



CHNEP Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, April 24th, 2024 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Virtual Meeting

AGENDA

This is a virtual meeting ONLY, Microsoft Teams meeting link below:

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Meeting ID: 261 920 718 132

Passcode: nUvGLL

1. Call to Order, Meeting Instructions, and Introductions — CHNEP, for CAC Co-Chairs
2. Agenda Additions or Deletions — CHNEP, for CAC Co-Chairs
3. Public Comment on Agenda Items — CHNEP, for CAC Co-Chairs
4. Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) December 13th, 2023 Meeting Minutes — CHNEP, for CAC Co-Chairs
5. Citizen's Advisory Committee Co-Chair Election — CHNEP, for CAC Co-Chairs
6. CHNEP Update — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP
7. New Conservation Grant Applications — Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP
8. Overview of the CHNEP Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) 5-Year Update — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP
9. Action Plan 1 Update: Water Quality Improvement— Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP
10. Action Plan 2 Update: Hydrological Restoration— Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP
11. Action Plan 3 Update: Fish Wildlife and Habitat Protection— Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP
12. Action Plan 4 Update: CCMP Public Engagement— Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP
13. CHNEP Technical Projects and New Tools — Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP
14. CAC Updates & Roundtable Discussion on Topics of Interest: Science Communication Engagement — CHNEP, for CAC Co-Chairs
15. General Public Comment — CHNEP, for CAC Co-Chairs
16. Future Meetings: Topics, Location and Date — CHNEP, for CAC Co-Chairs
 - Upcoming Dates for 2024: 8/21/24, & 12/18/24
17. Adjourn

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

CHNEP, on behalf of the CAC Co-Chairs, will call the meeting to order. Members will introduce themselves.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS

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. CITIZEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Recommendation: Approval of the minutes from December 13th 2023 meeting.

Attachment: Draft December 13th 2023 CAC Meeting Minutes.

5. CAC CO-CHAIR ELECTION

CAC bylaws stipulate that Co-Chairs are elected on an alternating basis annually at each spring meeting for 2-year terms. The staggered two-year terms ensure that a new Co-Chair will be paired with an experienced Co-Chair. Nominations are being sought for one of the Co-Chair positions in advance of the next meeting for staff to compile into a nominations list. CAC members can nominate themselves or another CAC member whom they have previously conferred with to confirm they are willing to serve. The list of nominees will be brought forward for consideration at the meeting.

- *Nominations are requested to be submitted by COB Tuesday, April 23rd using the link provided: <https://forms.gle/rv3UkhE46sgpD18J7>*

CAC Co-Chairs alternate chairing of CAC meetings, as well as alternate attendance of Management Committee meetings to brief them on CAC comments on items before them for discussion. The CAC Co-Chair attending the Management Committee meeting has voting privileges at that meeting as well. CHNEP staff provides email meeting notices of future Management meetings to the Co-Chairs, as well as personal pre-meeting briefings to assist the CAC Co-Chairs in their role.

CHNEP, on behalf of the CAC Co-Chairs, will be facilitating this discussion.

6. CHNEP UPDATE

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

Program Administration

- Planned and executed the Technical Advisory Committee Meeting (11/30), Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting (12/13), Management Committee Meeting (1/12) and Policy Committee Meeting (1/25), including lining up presenters, drafting agenda packets, creating PowerPoints, drafting minutes, etc.
- At the January Policy meeting, the Committee approved updates to the Policy Committee Bylaws and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Charlotte County.
- In follow up from the Winter Management Conference meetings, CHNEP reached out to participating agencies, cities, and counties with committee vacancies to designate new representatives. Based on responses, all internal lists for each committee were updated and new member emails and packets were sent out.

- Received USEPA Region 4 and Headquarters approval for 2023 NEPORT Congressional Report for annual partner conservation, management, and restoration accomplishments.
- CHNEP provided letters of support for the following research project proposals focused on the CHNEP area: *Sarasota County Gottfried Creek Stormwater Improvement Project* and *Septic to Sewer Conversion on Charlotte County Barrier Islands*.
- CHNEP partnered on a letter of interest and provided a letter of acknowledgement for the following research project proposals focused on the CHNEP area: *Testing the effectiveness and suitability of Vallisneria sp. plantings in stormwater canals for improving water quality in a southwest Florida estuary* and *Coastal Habitat Monitoring*.
- At the request of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, CHNEP served on the Management Advisory Group for the Babcock Webb Wildlife Management Area Management Plan update, providing comments and data to assist in development of management intent, goals and objectives, and challenges and strategies for the ten-year Management Plan.

Finance and Grant Management

- Received fully executed SD015 FDEP funding agreement.
- Sent customized budget letters and information packets to City & County partners who contribute to the CHNEP, providing an overview of what value and projects CHNEP provides to their areas. This is sent during the spring for FY25 to help with partner budgeting.
- Interlocal agreement with Central Florida Regional Planning Council fully executed.
- Interlocal agreement with Lee County fully executed.
- Sent FY24 Q1 reports for SWFWMD FY21 and FY24 cooperative funding agreements. After these were approved, the final reimbursement request for the SWFWMD FY21 agreement was prepared approved by the District in March.
- Worked with EPA to update the FY24 BIL Work Plan and submit a revised grant request package for FY24 BIL funds from EPA.
- Worked with EPA and City of Punta Gorda to update a grant request package for Novated funds from FY22-23 from EPA, which is presently being processed by EPA.
- Received the draft Cooperative Agreement 24CN0004327 for FY24 funding from the Southwest Florida Water Management District. This was subsequently entered into the County grant award acceptance system and is presently scheduled to go to CHNEP's fiscal host for partial execution, prior to being sent back to the District for full execution.
- Updated the Conservation Grant form and website landing page to reflect changes to the program and increases to available funding.
- Work plan and budget amendments for EPA 320 Master Work Plan reviewed and approved at January Policy meeting.
- Received and processed all annual partner contribution checks for FY24.

Regional and multi-jurisdictional organizational meetings

- CHNEP Water Atlas Monthly Meetings
- Charlotte County Vulnerability Assessment Meetings
- Hardee County FDEP Vulnerability Assessment Steering Committee Meetings
- North Port Vulnerability Assessment Steering Committee Meetings
- Myakka River Management Coordinating Council
- SWFWMD Water Resources Forum

- CHNEP/City of Punta Gorda Tiki Point Project Meeting
- Yucca Pens/Designing Wetland Habitat Enhancement and Flooding Improvements for Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Stakeholder Meeting
- Regional Ambient Monitoring Program (RAMP) Meeting
- Lehigh Acres “LA MSID” Watershed 2024 Biennial Meeting
- Babcock-Webb SWIA/Bond Farm/Yucca Pens Project Site Visit
- ANEP External Affairs Committee Meetings
- All Clams on Deck Advisory Panel
- SFWMD Joint Working Group/Science Coordination Group Meeting
- Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative (CHFI) Quarterly Meetings
- Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network Data Management and Water Quality Trends Meetings
- Myakka Headwaters Preserve Restoration Project Site Visit
- SEC Seagrass Meeting
- Babcock Webb Wildlife Management Area Management Advisory Group Meeting
- CHNEP/Mote Meeting to Discuss Beach Conditions Reporting System
- EPA National Estuary Program OAH Monitoring Meeting
- SWERT (Southwest Florida Estuarine Restoration Team) Meeting
- GOMA Data & Monitoring All Teams
- USEPA Future Flood Vulnerability Analysis Project Kick-off Meeting
- Everglades Coalition Conference
- AWRA 33rd Annual Southwest Florida Water Resources Conference
- One Charlotte One Water Workshop
- Science and Environmental Council EcoSummit & Green Living Expo
- Gulf of Mexico Conference
- Southwest Florida Climate Summit
- Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN) Community Conversations on Coastal Heritage at Risk Meeting
- League of Environmental Educators in Florida (LEEF) Spring Conference
- NEP EJ Community of Practice (CoP) Meetings
- Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) Meetings
- Charlotte County Water Quality Dashboard Meetings

CHNEP staff presentations

- Plenary Panelist at the 2024 EcoSummit (hosted by the Science and Environmental Council in Sarasota) on the [Recharging Nature with Estuary Restoration](#) panel along with other Florida Gulf Coast National Estuary Program Directors.
- Session proposer/host at Gulf of Mexico Conference (GOMCON) with Auburn University. Session Title: *Advancing coastal resiliency through watershed planning and hydrological restoration.*
- Presented on hydrological restoration planning initiatives in the CHNEP: *Moving Water to Restore Rivers, Wetlands and Estuaries* at Gulf of Mexico Conference.
- Presented on updates to the CHNEP Water Atlas in *CHNEP Water Atlas: An Interactive Estuaries Report Card* presentation at the 2024 AWRA Geospatial Water Technology Conference.
- Presented Presentation on *CHNEP Water Atlas: An Interactive Habitat & Estuaries Report Card* at the Coastal Habitat Integrated Monitoring and Mapping Program Workshop.

- Poster presentation on *CHNEP Habitat Restoration Needs Plan* at the Coastal Habitat Integrated Monitoring and Mapping Program Workshop.
- Submitted abstracts for Restore America's Estuaries Conference 2025.

Publications and Outreach Initiatives

- Hosted and organized the [2024 Southwest Florida Climate Summit](#) in Punta Gorda. Approximately 200+ attendees each day, 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. Sent out personalized invitations to all city and county councils/commissions and managers/administrators, as well as federal and state senators and representatives.
- Prepared a link and hard copy packet of [CHNEP science communication/education tools](#) and resources that were sent to each CAC member to assist their community environmental education and outreach efforts.
- Attended [Water, Wings & Wild Things Festival](#) at Circle B Bar Preserve in Polk County. [Engaged attendees with fish habitats educational activity](#) this included over 200 students from schools throughout the county. Handed out Nature Calendars and Kids Activity Books to chaperones.
- Provided environmental education materials (2024 calendars, Kids Activity Books, Climate Summit flyers, etc.) for partner events including LAMSID Wings Over Water Festival and the Cape Coral Waterways Festival in Lee County, as well as Lemon Bay Conservancy Open House and City of North Port Public Works Road-E-O in Sarasota County.
- Held exhibitor booths at the One Charlotte One Water Workshop, Annual Southwest Florida Water Resources Conference, and the Everglades Coalition Conference. Distributed calendars, fact sheets, CCMP brochures, upcoming volunteer event information, and 2024 Southwest Florida Climate Summit. Also assisted Charlotte County in gathering stakeholder feedback related to water quality via surveys at the One Charlotte One Water Workshop and provided environmental education materials to the public and policymakers present.
- Attended the [Highlands Hammocks Civilian Conservation Corps Festival](#). Over 300 people visited CHNEP booth, which included a bird trivia wheel, Backyard Bird Week information, Kid's scratch off ocean crafts, and general education materials.
- Attended the [Myakka Headwaters Preserve Tree Planting](#). This volunteer event was co-hosted with the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast and Sarasota Bay Estuary Program. Volunteers planted over 600 tree saplings in two hours.
- Attended the [Swamp Cabbage Festival](#) in LaBelle, FL. Over 60 people came to CHNEP booth, where children played a fish habitats game and educational materials about CHNEP and calendars, CCMP brochures, and Kids Activity Books were distributed.
- Updated the Funding Opportunities Fact Sheet (<https://www.chnep.org/federal-funding>) to distribute to stakeholders, community members, and anyone who can benefit from current funding opportunities.
- Attended the Chalo Nitka Festival in Moore Haven, FL. Over 40 people came to the CHNEP booth, where children played a fish habitats game and learned how to measure popular game

fish. Educational materials were distributed including Kids Activity Books, calendars, and CCMP brochures.

- Celebrated and recognized #IHeartEstuaries month in February with a series of posts on Facebook and Instagram highlighting estuaries and projects in CHNEP area.
- Attended the Hardee County Schools Field Trip to Charlotte Harbor with CHNEP CAC Member Kayton Nedza, who manages the Hardee County Water Resources Education Program. CHNEP staff assisted in providing hands-on environmental and water resources education to 50 fourth grade students. Additionally, provided 50 copies of CHNEP *Kid's Activity Book* to Hardee County Water Resources Education Program.

Outreach analytics

- 6,041 subscribers for CHNEP educational mailings
- 2,513 unique visitors and 6,585 page views of CHNEP website since start of 2024
- 43 new Instagram followers this year for a total of 576 followers
- 1,943 Facebook followers
- 9,660 YouTube Views/62 Subscribers/297 Videos

Media/Press

- [Experts: Flooding puts flat Florida at risk / Charlotte Sun Newspaper](#)
- [Experts will gather in Punta Gorda next week to present the latest climate science and the public is invited to attend | WGPU PBS & NPR for Southwest Florida](#)

CHNEP Executive Director Jennifer Hecker will be presenting the CHNEP Update.

7. NEW CONSERVATION GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership’s (CHNEP) goal for Public Engagement is to increase the proportion of the population that supports and participates in actions to protect and restore estuaries and watersheds. Since 2001, CHNEP has offered grants to help establish and maintain environmental education efforts and further partnerships to help implement the CCMP. Due to the move to the new fiscal host, the Conservation Grant application was recently restructured to improve access and streamline the payment process. Applications and instructions can be found here: <https://www.chnep.org/conservation-grants>.

This item is to inform the Citizen’s Advisory Committee on the new Conservation Grant application that was submitted for the April 1, 2024 due date and to seek CAC input on associated funding awards. The CAC role as related to this program is to seek 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. Preference will be given to partners and to projects in communities that have been historically underserved.

Stewardship Funding for Neighborhood Land Management	4/1/2024	\$1,500.00	Environmental Conservancy of North Port		Barbara Lockhart, npconservancy@gmail.com	9/1/2024	The deliverable for the project is a project report 'Stewardship Funding for Neighborhood Land Management' (in PDF format). This Memorandum needs to include: (1) copy of notice of volunteer workday on property so CHNEP can share through our social media, etc. (2) documentation of # of acres treated or estimate of invasive plant materials removed (truck loads removed) (2) photographs of the volunteer event and before and after photos at a selected location (fixed station) documenting contractor work (3) the number of volunteers who participated in volunteer event and volunteer hours, (4) inclusion of the CHNEP logo on the educational signs and photo of the signs.
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Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP Dir. of Research & Restoration, will be giving an overview of the Conservation Grant applications received this cycle and staff recommendations regarding them.

Recommendation: Gather CAC input on Conservation Grant Application
Attachment: April 2024 Conservation Grant Application

8. OVERVIEW OF THE CHNEP COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN (CCMP) 5-YEAR UPDATE

The US EPA recognizes that National Estuary Program (NEP) Comprehensive Conservation Management Plans (CCMP) are critical components of their model of adaptive management as it facilitates a continual process of integrating new data and results. CCMPs are living documents and as such should be re-examined and updated on a regular basis. EPA requires each NEP to review their CCMP every 5 years to determine if updating or revision is needed. The CHNEP recently undertook a major revision of its CCMP in 2019 with the expansion of its program area and name change, which was approved by the Management Conference Committees and the EPA. Therefore, it was determined that only an update would be needed at this time.

The discussion at this meeting will be focused on gathering committee member input on the update made on behalf of their respective organization. The CCMP should capture the latest science as well as the consensus on the direction of the Partnership's collective work to further water quality and habitat goals for the region. It guides how the NEP can provide programmatic or funding support to assist partner research, restoration and public engagement efforts outlined therein.

CHNEP staff have read through the full CCMP to provide initial comments based on research shared by members of the Partnership and discussions held at recent Management Conference meetings, major comments are highlighted. In preparation for the meeting, Committee members are asked to review the 2019 CCMP and staff comments and help identify other items not currently captured. This could include new and emerging research or issues that the Partnership is working on, inaccuracies or old projects and initiatives that have since been retired, as well as any adjustments that need to be made to an 'Activity' identified for implementing the four CHNEP CCMP 'Action Plans'. After comments are gathered at the Spring Management Conference meetings (held in April and May) staff will procure a contractor to make the agreed upon updates to the CCMP. This revised draft will be brought back for review and final comment on how issues were addressed at the Fall Management Conference meetings (held in August and September). The finalized CCMP will be sent to USEPA for final approval in the fall of 2024, with new copies printed and provided to Committee members and partners afterward. Additional non-substantive comments, resources and or references should be sent to chnep@chnep.org by May 24th, 2024.

This overview will be given by CHNEP Executive Director Jennifer Hecker.

Attachments: CHNEP 2019 CCMP (Word Version)
CHNEP 2019 CCMP Update Staff Comments Document

9. ACTION PLAN 1 UPDATE: WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

This item will be focused on gathering committee input on the CHNEP CCMP Water Quality Improvement Section. CHNEP staff will give an overview on this section of the CCMP and share current recommendations for changes to the narrative or activities. Afterward, there is time set aside to for facilitated discussion to gather committee comments and consensus on those items.

WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

VISION: Waters that meet their designated human uses for drinking, shellfish harvesting, or swimming and fishing, while supporting appropriate and healthy aquatic life.

GOAL: Water quality improvement.

OBJECTIVE: Meet or exceed water quality standards for designated uses of natural waterbodies and waterways with no degradation of Outstanding Florida Waters.

STRATEGY: Support comprehensive and coordinated water quality monitoring programs, and projects and programs that reduce pollutants entering waterways.

CHNEP Director of Research & Restoration Nicole Iadevaia will be facilitating this discussion.

10. ACTION PLAN 2 UPDATE: HYDROLOGICAL RESTORATION

This item will be focused on gathering committee input on the CHNEP CCMP Hydrological Restoration Section. CHNEP staff will give an overview on this section of the CCMP and share current recommendations for changes to the narrative or activities. Afterward, there is time set aside to for facilitated discussion to gather committee comments and consensus on those items.

HYDROLOGICAL RESTORATION ACTION PLAN

VISION: Appropriate freshwater flow across the landscape to sustain healthy wetlands, rivers, and estuaries.

GOAL: Enhanced and improved waterbodies with more natural hydrologic conditions.

OBJECTIVE: Adequate aquifer recharge and freshwater volume and timing of flow to support healthy natural systems, meet water quality criteria, and protect the designated use.

STRATEGY: Support data-driven watershed planning and hydrologic restoration projects to protect and restore natural flow regimes and provide sufficient fresh surface water and groundwater to natural systems.

CHNEP Executive Director Jennifer Hecker will be facilitating this discussion.

11. ACTION PLAN 3 UPDATE: FISH WILDLIFE AND HABITAT PROTECTION

This item will be focused on gathering committee input on the CHNEP CCMP Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Section. CHNEP staff will give an overview on this section of the CCMP and share current recommendations for changes to the narrative or activities. Afterward, there is time set aside to for facilitated discussion to gather committee comments and consensus on those items.

FISH, WILDLIFE, and HABITAT PROTECTION ACTION PLAN

VISION: A diverse environment of interconnected, healthy habitats that support natural processes and viable, resilient native plant and animal communities.

GOAL: Natural habitat protection and restoration.

OBJECTIVE: Permanently acquire, connect, protect, restore, and manage natural terrestrial and aquatic habitats.

STRATEGY: Promote and facilitate permanent acquisition and effective protection and management of critical natural habitats including wildlife dispersal areas, movement and habitat migration corridors, wetlands, flowways, and environmentally sensitive lands and estuarine habitats.

CHNEP Director of Research & Restoration Nicole Iadevaia will be facilitating this discussion.

12. ACTION PLAN 4 UPDATE: CCMP PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

This item will be focused on gathering committee input on the CHNEP CCMP Public Engagement Section. CHNEP staff will give an overview on this section of the CCMP and share current recommendations for changes to the narrative or activities. Afterward, there is time set aside to for facilitated discussion to gather committee comments and consensus on those items.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

VISION: An informed, engaged public making choices and taking actions that increase protection and restoration of estuaries and watersheds.

GOAL: Public education and engagement.

OBJECTIVE: Increase the proportion of the population that supports and participates in actions to protect and restore estuaries and watersheds.

STRATEGY: Promote environmental awareness, understanding, and stewardship to the general public, new target audiences, and policymakers; and strengthen non-profit partner collaboration in education and engagement programs.

CHNEP Executive Director Jennifer Hecker will be facilitating this discussion.

13. CHNEP TECHNICAL PROJECTS UPDATES

In addition to the items featured earlier on the agenda, other research and/or restoration projects (or phases of projects) recently completed or currently underway with CHNEP FY21-24 funds. A brief overview will be given on project progress since the previous TAC meeting.

Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP Director of Research & Restoration, will be presenting this agenda item. Project fact sheets are available on the CHNEP website: <https://www.chnep.org/chnep-fact-sheets>.

13. CAC MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

This is a Round-Robin style discussion for the Committee to engage on environmental topics as they pertain to counties they represent and to organize on working toward mutual issues of interest. After learning about available CHNEP resources, what can be done through the CAC to advance Water Quality Improvement, Hydrological Restoration, Fish Wildlife & Habitat Protection, and Public Engagement in the region?

Discussion may include the following topics:

- What are main concerns in the counties currently?
- Where are there 'gaps' in resources/information and possible solutions?
- What are best ways to get educational information to the public?

CHNEP, on behalf of the CAC Co-Chairs, will be leading and facilitating this discussion.

14. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

15. FUTURE MEETING'S TOPICS, LOCATION AND DATE

Please mark your calendar with these upcoming CHNEP CAC Meetings dates: 8/21/24, & 12/18/24. If you have ideas of topics for a future presentation, please email them to CHNEP Director of Research & Restoration Nicole Iadevaia at niadevaia@chnep.org.

16. ADJOURN