2 grant and progress reporting were completed for multiple agreements. The amended FY22 budget was updated and approved by the Policy Committee and the FY23 work plan and budget has been provided to the City of Punta Gorda. CHNEP continued to present, host, coordinate, organize, and attend an abundance of workshops, conferences, meetings, project site visits, data analysis, coalition partner briefings, public engagement, media / press outreach, and council discussions. In addition to continuing communications, publications, and outreach, CHNEP hosted the highly successful and engaging 2022 Climate Summit with over 30 speakers and 200+ attendees. These resources are continually updated and archived online for the public.

A committee member asked for an update on the oyster habitat project that was conducted for individual homeowners to hang on their docks. Ms. Hecker reported that CHNEP staff have recently emailed the participants requesting an update, with one participant recording photo data so far. As results come in they will be recorded and communicated with committee members and the public as a continued educational resource.

Agenda Item #8 – CHNEP Fiscal Hosting by Charlotte County- Claire Jubb, Charlotte County & Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP

Co-Chair Mr. Jon Iglehart provided a written statement which Mr. Brian Smith read aloud to the committee outlining his support of CHNEP's proposed host transition to Charlotte County with rationale that administration, staff, and operational support needs will increase as CHNEP's budget is anticipated to double in the upcoming fiscal year. Ms. Claire Jubb, Assistant County Administrator for Charlotte County reported that the Charlotte County Commission on May 10, 2022 reviewed the initial proposal with unanimous conceptual approval with rationale that the partnership would complement the vision of the County's existing 'One Charlotte One Water' initiative. Ms. Jubb noted the County currently hosted the MPO, with similar governmental parameters as CHNEP and are confident they can facilitate an agreeable hosting arrangement as CHNEP continues to grow. Ms. Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP Executive Director thanked the City of Punta Gorda for their hosting role and explained that there are expanded operational support needs given the increased budget and related increased staffing and technical projects. She outlined that if the Policy Committee gave its conceptual approval, the next steps would include drafting a temporary lease agreement to move physical offices and create a host agreement to

present to the County Commission in July. Further transition agreements would then be drafted, reviewed, discussed, and presented to the Policy Committee at the next scheduled meeting on September 22, 2022 with an effective date of the transition as October 1, 2022 for the new fiscal year.

Two Committee Members commented that the move would be a good strategy given the growth of CHNEP. Two Committee Members wanted assurance that this host move would not impact current projects or future projects in areas that were farther away from CHNEP's new proposed host city. Ms. Hecker assured the committee members that CHNEP would continue to operate according to the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan and its annual work plans and budgets, with equitable distribution of resources throughout the entire CHNEP service areas. Co-Chair Mr. Smith affirmed that CHNEP's CCMP offers the continuity of foundational guiding objectives and principles for the organization and a host change does not affect coverage, project scope, focus or intent.

RAMON IGLESIAS MOTIONED TO APPROVE CONCEPTUAL GRANTING OF THE HOSTING AGREEMENT WITH THE COUNTY AND EXPLORE TEMPORARY LEASE AGREEMENT, SECONDED BY KEN DOHERTY. THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED WITH NO ABSTENTIONS OR OBJECTIONS.

Agenda Item #7 – Amended FY2022 Work Plan & Budget and Proposed FY2023 Work Plan & Budget — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP

Ms. Jennifer Hecker presented the FY2022 Amended Work Plan and outlined pertinent removals, carryovers, decreases, updates, and overall adjusted funding in detail for both revenue and expense portions with narrative task descriptions to reflect the changes. Ms. Hecker explained that the FY23 Work Plan and Budget draft would be sent to the EPA June 1 with next year's grant application and addressed rationale for updates to program costs. She explained how CHNEP in the upcoming years would be assisting with hiring contractors to assist in completing the Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessments to access \$200,000 in funding for Counties in the program area.

A committee member asked if the budget increase was temporary and Ms. Hecker explained it was effective for five years. A committee member asked about a project that had to be reversed for funding and how to not lose funding in the future. Ms. Hecker explained that in that particular project the County changed course on their plan and this change resulted in the loss in funding. She stated CHNEP does a call for projects every year and external factors out of their control may impact projects. Co-Chair Mr. Smith noted that not changing approved project specifics mid-project is advisable. A committee members asked how the resiliency compacts, counties, and CHNEP interact together with the vulnerability assessments. Ms. Hecker explained that CHNEP coordinates closely with the Heartland Resiliency Coalition, the Southwest Climate Compact Entities, and many other stakeholders to encourage dialogue and collaboration. She noted CHNEP continually communicates with all stakeholders to equitably distribute support with technical data and science-driven information. A committee member commented that the evolution of the Water Atlas has made it more user friendly and applicable to the needs of a wider audience. Another member applauded the Water Atlas as a highly valuable resource that is widely used in multiple applications across Districts in communicating to various stakeholders on a variety of projects.

KATY ERRINGTON MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE CHNEP FY2022 AMENDED WORK PLAN & BUDGET AND PROPOSED FY2023 WORKPLAN & BUDGET, SECONDED BY LAURA CARR. THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED WITH NO ABSTENTIONS OR OBJECTIONS.

Agenda Item #9 – Algae as an indicator of nutrient pollution in the Tidal Caloosahatchee – Dr. James Douglass, Florida Gulf Coast University

Dr. Douglass presented research on seagrass habitats in the tidal Caloosahatchee River and Lake Okeechobee as it pertains to excessive algae as an indicator of nutrient pollution. An in depth analysis of data from multiple water quality sources were assessed and recommendations were shared.

A committee member commented on how spraying natural vegetation with poison was counter-productive as it contributed to the increase in nutrient waste and exacerbated the bloom growth. He continued to state that it was his opinion that aquaculture harvesting techniques could alleviate some of the mass of legacy nutrient build-up. Dr. Douglas commented that natural sequestration of nutrients with native vegetation could be a good strategy to reduce nutrient sources from the water.

Agenda Item #10 – Blue Green Algae (Cyanobacteria) Research Update – Dr. Barry Rosen, Florida Gulf Coast University

Dr. Rosen presented on behalf of The Water School and the Department of Ecology & Environmental Studies at Florida Gulf Coast University about the increase in toxic algae blooms in Florida since 2018. Dr. Rosen's research denotes how harmful this algae is to humans, animals, and local environmental systems. Dr. Rosen's team is developing a new cyanobacteria key to help identify, classify, and organize emerging cyan toxin data while educating on the effects of toxicity levels in regard to exposure rates and effects on drinking water supplies.

A committee member asked if the algae in Lake Okeechobee could have originated from boaters unloading their fecal matter into the water and Dr. Rosen said he did not think so, because there was a large bloom that got caught in the basin and spiked measurements. He stated that once sheet piling was removed, the water flowed better, the bloom was carried away and measurements were normalized. A committee member asked if the nutrients from sediment were more of a concern as the algae's primary source of nutrients for growing algae and Dr. Rosen said algae primarily want to get nutrients from the water column, not sediment. Another committee member asked if the excessive biomass starves the algae and Dr. Rosen said yes, excessive biomass causes major damage like fish kills. Another committee member asked if the bubblers used in aquaculture and other applications create an aerosol effect and place algae toxins in the air to which Dr. Rosen replied that it is unknown, but possible. A committee member asked if the nanobubbles used in aquaculture and other applications burst within the water column and dissipate in the toxins into water to which Dr. Rosen said he is investigating that subject now in his lab.

Agenda Item #11 – Blue Green Algae Task Force Recommendations Response – Dr. Michael Parsons, Florida Gulf Coast University

Dr. Parsons spoke on the recommendations of the Blue-Green Algae Task Force in particular the use of new and innovative technology, updated stormwater systems, data collection, predictive-modeling, sewage treatment, and disposal systems. He offered research and recommendations for next steps in working toward protecting, conserving, and managing water as a natural resource.

A committee member asked if the science is showing now that vegetative-style stormwater retention designs are better than the designs we have now and Dr. Parsons said it would be a good, general transition to move toward vegetative style systems with further steps that insure the vegetation is well-suited. The committee member agreed that the type of vegetation that is installed is crucial. A committee member asked Dr. Parsons to recommend to the Task Force a more regionally cooperative approach encompassing all five water management districts with additional funding for water quality from the legislature to which he said he would bring that idea back to the Task Force. A committee member asked if plants would help sequester the nutrients prior to entering the waterways and if mowing the canals and ditches are counterproductive. Dr. Parson's said he is not an expert on that but would say that those plants would need to be harvested in some way so they are not re-introduced into the pond. He encouraged dialogue with experts and possibly in pruning and picking up the clippings of vegetation so the sequestered nutrients are completely and physically away from the water system. A member said that the current spraying that is done to kill the vegetation in the waterways is counter-productive and Dr. Douglass agreed and commented to skip the spraying and mechanically prune the plants possibly and then collect the debris so as not to reintroduce the plants into the water system may be a better strategy.

Agenda Item #12 – Funding Resources for Combatting Harmful Algae – Ed Smith, Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Mr. Smith presented the funding opportunities available from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to help communities protect their local waterways in particular when considering effects to strategically reduce harmful algae blooms. Members were directed to Mr. Smith's email and website with questions.

Agenda Item #13 — Research & Restoration Project Updates— Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP

CHNEP's Research & Outreach Manager, Ms. Nicole Iadevaia, presented on project updates occurring since the last Policy Committee meeting. The CHNEP Water Atlas enhancements are resulting in more user friendly, updated, data-driven resources about local water quality and is being well received by various stakeholders. Additional initiatives include the Pine Island Flatwoods Restoration, Lower Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Hydrological Restoration, South Lee County Hydrological Restoration Project, Tiki Point Harborwalk Living Shoreline Project, and the Myakka Headwaters Preserve Restoration. Comprehensive resources like fact sheets and project updates are continually updated and available at the CHNEP website <http://www.chnep.org> and the [CHNEP YouTube Channel](#).

Agenda Item #14 – MAC Membership Project Updates — James Evans, Co-Chair

Alice White, City of North Port - North Port is moving forward with the first phase of septic to sewer conversion.

Katy Errington, Village of Estero - Estero is moving forward with septic to sewer. Also the Estero on the River Project is in beginning stages.

Randy Smith, Southwest Florida Water Management District - The May governing board FY 23 cooperative funding projects were approved closing out the cycle. The next application cycle will open in August with applications due the first Friday in October. Some changes in the program will be communicated after Board approval. The 2022 seagrass mapping aerials were flown this winter and the consultants are finishing verifications and going into the mapping part of the project. We plan to have draft numbers on the seagrass maps at the beginning of the calendar year.

Phil Flood South Florida Water Management District - SWFWMD continues to work on multiple projects for coastal estuaries and continues working with the Army Corp of Engineers with the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual. The Legislative 2022 session just wrapped up in March and the District is monitoring several bills including the appropriations bill with Florida's environment and regional water projects within that bill, some specifically for blue green algae and red tide. Program funding for the septic to sewer conversion and resiliency project planning and project implementation is available and you can and connect with Ed Smith for information on that funding. As well we are waiting on the line items that were added with 4 million specifically for water quality projects in the Peace River water system and 6 million for the Caloosahatchee water system.

Mike Miller, City of Sanibel - Our primary strategy has been improving our wastewater facilities to reduce the nutrients that goes into our reclaimed water for irrigation. We have also established a small water treatment park and received a status report that it is reducing nitrogen but not as much for phosphorus. We will be increasing some vegetation and install some aeration systems.

Bill Veach, Town of Fort Myers Beach - Local citizens are working on planting native species and they are encouraged that locals on private property are taking on this important work.

Don McCormick, Southwest Regional Planning Council – The Council has been working on readjusting the inter-local agreement and continue to administer \$900,000 in grants. They recently had a presentation about the Port of Miami which will undergo a 400 million dollar expansion and that will have a positive impact on the surrounding transportation systems.

Ken Doherty, Charlotte County - Our 20 year master plan from septic to sewer is well into the third phase in Charlotte County. We recently had the board approve the utility department to expansion for the east port plant and the burnt store plant wastewater treatment will expand so the effluent will meet the new state standards. Our water quality manager is busy with our water quality monitoring program and we'll be having a meeting soon with our neighbors in North Port.

Jennifer Codo-Salisbury, Central Florida Regional Planning Council - The Heartland Regional Resiliency Coalition did formalize their memorandum of cooperation amongst the signatories of

the heartland counties and it went into effect April 1, 2022 and they are now operational as a coalition.

Brian Smith, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – EPA is working to get the bill guidance out for infrastructure projects. We're working on the definition of the Waters of the US.

Agenda Item #15 – Public Comment — Brian Smith, Co-Chair

Mr. Mike Elfenbein spoke on his desire to re-submit an innovative grant application to FDREP during the next cycle for his aqua harvesting system to remove legacy nutrients from Lake Okeechobee.

Agenda Item #16 – Future Meeting's Topics, Location and Date – Brian Smith, Co-Chair

The next meeting will be held on September 22, 2022. The upcoming 2023 meeting will be on January 26, 2023.

Agenda Item #17 – Adjourn – Brian Smith, Co-Chair

Meeting was adjourned at 12:53 pm.