



CHNEP Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday August 20th, 2025 9:30 AM – 2:00 PM
Centennial Park, Large Multipurpose Room
1120 Centennial Blvd. Port Charlotte, FL 33953

**Draft Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
August 20, 2025**

Members Present:

Tonya Bramlage	Charlotte County
Kayton Nedza	Hardee County
Church Roberts	Hendry County
Zach Franco	Highlands County
Nicole Johnson	Lee County
Harry Phillips	Lee County
Brooke Langston	Manatee County
Tom Palmer	Polk County
Cheryl Cook	Sarasota County
Aaron Zimmermann	Sarasota County

Others Present:

Jennifer Hecker	Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP)
Nicole Iadevaia	Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP)
Sarina Barnard	Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP)
Keara Abel	Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP)

Agenda Item #1 – Call to Order and Introductions — Aaron Zimmermann, CAC Co-Chair

Aaron Zimmermann called the meeting to order at 9:38AM. Introductions were then made by existing members.

Agenda Item #2 – Agenda Additions or Deletions — Aaron Zimmermann, CAC Co-Chair

No additions or deletions were made to the agenda.

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

Agenda Item #3 – Public Comments on Agenda Items — Aaron Zimmermann, CAC Co-Chair

No public comments on agenda items were made.

Agenda Item #4 – Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) April 23rd, 2025 Meeting Minutes — Aaron Zimmermann, CAC Co-Chair

No changes were made to the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) April 23rd, 2025 meeting minutes.

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

Agenda Item #5 – CHNEP Update — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP

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

CHNEP welcomed new EPA Region 4 Management Committee representative, Felicia Burks, and Policy Committee representative who will also serve as cochair, Craig Hesterlee. CHNEP submitted the CHNEP 2025 Program Evaluation Report and supporting documents and conducted the 2020-2024 CHNEP Program Evaluation May site visits, coordinating with local partners as well as EPA evaluation team members who traveled to meet with CHNEP staff and members and to see the wide range of projects completed together in the last five years. This included presentations from partners discussing how federal funding was leveraged with state and local dollars to reach goals. To showcase work around the EPA pillars of Strong Communities and Clean Waters CHNEP, EPA and National Estuary Program staff met with representatives from around the region who presented on their work to improve water quality and flows. Presenters included the City of Arcadia, and Central Florida Regional Planning Council on resiliency in the Heartland, Charlotte County and CHNEP on water quality monitoring in Charlotte Harbor, and the South Florida Water Management District and the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission on hydrologic restoration in the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods area and Babcock Webb WMA. To showcase work around the EPA pillar of Healthy Ecosystems, the team visited important project sites in the watershed and spoke with local partners who presented on restoration challenges and successes. This included trips to the Myakka Headwaters Preserve to speak with Big Waters Land Trust the Southwest Florida Water Management District, and Blackbeard's Ranch to hear from Florida Conservation Group, Florida Cattlemen's Association and Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation representatives. The team also met with City of North Port and Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission to see Warm Mineral Springs Creek restoration site. CHNEP also planned and executed the Spring Committee meetings, sent Committee member packets to newly appointed members on Committees, welcomed three new Policy Committee members, Commissioner Barbara Langdon, representing the City of North Port, Councilmember Lloyd Weed, representing the City of Venice, and Councilmember Jeff Hunt, representing the Village of Estero, and completed available Programmatic Appropriations Forms for FY26 federal funding and remitted them for consideration.

For finance and grants, CHNEP submitted FY25 FDEP Grant SD016 Q2 and Q3 reports and attachments (and subsequently approved and closed out grant), submitted EPA CE-02D41623-3 Section 320 as well as EPA 4T-02D4123-2 IIJA Midyear Progress Report and attachments, submitted Upper CCHMN Q2 report and field data deliverables to Southwest Florida Water Management District, compiled all approved habitat projects submitted to NEPORT in FY24 to produce that FY24 Annual GPRA NEPORT Report and provided to FDEP in grant reports, and processed the FY26 EPA 320 and IIJA Grant Applications for County Approvals, after which they were then entered into Grants.gov.

CHNEP staff attended several partnership meetings since last cycle including:

- ANEP External Affairs Meetings (multiple)
- Hardee County-CHNEP Coordination Meeting (multiple)
- DeSoto County-CHNEP Coordination Meeting (multiple)
- Highlands County-CHNEP Coordination Meeting (multiple)
- Polk County-CHNEP Coordination Meeting (multiple)
- Charlotte County Vulnerability Assessment Monthly Meetings (multiple)
- Charlotte County Vulnerability Assessment Stakeholder 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 One Commission Monthly Meetings (multiple)
- Southwest Florida Regional Ambient Monitoring Program (RAMP) Meetings (multiple)
- CHNEP/SWFWMD 2026 Contract & CCHMN Meetings (multiple)
- CHNEP/Calusa Waterkeeper Water Atlas Coordination Meetings (multiple)
- 2025 Marine Pollution Forum (4/1)

- CHNEP TAC Hurricane Season Talking Points Meeting (4/2)
- Tropicalization of Gulf Coast Habitats Meeting (4/2)
- Charlotte County MPO Consensus Building Workshop Meeting (4/7)
- SWFWMD Environmental Advisory Committee Meeting (4/8)
- Caloosahatchee River & Estuary BMAP & Everglades West Coast BMAP Update Meeting (4/8)
- Water Atlas/GOMOD/TAC “Catch Up with Team” Meeting (4/8)
- Southwest Florida Eco-Alliance Steering Team Meeting (4/9)
- CHNEP Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting (4/10)
- City of Fort Myers’s Participation & Contribution to CHNEP Meeting (4/18)
- Nutrients & Red Tide in Florida State of the Science Symposium (4/21-4/23)
- ANEP Communications Working Group Meeting (4/22)
- CHNEP Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting (4/23)
- Hardee County and City of Wauchula Project Meeting (4/23)
- City of Punta Gorda – CHNEP Tiki Point Discussion Meeting (4/25)
- EBAP Algae Data on CHNEP Water Atlas Discussion Meeting (4/25)
- Water Quality Trends Presentation Preparation Meeting (5/1)
- Gulf of America Alliance All Hands Conference (5/5-5/8)
- FDEP Quarterly Resilience Forum 2025 (5/7)
- CHNEP Management Committee Meeting (5/9)
- South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force WG/SCG Meeting (5/14)
- CCHMN GAM Water Quality Trends Presentation Meeting (5/15)
- CHNEP & EPA Program Evaluation Site Visits (5/20-5/22)
 - Lower Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Hydrological Restoration Site Visit (5/20)
 - Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network Site Visit (5/20)
 - DeSoto County Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment Site Visit (5/21)
 - Myakka Headwaters Preserve Restoration Project Site Visit (5/21)
 - Everglades to Gulf Coast Conservation Area & Florida Wildlife Corridor Site Visit at Blackbeard’s Ranch (5/21)
 - Warm Mineral Springs Restoration Project Site Visit (5/21)
- CHNEP Policy Committee Meeting (5/22)
- SFWMD Resiliency Coordination Forum Meeting (5/28)
- CHNEP – CFRPC Data Review Meeting (5/29)
- Urban Waters Federal Partnership Meeting (5/29)
- Florida Wildlife Corridor Connect 2025 Conference (6/2-6/5)
- CCHMN Project Implementation Meeting 1 (6/3)
- Lemon Bay Watershed Plan Workshop (6/4)
- FLERA Water Resources Committee Meeting (6/5)
- Charlotte BCC Meeting- Approval of Sarasota County ILA (6/10)
- Resiliency Summit Planning Meeting (6/10)
- CAC Member Outreach Meeting (6/12)
- CHNEP – SFWMD Flood Survey Tool Meeting (6/12) Bivalve Seagrass Restoration Consortium Project Update Meeting (6/13)
- NOAA Disaster Preparedness Program – CHNEP Meeting (6/13)
- CHNEP – FWC Meeting (6/12)
- Florida Floodplain Conference Planning Meeting (6/16)
- SWFRPC Council Meeting (6/19)
- CHNEP – Finance Grant Invoicing Meeting (6/19)
- Florida Floodplain Managers Association Annual Conference (6/24)
- Calusa Waterkeeper Rangers Water Atlas Training (6/26)

For presentations, CHNEP presented on *the CHNEP Water Atlas 2.0* at the CAC meeting, presented *The Health of Our Waters* at the Barrier Island Parks Society Marine Pollution Forum, presented on the *Lower Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative and Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network Programs* during the EPA Program Evaluation site visit, and presented *A Regional Approach to Restore and Manage Water* to talk about alignment between the work of the NEPs on natural resources and flood management in the built environment at the Annual Florida Floodplain Managers Association Meeting. CHNEP staff also provided *CHNEP Water Atlas Training* to the Calusa Waterkeeper Rangers in-person and online. The training session included an in-depth overview of the data and analyses available on waterbody pages and interactive maps, as well as step-by-step instructions on how to download data from the Atlas. Four tutorial videos were recorded on how to use the CHNEP Water Atlas which focused on topics including the home page and how to find a waterbody, waterbody pages, maps and data, and how to download data. The videos are available on the CHNEP YouTube channel under the CHNEP Water Atlas Tutorials Playlist. For outreach events, CHNEP attended the Englewood Earth Day Festival, discussing how to protect natural resources, distributing CHNEP publications and making native wildflower seed bombs with over 170 visitors, and attended the Ding Darling Conservation Carnival in Ft. Myers where staff interacted and conservation discussions with over 200 guests. For publications and social media, CHNEP sent out monthly subscriber emails on relevant upcoming public engagement events in the CHNEP area, shared posts on National Wildlife Week, showcasing SWFL wildlife through local photography, uploaded the new 2025 Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan on the CHNEP website, shared partner projects visited under the themes of the three EPA Pillars: Strong Communities, Clean Waters, and Healthy Ecosystems, posted about World Oceans Day, sharing information about how CHNEP works to protect Southwest Florida's waters and wildlife, and celebrated Pollinator Week, sharing resources from partners and sharing about work the CHNEP does. CHNEP launched the 2026 Annual Nature Calendar Photo Contest and held a photo selection meeting with members of the CAC (the calendar design is now underway for the 2026 CHNEP Nature Calendar), created a NEP informational handout highlighting national assets that the National Estuary Program helps to protect, for federal policymaker education, and created CHNEP 30th Anniversary video, including associated maps and other information which will be soon be shared on social media. CHNEP also contributed to the media/press regarding: Sprinkle list: \$10M flows from Senate to Caloosahatchee basin; Alligator Alley trail at Circle B reopens after 8-month closure from Hurricane Milton damage; GAMIFY LEARNING: Carnival fun teaches conservation at Lakes Park Earth Day event; Commissioners support NOAA tidal gauge project; and Sarasota Bay's sea grass population soars; setting benchmark for other marine reclamation efforts – WGPU PBS & NPR for Southwest Florida.

CHNEP has 17 new Facebook followers for a total of 2,035 with 7 new "likes" (1,700 total likes), 5,809 subscribers for the educational mailings, 2,079 unique visitors and 2,869 page visits to the CHNEP website, 15,241 YouTube views with 99 subscribers and 336 videos, and 14 new Instagram followers for a total of 632 total followers.

One member asked if the 2025 Southwest Florida Resiliency Summit will be at the same location at CHNEP's resiliency summit and Ms. Hecker confirmed that it is with CHNEP's event preceding it the one full day and one-half day prior. Ms. Hecker said that there will be cross-promotion between the two events/organizations, and that the speakers were coordinated so as not to duplicate presentations.

Agenda Item #6 – CHNEP Technical Projects and New Tools — Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP

Ms. Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP Director of Research & Restoration, provided the committee with a brief overview on project progress since the previous TAC meeting. Highlights are as follows:

The CHNEP Water Atlas now displays new basin pages which are presented with associated Minimum Flows and Levels (MFL), HRN and habitat evolution model results, annual rainfall totals, land/use land cover maps, economic valuation reports, and all relevant CHNEP project information. The SCCF River, Estuary, and Coastal Observing Network (RECON) water quality data is presented on the Real-Time

Data Mapper. The “Download Data for this Waterbody” button have been added to the waterbody pages. The four Water Atlas tutorial videos are available on CHNEP Water Atlas Video Library, the CHNEP YouTube Channel, and CHNEP.org website. The Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network’s (CCHMN) Q3 data collected and submitted and the Q4 data collection is underway. The CCHMN Annual Audits and meeting are scheduled for August. A fact sheet and infographics were created to share results from CCHMN trend analysis published in an article in Estuaries and Coast scientific journal (ESCO), *Water Quality Trends and Eutrophication Indicators in a Large Subtropical Estuary: A Case Study of the Greater Charlotte Harbor System in Southwest Florida*.

For the Highlands, Hardee, and DeSoto County Vulnerability Assessments are projects that are in partnership with the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC). The CFRPC will identify Adaptation Action Areas for each county based on data gathered for vulnerability assessments. A final critical assets list of exposure and sensitivity analyses will also be used to identify and prioritize Adaptation Action Areas. The methodology for prioritizing critical assets and flood exposure has been developed and approved by counties. The final product will be lists of projects, designs and costs for the top three adaptation action areas for each County. The project pages for each county vulnerability assessments created for the CHNEP website include interactive maps created by the CFRPC. The Polk County Vulnerability Assessment is a project in partnership with the CFRPC to conduct additional rainfall flood modeling for Polk County’s Vulnerability Assessment. It includes a 200/500-year, and compound flooding events, and creates a visual interpretation of the flooding events for community outreach. The HEC-RAS model was used for additional flood scenarios (this the preferred method by FEMA, USACE, and other regulatory agencies for flood hazard mapping and mitigation planning). Model results were used to select priority areas in the county to create a visual interpretation of model results. The Charlotte County Vulnerability Assessment is a project to conduct a baseline vulnerability assessment with Charlotte County. The first public meeting was held in the spring, with the second taking place in August. Critically significant asset data was aggregated and mapped, and the metadata has been standardized to meet state requirements. An ‘Existing Data/Model Tools Sufficiency Analysis’ was conducted to identify data needs for this project and future projects. The modeling of exposure and sensitivity/risk analysis for critical assets under different flood scenarios was conducted, and adaptation focus areas were identified. For seagrass in the CHNEP estuaries, updated charts and maps will be available on the CHNEP Water Atlas soon. Updated factsheets are now available on CHNEP’s website. CHNEP also produces other science communication resources and updates fact sheets on basin water quality, basin seagrass health, and state and federal research and restoration funding opportunities.

One member said that there has been a lot of rainfall in Polk County, there could be a range from 55 inches to 90 inches, so that CHNEP tools are especially valuable to inform the public which areas had rain and which ones didn’t. Ms. Iadevaia said that now that the Water Atlas identifies rainfall according to basin, it provides context because it has been quite dry over the past few years. There has been less rainfall along the coast, so seagrass has done a little bit better but what will happen when (and if) typical seasonal rainfall totals return. The member also offered that (Polk) county commission was getting ready to do something about regulations that deal with flooding in some of these areas. Florida Senate Bill 180 has limitations, and the Polk County Commission feels that they are the best deciders of what should happen within their own county. That is probably something that many local jurisdictions are dealing with. Ms. Hecker said that Resiliency Florida program is still moving forward at the state-level to encourage communities to look at and address those issues. It is interesting that the state is behind the resiliency work, and this is probably headed towards some trade-offs to accomplish goals. Ms. Iadevaia said that it is a positive development that Polk County is modeling additional rainfall. Ms. Hecker said that local governments may challenge some restrictive legislation from 2024. Another member asked whether the journal article with 20 years’ worth of data is available on CHNEP’s website and Ms. Iadevaia said that article is available through a link, and the fact sheet is as well. She also said that one of the priorities was to go back through the data and gather a clean data set so that if anyone wants to go back there is a now accessible, clean, data set which is available through a link as well.

The member then asked if there were any expected results from the data such as TMDLs or if it was not at that level yet and Ms. Iadevaia said that it does compare results in the hotspot areas as what the regulatory threshold is. However, the data is not collected by WBID, so it is not a one-to-one comparison, but it helpful to contextualize what is going on. There are 5-year trend analyses that are examined. The focus of that publication is on how it is not so much that phytoplankton that is the nutrient pathway in these estuaries, it is macroalgae, which a lot of macroalgae blooms are being recorded. It also depicts how there is a lapse in nutrient management and regulatory thresholds. This publication may lead to others that will expand on that information. Ms. Hecker offered that the fac sheets do a good job of synthesizing and summarizing the information.

Agenda Item #7 – CAC Workshop & Group Discussion — Facilitated by CHNEP Staff & Aaron Zimmermann, CAC Co-Chair

The purpose of the CAC Workshop and Discussion was to gather member input in informing updates to bylaws, communication and outreach strategies, and deciding on next steps and strategies to implement the workshop decisions. Highlights are as follows:

The Citizens Advisory Committee members represent the leading environmental advocates and groups in Central and Southwest Florida. By having these meetings, the members can support and reinforce one another's efforts and create joint regional initiatives as well as share resources with each other. By CHNEP being involved in the meetings, it can provide resources and assist in various ways to help amplify efforts – so that the sum is greater than the respective individual efforts. The goal of this workshop is to conduct group discussions as well as interactive question and answer exercises to reflect and gather CAC member feedback on CHNEP outreach resources, the current role of the CAC and bylaws and Partnership's Communication & Outreach Strategy. Several topics will be covered such as the Role of CAC and Bylaws, CHNEP Outreach Resources, Communications and Outreach Strategy, and Next Steps. The feedback will be gathered, synthesized and shared with the group.

The Role of CAC

The first topic was the role of the CAC. The members were asked what they believed the current role of the CAC is in the community. Answers and feedback included:

1. Coordinate information through all parts of the partnership; provide education information about my watershed to students, adults and government agencies.
2. To connect available resources to the public, inform individuals or groups of great opportunities and other opportunities to foster environmental engagement and exploration.
3. To help get the word out about the CHNEP resources to segments of the community that CHNEP may not reach and amplify the message; connect funding sources to those looking for funds.
4. Be an ear on the ground in our respective counties to understand continuity, parts of the watershed to understand both community and natural resource concerns; to operate as a bridge between the partnership and the community, whether it's government, students' organizations, and sharing those resources and information both ways.
5. In my CAC role, I feel that I am a purveyor of CHNEP information, boots on the ground science, funding opportunities, but also to bring forth or voice concerns and needs of the community I represent, especially when we have these discussions about what is happening in Lee County or Cape Coral and what they are needing and then I can direct them to CHNEP resources, or bring it here and say there is a need for this; that is the connection of what CHNEP offers and what it does versus what our communities are seeing and what they need.
6. Being able to see the effort whole and understanding the bigger picture.
7. To try to get the public to engage, and stay in; working with so many organizations, there is a lot of lethargy out there; if everyone is concerned with flooding, why isn't that reflected in a rise in volunteerism.

8. Make connections, spread like H₂O, be the bridge, the conduit.
9. This is a question that I struggle with - understanding that I should be doing in my county and could benefit from direction.
10. Sharing CHNEP's work with the community and bringing the community voice to CHNEP.

The second question asked the members what they believed that the role of the CAC is to CHNEP.

Answers and feedback included:

1. Provide information on local initiatives and concerns.
2. Bring public concerns and ideas to any individuals and organizations that might assist in implementation of CHNEP programs.
3. Be an ear on the ground to build a comprehensive view of different parts of the watershed.
4. To present recommendations to the Management and Policy Committees.
5. Like question 1, helping CHNEP's mission by getting the word out about its work and resources; also, helping to select the photos for the calendar and helping to get CHNEP's communications out to the community.
6. To connect CHNEP's resources to the public.
7. To make the community aware of the NEP and the resources/information that is available; also making the value of CHNEP known to the community.
8. Provide feedback, collaborate, and act as an ambassador.
9. Bringing up specific issues or opportunities for areas that are represented.
10. Making sure that voices from whole service area are heard.

The third question asked what the biggest motivator was for coming to the CAC meetings. Answers and feedback included:

1. To learn more about what is happening in the watershed outside of my area.
2. CAC is Florida and I am Florida – it is not that difficult.
3. To network with other members and see different parts of the watershed and learn about them.
4. Building a better understanding and network of and with the watershed; to learn more; being a representative of Highlands County, there are many conservation challenges and it less likely to be represented being farther out.
5. It is helpful to learn about the latest CHNEP projects that are being done, and to learn from other members what is happening in their areas and in their work.
6. I like getting updates on what CHNEP is doing throughout the whole program area; I also use it as an opportunity to hear if other areas are having similar issues/challenges and how others may have approached those challenges – what works and what doesn't work.
7. The learning opportunity, the networking, the camaraderie, watching what we do move up the chain.
8. I care about water.
9. Learn, to stay connected, and new environmental strategies to implement.
10. Connections with colleagues.

The fourth question was what would make the CAC meetings provide more value to you. Answers and feedback included:

1. The meetings are extremely effective now; more value would come from me taking more time to look the materials that are already available.
2. I don't have a good answer. I look forward to others' comments.
3. Perhaps a more detailed report on a couple of longer-range projects, and how they have worked out, and maybe one where the hypothesis failed.
4. I am still learning since I am new; I already use the YouTube videos, clearly naming the resources or opportunities provided by CHNEP or having tangible action items – what can you

bring/build on at each meeting, what are you looking for from each county rep, and what info we can bring to each meeting, crowdsourcing.

5. An occasional field trip.
6. A recap of outcomes from previous meetings' accomplishments especially the Management or Policy meeting, because CAC members cannot attend all the meetings, it would be valuable to know what happens.
7. Feel more goal and collaboration-oriented; feeling like I have homework assignments for the next meeting.
8. Opportunity for engagement with others, and how I can people to plug in.
9. Better continuity – I need to be more engaged, maybe present at a future meeting.
10. Share challenges for group help.

Ms. Hecker said that what she was hearing from the group feedback is that the members may want to present at meetings on a topic that they have researched, taking turns so that all members that are interested could do so. One member suggested each member coming up with an issue and a challenge to discuss at each meeting because of the expertise in the room, and Ms. Hecker said that maybe that could be woven into the update.

CAC Bylaws

Starting with page 1, under Article 1, the address was updated and the “2019” was removed. On page 2, Section 2: Accomplishing the Purpose, , “Provide input into” was removed and “If” was added along with “are received, provide input on those. If Conservation Grant funds are available, assist in..’ removing “as well as,” adding “ing information,” “ing” and removing “and readability.” One member said that she understood using the word “readability” because how technical some of the jargon can be. Members suggested that “As” should replace “If.” Also on page 2, Section 2b changes from four to two; Section 3b’s change has two changed to three, “automatically” is taken out as is “voting rights and will be required to attend a meeting and submit an *Application for Voting Status* to the CAC and the Policy Committee in order to reinstate their voting privileges,” and “membership status. The member could reapply, or the seat will be refilled” has been added. Also on page 3, “Non-voting members include CHNEP partners as well as members of the general public or alternates on attendance when both primary members can give input only during “public comment” portions of the CAC agendas” has been removed along with “for failing to uphold the bylaws, including the Sunshine Law provision within.” Section 4a Term Limits is removed, “If this is not possible nominations can be” is removed and “or” has been added. The “Members may...” statement has also been removed. On page 4, Section 2: Special Meetings and Section 3: Agenda Items have been removed, Section 2 is now “Notice of Meetings” with “one week in advance on the CHNEP website added, and “placed on by the Program Office...,” “Active media participation...,” “The Program Office...,” and “Notice” and “written notice”...” removed. On page 4, Section 6 is now Section 4, “physically present” is replace with “participating, “ Section 7 is now Section 5 with “or staff representative” removed. On page 5, “Program” is removed.

Ms. Hecker advised that they would make the proposed changes along with the one identified and agreed upon by the group and that a “clean” version will be brought back at the next CAC meeting.

CHNEP Outreach Resources

Members were asked whether they had used CHNEP resources in the past year and the answers were as follows:

Kids Activity Book	-	3/10
Annual Nature Calendar	-	8/10

Instagram	-	2/10
Facebook	-	5/10
Online Events Calendar	-	5/10
Constant Contact/Monthly Newsletter	-	5/10
Resiliency/Climate or Watershed Summit Attendance	-	5/10
Speaking Engagement Coordination	-	0/10
Tabling Event Sharing CHNEP Materials	-	3/10
CHNEP Water Atlas	-	8/10

The Tabling Event and the Water Atlas were suggested by CAC members for the list.

The first Outreach Resources question asked what some of the limitations or impediments that CAC members face when using CHNEP resources. Answers and feedback included:

1. Lack of knowledge.
2. Simply do not think about it.
3. Timeliness/tech impairment.
4. Time limitations: (social media) sharing is up to my organization's marketing.
5. Limitations, lack of mindfulness.
6. CHNEP should bring extra resources to CAC meeting for members to distribute.
7. CHNEP should provide a resource guide.
8. Lack of time
9. Travel and budget difficulties for events
10. Resource guide, time, meeting in person.
11. I don't get to run the output of media/resources; I must go through a couple of channels first with the municipality, bureaucracy.
12. Overload, too many resources, lots of summits.

The discussion revolved around the challenges faced by individuals in accessing and sharing resources related to environmental education and community engagement. Members expressed a common concern regarding their limited knowledge of available resources, which can hinder their ability to utilize and distribute information effectively. One member suggested revamping the existing resource guide and to regularly update it, ensuring that key materials are accessible during meetings and events. The need for printed materials is emphasized, as many members feel that having tangible resources enhances communication and outreach efforts. Key issues highlighted include time constraints and technological barriers that prevent timely access to information. Some members said that sometimes faced difficulties in coordinating schedules to attend events or relay information to the appropriate individuals within their organizations. Additionally, connectivity issues in certain areas complicate the ability to download necessary materials, reinforcing the need for physical copies. Suggestions to improve the situation included distributing extra outreach materials at meetings and encouraging collaboration among colleagues to ensure that someone from the organization can participate in relevant events. The workshop discussion underscored the importance of effective communication and resource-sharing among CAC members involved in environmental initiatives. By addressing the identified limitations—such as the need for a comprehensive resource guide, timely communication, and the provision of printed materials—members aim to enhance their collective impact.

The second questions regarding resources, based on the utilization of these resources, what ones would be the most useful moving forward. Answers and feedback included:

1. Resources, Instagram, and speaking engagements.

2. Watershed Summit.
3. Water Atlas with tutorials and accompanying technical guides, and the Summit.
4. Water Atlas, summits, and the newsletter.
5. Water Atlas, Kids Activity Book, and speaking engagements.
6. Kids Activity Book, Facebook, and speaking engagements.
7. Calendar, Kids Activity Book, and Facebook (or other online presence).
8. Calendar which has wide public distribution, and the Water Atlas which has narrow public distribution.
9. Link online calendars for fewer paper ones.

The discussion centered around evaluating and prioritizing various CHNEP outreach resources. Participants were tasked with identifying the most valuable tools from a given list, emphasizing the need to focus on resources that effectively engage different generations. Among the highlighted resources are the Water Atlas, technical guides, and community summits, which facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration within the watershed community. The conversation also touched on the importance of social media platforms, particularly Instagram, for reaching broader audiences, as traditional platforms like Facebook are declining in relevance. Key ideas included the significance of the Water Atlas as a comprehensive resource for water quality data, paired with educational materials that help users understand its applications. Community summits are viewed as vital opportunities for engagement and fostering relationships among stakeholders. Additionally, the value of distributing calendars and children's activity books was discussed, noting their accessibility and educational potential. Members expressed concern over the sustainability and cost-effectiveness of printed materials, advocating for a strategic reduction in quantity while maintaining distribution channels to reach new residents and educational institutions. The discussion reflected a commitment to refining outreach strategies while balancing resource allocation. CHNEP faces differing opinions on the continuation of certain materials, particularly the calendar, highlighting the need for ongoing evaluation of effectiveness and cost. Ultimately, the goal is to enhance community engagement and resource accessibility while adapting to changing communication trends and ensuring the sustainability of outreach initiatives across the estuary.

The third question asked if members had other ideas on what outreach resources would support their work. Answers and feedback included:

1. Sponsorships, non-monetary and scavenger hunts.
2. More outreach in person to continue annually.
3. Spanish Kids Book, and science fair award for water-related projects.
4. Activity book at one's disposal or update online access.
5. Sturdy Kids Activity Book for libraries.
6. Water Quality fact sheet packet.
7. YouTube shorts or other videos for sharing tutorials or interviews.
8. Watershed webinars highlighting CHNEP as well as efforts and projects of partners in the region.
9. CHNEP Water Atlas tutorials.
10. CHNEP fair, a representative for outreach, and a podcast.

The discussion centered around enhancing community engagement and education regarding environmental resources. Members expressed the need for tailored materials, such as Spanish activity books for children, and highlighted the importance of understanding community demands to inform resource allocation. There was a recognition of gaps in outreach efforts, especially during the

pandemic, leading to the adoption of alternative communication methods like mailing educational packets to local officials rather than in-person presentations. Ideas included the importance of creating accessible educational content, such as webinars and tutorial videos, that cater to various audiences, including children and local officials. Members also discussed the idea of organizing scavenger hunts and competitions related to environmental education to foster engagement among youth. Moreover, the potential for collaboration with local libraries for distributing educational materials was considered, with the aim of making resources more widely available and enhancing public awareness of environmental issues. The discussion emphasized the necessity of strategic outreach, collaboration, and innovative communication methods to effectively educate and engage the community regarding environmental resources. Members expressed a desire for more direct representation in outreach efforts and innovative formats, such as podcasts or TikTok videos, to reach broader audiences.

CAC Communications and Outreach Strategy

The discussion revolved around the updating of a Communications Outreach Strategy mandated by the EPA, serving as an appendix to the CCMP. The strategy is crucial for aligning the committee's outreach objectives with the collective Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) updated in 2025. It encapsulates the collaborative efforts of the CAC and the supportive team to enhance communication and engagement initiatives. The meeting's purpose was to gather feedback on proposed modifications to the strategy, which aims to refine their collective approach to outreach. Significant changes were proposed to ensure equitable representation across the ten counties served. The strategy aimed to address issues of equity, modifying terms to reflect a focus on serving all populations inclusively. For example, the language has shifted from “traditionally underserved” to “traditionally underrepresented and vulnerable,” emphasizing the diverse communities impacted by environmental justice issues. This change is part of a broader effort to ensure that communication is tailored to engage various social, political, and economic groups effectively. The committee was encouraged to provide feedback on these guiding principles, which are intended to foster greater inclusivity in outreach efforts. The implications of these revisions extend beyond language; they reflect a strategic shift in how outreach will be conducted. CHNEP is moving away from outdated practices and is instead focusing on leveraging partnerships with organizations that already have established volunteer opportunities. This evolution highlights a commitment to utilizing resources more effectively by promoting partner activities rather than duplicating efforts. The revisions also include adjustments to communication methods, transitioning from printed materials to more digital outreach tools, which aligns with current trends in information dissemination. These updates aim to enhance the effectiveness of public engagement and collaboration with stakeholders. By strengthening partnerships and expanding outreach efforts, the strategy is designed to foster greater public awareness and participation in conservation initiatives. Members recognized the necessity of adapting its approach to meet contemporary challenges and ensure that diverse communities are engaged in environmental stewardship. This holistic view promotes resilience and community involvement, essential for effective conservation efforts in the face of environmental issues. The proposed updates to the Communications Outreach Strategy which represent a proactive approach to enhancing engagement and inclusivity in conservation efforts, were supported by members, and a final copy will come before the committee in December for a final vote. The feedback gathered during this meeting was instrumental in shaping a final draft that meets both regulatory requirements and the needs of the communities served.

Meeting Logistics and Next Steps

The first meeting logistics question offered the option of three in-person CAC meetings a year or one in-person daylong workshop with two shorter virtual meeting updates. The vote was overwhelmingly for the three in-person meetings. The consensus was that virtual meetings often result in lower engagement levels. Also, members expressed a desire to shift the responsibility of topic generation to the members themselves, rather than relying solely on the CHNEP staff. This collaborative approach will increase enthusiasm and relevance in the discussions, allowing members to bring forth their expertise and interests into the meeting agenda. Additionally, members suggested the idea of organizing field trips and longer networking breaks to enhance informal interactions, making the meetings not only informative but also enjoyable and effective for networking among participants.

The second meeting logistics question was what outreach activities members were most interested in personally implementing. The choices offered were share CHNEP's social media posts, share fact sheets, flyers, calendars, and other publications at events you attend, help man an outreach booth in your county, and attend and encourage others to attend CHNEP events/Summits. The topic of engagement through outreach activities surfaced as a vital area for personal involvement. The aim is to mobilize CAC members to take active roles in promoting initiatives and resources, leveraging both personal and collective efforts to enhance community awareness and participation. One of the primary outreach activities identified is the sharing of resources like flyers, calendars, and other promotional materials at community events. Members expressed enthusiasm about utilizing their personal social media accounts to broaden the reach of these initiatives, indicating a willingness to support CHNEP's CAC mission in a personal capacity. Additionally, members showed interest in assisting with outreach booths in their respective counties, suggesting that collaboration and coordination are essential for effective community engagement. This hands-on approach allows members to connect with local audiences and create a more personalized outreach experience. Another key proposal was the idea of integrating mini-training sessions into CAC meetings. This would focus on familiarizing members with new features of the Water Atlas, a valuable resource for community engagement. By providing short, digestible tutorials, members can stay updated without feeling overwhelmed by extensive training sessions. This approach not only enhances member knowledge but also empowers them to utilize the tools effectively in their outreach efforts. Also, the emphasis on social media and localized outreach can enhance the visibility of the CHNEP's efforts, attracting more participants and resources. The red-lined final Amended Bylaws and Communications and Outreach Strategy will be included in next CAC meeting packet for final approval.

Next Steps

CAC members were asked what they see as the next steps to develop and implement the changes and new directions that were formed in the workshop. The discussion revolved around planning for upcoming meetings and outreach events, highlighting key decisions made and the need for effective coordination among CAC members. Two significant points of focus include the development of a resource guide and the planning of outreach events. The resource guide will compile valuable information for committee members and the public, which can be accessed easily via the website. Additionally, there was a call for members to assist in planning and promoting upcoming events in their respective counties. Emphasis was placed on the importance of these gatherings, as they not only foster community engagement but also facilitate the sharing of critical information regarding environmental issues. The discussion also addressed the financial challenges faced when organizing events, particularly those related to outreach and education. Members are urged to help boost attendance for the upcoming Climate Summit which has already incurred significant costs. With only a handful of registrations so far, the need for collaborative marketing efforts is stressed, highlighting

the importance of social media outreach. Beyond immediate planning, emphasis was placed on the need for continuous member engagement and the recruitment of new members to fill vacant seats in underrepresented counties. This initiative aims to ensure a diverse representation of voices within the committee, which is crucial for effective decision-making in environmental matters. Members encouraged each other to utilize local events for networking and outreach, seeking connections that can enhance community involvement in upcoming programs. The next CAC meeting is scheduled for December 17th, where amendments related to bylaws and a communications strategy will be voted upon. The meeting will serve as a platform for members to refine their outreach efforts and solidify strategies for public engagement in environmental initiatives

Agenda Item #8 – CAC Updates & Roundtable Discussion on Topics of Interest — Aaron Zimmermann, CAC Co-Chair

Tom Palmer (Polk): In Polk County, we have many interesting projects. On Peace Creek, there is a big ranch near Lake Hamilton which is the headwaters of the Peace Creek Canal, and the Polk County Commission has approved doing some restoration at that site. There will also be doing some restoration on a stream that to the Peace Creek. The ranch is quite a big piece of property, and in a photograph circa 2004, the only dry area is rush, the only dry land was near US 27. This work is a big undertaking. Polk County is also interested in an environmental lands program, and it is important to keep in mind how this will impact water resources. In July, there was the Annual Moth Week. Polk County hosted a few moth nights. There used to be only 7 species of moths in Polk County and the database now shows that currently, there are 755 different kinds of moths. There is hope that naturists could study more of Polk's natural areas to gather more accurate data. There are deer, hogs, turkeys, birds, etc.

Cheryl Cook (Sarasota): Sarasota County is currently all about the citizens being furious about the flooding issues. Sarah saw the County right now is all about the citizens being furious about flooding. I am not sure how you work that into the estuary program.

Zach Franco (Highlands): Highlands County is beginning its process for a potential land acquisition program, the Ridge to River Conservation Plan. At the end of October, there will be a series of three community workshops. Like Polk's program, it is an opportunity for the residents to vote on whether they want to see a county conservation program. That is a big opportunity for conservation in Highlands County. On November 8th, we are hosting a fire festival - Lake Wales Ridge Ecosystem Fire Festival. It is not just Ridge-exclusive. If CHNEP wants to host a booth there, it would involve Highlands, Polk, incorporating some of DeSoto and Hardee, and Okeechobee Counties getting people there. There will be live burn demonstration, fire experts, panelists and storytelling. We are currently working on a large water grant with the Department of Defense (DOD) and the South Florida Management District (SFWMD) to possibly expand some of the disperse water management projects. It is a payment for Environmental Services Program administered and implemented through SFWMD. They just expanded to the Caloosahatchee Basin. We are working on the grant with DOD to try to expand it throughout the Avon Park Air Force Range and the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC). We are getting a new Archbald Station executive director. Her name is Jen Owens, and she is from Michigan State University. She will be officially starting early November. We will also be announcing that we will soon be looking for a director of conservation. In your networks, if you know anyone who would be interested in leading some conservation efforts throughout Archbald, we will welcome any suggestions.

Kayton Nedza (Hardee): In Hardee, the mining is extending over towards Highlands. When that is finished, it is going to be basically be a chain of lakes for fishing purposes coming across our county using the reclaimed mine land.

Nicole Johnson (Lee): The 2026 Everglades Coalition Conference is going to be in Naples, January 28th through the 30th. It is going to be on this coast again next year as all the agencies and executives

are going to be in Collier County celebrating the ribbon cutting of the almost completion of the Picayune Strand Restoration Project. It was the first Everglades restoration project right now. We want to be careful to say that after they cut the ribbons, they still have not done the water quality treatment feature that they need for some of the restoration features that do have untreated stormwater such as Collier-Seminole State Park. EVCO will be from Wednesday through Friday and more information is available on the Everglade Coalition's website. The Conservancy is starting an exciting project - The Resilience Blueprint. It is an outgrowth of our resilience forum symposium that we had last December where we had many experts, CHNEP included, come and talk about nature-based solutions. What we found is that the community wants an alternative to the walls of gates, but they know that just adding more sand on the beach really isn't the way to fix storm surge or flooding problems. So, what is that middle ground? What do nature-based, and hybrid solutions look like? Our project is going to look at a series of "typologies." It is a series of areas and they each run bayside, maybe an upwind typology and what some of the projects are that can help those areas. It is focused on the City of Naples because the city has its vulnerability assessment done, it has its adaptation plan completed, and the council wants nature-based solutions. That was just the easiest fit to say this is going to be for the City of Naples, but the schematics that we anticipate coming from this process should be applicable to all sorts of different areas. We are excited. The project is taking off now and it should be done by next summer. Our climate person could come and present to the CAC at some point in the future.

Aaron Zimmermann (Sarasota): Flooding is certainly a large, loud topic of concern in Sarasota County. I know that at the county level, Sarasota County has made a new Stormwater Department, which was previously a division. This is to have a more departmental, overview of the stormwater systems with the county. They will continue to explore capital improvement projects and apply for dredging permits. There is a lot of attention around Phillippi Creek. They continue to roll out the Resilient SRQ funding opportunity for the long-term recovery of some of the impacted structures and properties from Hurricane Ian and then moving forward with another round of fundings for Milton and Helene. That is on the broader Sarasota scale. In North Port, there have been some tree planting projects most recently at Butler Park and the North Port Aquatic Center. At the Aquatic Center, they planted about 100 trees to increase shade and some aesthetics around that park because it was lacking. It was canopy-covered. The next project that they are looking to do in North Port is at one of the dog parks with the Canine Club, which will be more tree planting to increase the urban canopy. North Port is very close starting a lot acquisition program, identifying parcels with increased ecological significance, with protected species, heritage trees - things that can be strategic for acquisition to increase our waterway buffers and stormwater maintenance.

Harry Phillips (Lee): We've been harvesting the canal to remove the spatterdock. We are piloting a new BMP, trying to get people to move away from herbicides in favor of harvesting. It is now coming to fruition. We are pulling all of the nutrients out instead of just killing them in place. It has made a difference, and we are getting a lot of good reports from residents on how the water quality looks and the drinking clarity. This year has been a drier summer, so I think that has a large influence on some of the turbidity issues we have. We just wrapped up the planting of 1500 mangroves as a restoration project in the southwest part of the city. After the new fiscal year start, we are going to try and plant another 1500, if the tides cooperate. We will need volunteers. The old golf course which has been defunct about 2008-2009, was finally purchased a couple of years ago. We are now in the planning stages. We are going to have a stormwater component in there and parks. The Parks Department owns the property, so they are going to have a passive park atmosphere within that space. We have since removed all the exotic species that have grown on it over the years. so that is a new feature in the city. The Hudson Creek development just broke around recently, which, in my opinion, took away a large portion of the Yucca Pens area, not just north of Cape Coral. There are so many vacant properties up in the northwest, we probably could have worked on some sort of land swap. Also, I have been working with Sarina (Barnard, CHNEP) with Canal Watch data. The Water Atlas, which has been great, has not posted the second quarter data yet but I will keep checking it because I want to email the volunteers

and include that link. I will also include the tutorial. A few months ago, I joined the Advisory Board the Future Forestry, which has done a presentation previously at the CAC meeting. I am really engaged with that group that. Tonight, there is an event at a brewery. At the same brewery, the Calusa Waterkeepers is hosting a “Tap Flow for H2O” event in the future.

Tonya Bramlage (Charlotte): It's all about beach right now - parking, beach access, refurbishment, who's doing what and how it's impacting turtle association and turtle data. There is a lot of change going on. Josh Olive, who has written extensively about water issues and water life, announced his retirement and that means that the Sun will no longer be published. Currently, there is nothing to replace it. The Englewood Herald has also been sold to the Times Media Group which has changed the publication and distribution. That impacts how environmental issues are being addressed publicly by how it is being distributed within our county. There are some people that are eagerly anticipating and a little bit anxious about what will happen as far as how they will get the information, and how it will be disseminated. Our partner organizations are really leaning on each other for ideas about getting their information out. The other thing is volunteerism seems to be a huge issue all the way across the board of every organization that I'm dealing with, from Turtle Patrol to Audubon. Over the course of the last time that I saw you, while I was asked if I would come and speak to an organization on behalf of CAC-CHNEP and give a report of what happens in this room. There is an organization here within Charlotte County that at least is interested in having that information be presented to their members. My thought and being asked that question is that shouldn't that happen for everybody in the county and not just their organization. That is something that I'm working on cooperating and trying to get going in a creative way, but I haven't decided yet how that will happen. I have a couple ideas. It seems like right now, each individual partner organization is offering some sort of outreach or some sort of event that includes speakers and education, etc., but nobody is really working together. The project that I've taken on most recently is trying to collect the data and the information about the history on area-wide environmentalism specifically in Charlotte County and how it connects all the other organizations together. There isn't a group that is keeping track of that information here in our county, so I am interested in that.

Church Roberts (Hendry): Florida passed a new wetland mitigation rule this year that allows applicants to mitigate outside the basin or watershed. For example, you can have a project in Miami where they don't have any mitigation banks, and you can mitigate at Corkscrew mitigation bank. The only people making money on this are the bankers. There was one bank when I started that was selling credits for \$25,000 a credit, and now it is up to over \$300,000 a credit. They are making a lot of money by creating these small monopolies. I see is an opportunity for water quality trading because if I am going to mitigate across the state from my wetland impact, I should do something more local for my water quality training. Here is just an example, Corkscrew mitigation bank does nothing for water quality as a one mile, while other banks have large contributions. I think there should be a way to quantify all this, and it does not even have to be land-based. There are many things you can do for water quality impacts, but the real issue that I see is that it is not being handled appropriately. If I am going to go mitigate across the state from my wetland impacts, I should hopefully do something more local for water quality.

Brooke Langston (Manatee): Big Waters Land Trust recently produced a revised strategic plan. They worked with CHNEP to ensure it complimented CHNEP's Habitat Restoration Needs Plan. The recording of the strategic plan presentation to the Technical Advisory Committee is on CHNEP's YouTube TAC page, and the CHNEP website's TAC page. Sarasota County is celebrating 25 years of the Environmentally Sensitive Land Protection Program. The celebration will be at Deer Prairie Creek Preserve off the south entrance of 41, November 15th from 10 to 2. With that program coming up again for voting 2026, it would be great to have lots of support and celebration from anyone who can attend.

Agenda Item #9 – General Public Comment — Aaron Zimmermann, CAC Co-Chair

There was no public comment.

Agenda Item #10 – Future Meetings: Topics, Location and Dates— Aaron Zimmermann, CAC Co-Chair

- Upcoming date for 2025: 12/17/25.

Agenda Item #11 – Adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:48 PM.

DRAFT