



Draft CHNEP Management Committee Meeting Minutes

Friday May 9th, 2025, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm

Charlotte County Centennial Park

Large Multipurpose Room

1120 Centennial Blvd., Port Charlotte, FL 33953

Members Present:

Felicia Burks	U.S. Environmental Protection Committee (EPA)
Melynda Brown	Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)
Vanessa Bauzo	Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)
Jamie Wolanin	Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)
Jeff Devine	West Coast Inland Navigation District (WCIND)
Sheila McNamara	Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC)
Rebekah Harp	Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWRPC)
Phil Flood	South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)
Vivianna Bendixson	Southwest Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)
Kris Ramon	Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority (PRMRWSA)
Matt DePaolis	Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF)
Brandon Moody	Charlotte County
Debra Butler	Hardee County
Dawn Ritter	Highlands County
Ryan Riordan	Lee County
Charlie Hunsicker	Manatee County
Gaye Sharpe	Polk County
John Morgan	Sarasota County
Richard Thompson	City of Fort Myers
Ryan Pieper	City of North Port
Dana Dettmar	City of Sanibel
M.J. Carnevale	City of Winter Haven
Harry Phillips	Citizen's Advisory Committee Co-Chair
Mark Walton	Technical Advisory Committee Co-Chair

Others Present:

Jennifer Hecker	Coastal & Heartland Natural Estuary Partnership
Nicole Iadevaia	Coastal & Heartland Natural Estuary Partnership
Keara Abel	Coastal & Heartland Natural Estuary Partnership
Leda Khoury	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Miles Medina	ECCO Scientific, LLC
David Fiess	Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)

Agenda Item #1 – Call to Order and Introductions — Melynda Brown, Co-Chair

Co-Chair Melynda Brown called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM.

Agenda Item #2 Additions or Deletions — Melynda Brown , Co-Chair

HARRY PHILIIPS MOVED, SECONDED BY PHIL FLOOD, TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS AS PRESENTED. THE MOTION WAS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

Agenda Item #3 – Public Comment on Agenda Items — Melynda Brown, Co-Chair

There was no public comment.

Agenda Item #4 – Management Committee January 10th, 2025 Meeting Minutes — Melynda Brown, Co-Chair

MATT DEPAOLIS MOVED, SECONDED BY PHIL FLOOD, TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 10TH, 2025 MEETING MINUTES. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

Agenda Item #5 – Management Committee Co-Chair Election — Melynda Brown, Co-Chair

As stated in the bylaws, Management Committee co-chairs are elected on an alternating basis annually each Spring for 2-year terms. By staggering terms, a new co-chair is paired with an experienced co-chair and the duties are shared. Nominations were sought in advance of the meeting with the direction that members could suggest other members for the position or nominate themselves. Also, additional members could be nominated during the meeting. Only one nomination was received – Jamie Wolanin – Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission. She accepted the nomination.

MELYNDA BROWN AS CO-CHAIR MOVED FOR A VOTE ON THE SOLE NOMINEE AND MS. WOLANIN WAS ELECTED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

Agenda Item #6 – Technical Advisory Committee Report — Mark Walton, TAC Co-Chair

Mark Walton, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Co-Chair, provided a report from the April 10, 2025 meeting.

The TAC meeting held on April 10th, 2025 was chaired by Ernesto Lasso de la Vega. The Committee held its Co-Chair election and Arielle Taylor-Manges from FDEP was nominated and unanimously elected as the new TAC Co-Chair to replace Ernesto Lasso de la Vega. The first TAC presentation, given by Courtney Saari and Dave Blewett from FWC's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, was *NOAA RESTORE Sportfish Restoration Project Implementation in Charlotte Harbor*. The project revolved around conserving vulnerable sport fish nursery habitats through land-use planning and decision-making tools for restoration and conservation. It assesses local habitat restoration initiatives for juvenile sport fish, particularly during seasonal flooding, amidst rapid coastal development in Charlotte County. Research includes defining sport fish nursery extents, multi-year sampling, tracking fish movements, and evaluating growth rates, alongside developing new equipment for efficient juvenile tarpon capture. The project involves hydrological modeling, updating the Charlotte Harbor Habitat Evolution Model for sea level rise impacts, and conducting a risk assessment to prioritize conservation opportunities for habitat management and urban planning. The next presentation was from Dr. Miles Medina from ECCO Scientific, LLC, and it was *Water Quality and Eutrophication Trends in Southwest Florida's Estuaries from 2000 to 2021*. The study analyzed water quality data from the Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network (CCHMN) alongside seagrass and macroalgae data from various Florida agencies. Elevated nitrogen levels in the Charlotte Harbor system have shifted primary production from phytoplankton to macroalgae, while seagrass coverage has declined significantly since 2017. Comprehensive monitoring

indicates persistent nitrogen enrichment, with organic nitrogen predominating, and highlights the impact of disturbances like Hurricane Irma on ecosystem vulnerability. The findings emphasize the critical link between nutrient levels and ecosystem health, necessitating ongoing monitoring and management to address the adverse effects of urban and agricultural land use. The final presentation, given by Dr. Chris Anastasiou from Southwest Florida Water Management District, was *2024 Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) Seagrass Mapping Results*. Dr. Anastasiou outlined the methodology for biennial aerial photography used to estimate seagrass coverage in SWFWMD's service area. Seagrass is vital for coastal ecosystems, serving as a barrier against erosion, stabilizing sediments, and improving water quality. The mapping process involves imagery acquisition, photointerpretation, and field verification, following strict criteria for accuracy. Recent trends show mixed results in seagrass coverage, with some areas gaining and others, like Charlotte Harbor, experiencing significant losses; overall coverage remains at a record low since 1988 despite a 55% increase in continuous seagrass since then. Future mapping efforts are scheduled for 2026, with discussions on the impact of nutrient removal versus restoration projects on seagrass health and related water quality parameters. There were no comments or questions from Committee members regarding this report.

Agenda Item #7 – Citizen’s Advisory Committee Report — Harry Phillips, CAC Co-Chair

Harry Phillips, Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Co-Chair, provided a report from the April 23, 2025 virtual meeting that he chaired.

The CAC meeting was held virtually on April 23rd, 2025 and was chaired by Harry Phillips. The Committee held its Co-Chair election. Harry Phillips was nominated and unanimously re-elected to continue his tenure as CAC Co-Chair. The first presentation was given by Lee County Hyacinth Control District’s Madeline Aadnes and Dr. Ernesto Lasso de la Vega. It was on the Citizen’s Pond Watch Survey. This Survey was funded through CHNEP’s grant program, the Pond Watch Survey program enhances community awareness about local pond conditions and monitors seasonal dynamics. The Survey collaborates with the CHNEP Water Atlas for annual data uploads – for which, the Survey gathers data on water levels, algae types, and erosion metrics. It encourages community engagement and historical recordkeeping and serves as model for environmental stewardship and community involvement. There is the potential for app development to enhance impact on local ecosystems. The Survey highlights the importance of citizen science in monitoring and improving pond health. The second presentation was given by CHNEP’s Sarina Weiss on the CHNEP Water Atlas 2.0. It detailed the updates and upgrades that the Water Atlas now provides. The updated CHNEP Water Atlas provides comprehensive information on over 600 waterbodies, organized by waterbody, basin, and watershed. Each waterbody page includes key details such as FDEP WBIDs, impairment status, water quality criteria, and interactive maps showcasing Water Quality, Hydrology, Wildlife Habitat, and Climate Change data. The Water Atlas features topical pages covering crucial areas like seagrass, clam habitat suitability, and habitat restoration needs, offering a holistic view of aquatic ecosystems. It is designed as a dynamic, constantly updated resource, and as such, the Water Atlas incorporates new data and features to address emerging environmental challenges, acting as a "living report card" for water quality. It is another example of how CHNEP actively collaborates with stakeholders to present complex information in user-friendly formats, catering to both casual users and technical audiences, and promoting informed environmental decision-making. There were no comments or questions from Committee members regarding this report.

Agenda Item #8 – CHNEP Update — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP

CHNEP’s Executive Director, Jennifer Hecker, presented on programmatic activity occurring since the last Management Committee meeting.

CHNEP submitted the CHNEP 2025 Program Evaluation and planned the May site visits. An evaluation team will be EPA staff and NEP Directors who will be visiting sites of partner projects in the CHNEP area and learning about the work being done in the region. They will also attend the May Policy Committee meeting. CHNEP planned and executed the Winter Committee meetings; sent Committee member packets to newly appointed members on Committees; welcomed three new Citizens Advisory Committee members, Brooke Langston representing Manatee County, Cheryl Cook representing Sarasota County, and Zachary Franco representing Highlands County approved at the January Policy Committee Meeting; updated all federal, state, county and city contact lists to reflect current elected leaders in CHNEP area, as well as their relevant staff. Began to contact federal legislative offices to obtain Programmatic Appropriations Forms to submit those available for FY26 federal funding; co-hosted and facilitated the Southwest Florida Federal Interagency Resource Exchange (FIRE) and Economic Recovery Workshop listening session with the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council; participated in Federal Interagency Resource Exchange (FIRE) and Economic Recovery Workshop listening session with the Central Florida Regional Planning Council; and hosted 2024 Hurricane Season Listening Sessions at January Management and Policy Committee meetings. CHNEP discussed partner responses, problems, and lessons learned during Hurricanes Helene and Milton recovery and compiled member feedback on resources and questions which were sent to the Post-Storm Interagency Recovery Coordination (IRC) team in February for response. CHNEP welcomed new CHNEP member organization LeHigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District (LA-MSID); drafted and sent a Letter of Support for Federal Designation of the Myakka Wild and Scenic River to the U.S. National Park Service and Congressmen Buchanan and Steube's office following approval at the January Policy Committee Meeting; and sent out Spring budget reminder letters to all CHNEP partners (counties and cities) to ensure consideration of respective dues' amount in their respective FY26 budgets. Regarding the 2025 Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP), CHNEP staff held meetings with the consultant regarding the layout/design of 2025 CHNEP CCMP; received the initial CCMP layout for review; and completed final review for copy edits, edited with new preferred terminology and added reference to 2024 storm season impacts where appropriate in text and figure captions (the updated CCMP is available on CHNEP's website for review).

For finance and grants, CHNEP processed annual contribution checks that have been received thus far and ensured donation files are up-to-date and sent out acknowledgement letters for donors' tax records; worked with the County finance team to set up CHNEP accounts and codes for tracking expenses in new financial software; held FY24 Close Out Finance Meeting with County grants staff; finalized FY24 and FY25 match documentation for EPA 320 grants to keep on file; drafted alternate FY25 work plans and budgets to address potential IJA funding changes and held meetings with County fiscal and grants staff to discuss federal funding pause and planning; and successfully obtained commitment for \$5,000 sponsorship of upcoming CHNEP 2025 SW FL Resiliency Summit from the Volo Foundation. In response to an EPA request, CHNEP worked with administrative host to provide additional documentation for the EPA IJA FY25 application, and approval of materials and EPA notice of EPA IJA FY25 grant award has since been received. CHNEP received reimbursement from SWFWMD for staff support and field contractor expenses for Upper CCHMN surface water monitoring project incurred in FY24; submitted annual dues for continued membership in the Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP); updated the funding opportunities fact sheet and sent out historic funding opportunities notification to all CHNEP Committees; sponsored the Annual Southwest Florida Water Resources Conference and the Cape Coral Burrowing Owl Festival; received FY25 grant agreements with FDEP and SWFWMD, which were approved by Charlotte County and fully executed; received the executed change order for purchase order for additional work associated with updating interactive map layers; submitted FY25 Quarter 1 report and deliverables for the Upper CCHMN water quality monitoring project to the

Southwest Florida Water Management District; and assisted in filling out a State Legislative Appropriations Request together with the other Gulf National Estuary Programs, which was filed (#2880) in both the House and Senate. CHNEP drafted and received three Letters of Support for the cities of Arcadia and Sanibel, as well as Strickland Ranch; sent out email with information about it to the CHNEP Policy Committee and City/County Lists, as well as emails to each CHNEP legislator on key committees where the request will be heard; and presented the request at the Charlotte County Legislative Delegation meeting.

CHNEP staff attended numerous partnership meetings since last cycle. CHNEP sent Letters of Support for conserving the Myakka Corridor Addition and B Squared Ranch in Manatee County by adding it to the Florida Forever list for state purchase, the National Science Foundation (NSF) funding proposal: “RAPID: Impact of Back-to-Back Major Hurricanes on Antibiotic Resistance Gene Transfer to Autochthonous Bacteria in Estuarine and Coastal Water Systems” for University of Florida, the NOAA funding proposal: “Transformational application of the on-line geospatial decision support tool Future Shorelines to inform ongoing restoration efforts designed to sustain productive fisheries” for Florida International University, and the NEP Coastal Watersheds Grant proposal: “Ecological Restoration and Coastal Resilience” for Hermitage Artist Retreat. For presentations, CHNEP presented “Resiliency Lessons” at the *Nature-Based Solutions Symposium* hosted by the Conservancy of Southwest Florida; presented on CHNEP and *Landscape Scale Planning and Restoration* to Heal Our Harbor as a part of their annual Ambassador Training Program; gave a panelist presentation in the *Hurricane Recovery* session of the 34th Annual Southwest Florida Water Resources Conference; presented on CHNEP to Central Florida Regional Planning Council; gave opening remarks and facilitated session on *Fisheries & Agriculture* at Southwest Florida Federal Interagency Resource Exchange (FIRE) and Economic Recovery Workshop listening session; presented on *Nitrogen Contributions to Red Tide* to the County Coalition for Responsible Management of Lake Okeechobee, the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries, and Lake Worth Lagoon; presented *An Evaluation of the Relationships between the Duration of Red Tide Blooms and Watershed Nitrogen Loads in Southwest Florida* to South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Working Group / Science Coordination Group meeting; presented on *Water Quality Indicators of Southwest Florida Estuaries* at the Barrier Island Parks Society “Marine Pollution Forum;” provided an update on *Watershed Restoration Projects and Habitat* to the Peace River Audubon Society; and presented on CHNEP and *Habitat Protection & Restoration* to Lee County Friends of Manatee Park volunteer association. For outreach events, CHNEP attended the Water, Wings, and Wild Things Kids Festival at Circle B Bar Reserve in Polk County. Over 160 second graders visited the CHNEP booth; provided calendars, brochures, and Kids Activity Books to LA-MSID for the annual Wings Over Water Festival; displayed and distributed informational materials at the SWFL Federal IRC Listening Session for the 2024 Hurricane Season co-hosted by CHNEP; attended the Burrowing Owl Festival in Cape Coral, where CHNEP manned a booth to share information with 478 visitors; attended the annual Chalo Nitka Festival in Moore Haven to host activities for visitors and distribute free resources; and attended the Citizen Summit in Punta Gorda to speak with attendees about CHNEP’s work and share free resources.

CHNEP sent out monthly Constant Contact emails to subscribers about relevant upcoming public engagement events in the CHNEP area; awarded two Conservation Grants for the FY25 winter cycle for the Myakka River Management Coordinating Council Website and the Lee County Hyacinth Control District Pond Watch Survey Tool; completed deliveries and shipments of the 2025 Nature Calendar; continued making functional improvements to the CHNEP website including streamlining document uploading processes, adding to staff guidance document, and integrating an *ArcGIS home page map* in both mobile and desktop view; created and published a new *Resources & Publications* page that is more intuitively organized for visitors and easier for staff to keep updated; created an updated *Legislative*

Priorities page for partners and citizens to access; updated the *Community Resiliency* page to include details on CHNEP-funded components of Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessments in each of the ten service counties with relevant fact sheets; created a NEP informational handout highlighting national assets that the National Estuary Program helps to protect, for federal policymaker education; continued to foster engagement through social media campaigns and the sharing of events (ex: I Heart Estuaries Week, the Great Backyard Bird Count, World Seagrass Day and World Water Day); and shared collective 2024 achievements from Florida's Gulf Coast NEP organizations on social media in a series of graphics. In the media and press, CHNEP contributed to *Hurricane impacts reach beyond humans* - Daily Sun, *Burrowing Owl Fest provides fun, advocacy* - Cape Coral Breeze, *Nature-based solutions help address Florida's climate challenges* - *The Invading Sea*, *Five Reasons for Southwest Florida to Consider Nature-Based Solutions* - Coastal Breeze News, and *Hurricane Threats: Is there a plan to keep region safer?* - The Daily Sun. CHNEP has 22 new Facebook followers for a total of 2,018 with 7 new "likes" (1,700 total likes), 5,845 subscribers for the educational mailings, 2,048 unique visitors and 2,727 page visits to the CHNEP website, 13,266 YouTube views with 88 subscribers and 325 videos, and 618 total Instagram followers.

One member asked how federal funding guidance, and the procurement process have impacted staff time and Ms. Hecker responded that some projects' procurement process needed to be paused in order to confer with the County as fiscal host on how to move forward. Members also commented that it is a significant and impressive amount of work that CHNEP routinely does.

Agenda Item #9 – FY2026 Work Plans & Budgets — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP

Ms. Jennifer Hecker presented the FY2026 Work Plans and Budgets 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. Highlights are as follows:

CHNEP has prepared three annual work plans and budgets: a CHNEP Master Work Plan and Budget, an EPA320 Workplan and Budget, and an EPA Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Work Plan and Budget. All three work plans and budgets are based on assumption grants will be awarded, since these workplans are required to outline how those grants funds are planned to be used. The FY26 Master Work Plan has all FY26 revenue/funding sources and expenses. The FY26 EPA 320 Work Plan only has FY26 EPA 320 revenue/expenses and the FY26 EPA IIJA Work Plan only has FY26 EPA IIJA revenue/expenses – that match amounts in the FY26 Master Work Plan. The major changes between FY25 and FY26 are that personnel is using prior year federal EPA 320 carryover funding and new state (FDEP, SWFWMD) and local funding due to uncertainties regarding new federal grant awards, as well as expends older funds first if FY26 EPA grants are awarded; partner contributions have increased by \$10,000 overall, due to Polk County increasing their dues, matching many other CHNEP counties at the \$25,000 level; personnel costs were decreased from \$669,810 to \$525,000 to eliminate two unfilled entry-level positions; a Finance and Grants Specialist and a Restoration Specialist - decreasing authorized personnel from 7 positions to 5; the overhead administrative fees have slightly decreased from \$256,869 to \$246,120 due to the reduction of authorized CHNEP positions and associated human resource, information technology, and other associated operational support costs; public outreach is decreased from \$106,321 to \$94,500 in reducing sponsorships by \$5,000, increasing CHNEP Publications from \$50,107 to \$55,000 to account for rising print and shipping costs (though contingent on FY26 EPA 320 funding), and CHNEP Events going from \$16,214 down to \$4,500; non-IIJA Research and Restoration is increased from \$442,875 to \$947,821, though the majority of this is contingent on FY26 EPA 320 funding; and IIJA Research and Restoration is increasing from \$899,800 to \$909,800 (contingent on FY26 IIJA grant award). Once new awards are received/accepted by host, CHNEP would issue a call for projects for the TBD Research and Restoration funds. Three possible projects for FY26 (contingent on the FY EPA grant awards) are the Peace River

Basin Water Pollution Hotspot Assessment, the Submerged Aquatic Vegetation and Water Quality Restoration, and the CHNEP Water Atlas Improvements projects. The annual number of added reserves increased from \$51,500 to \$62,000. The current reserve balance is \$739,641.59, so is anticipated to be \$801,641.59 at the end of FY26. Based on recent EPA guidance, the FY26 EPA 320 Work Plan and Budget will be handled like the EPA IJA Work Plan and Budget, in only including budget tables and task descriptions relative to monies and projects funded by those grants. Management Committee makes recommendations to Policy as to their review and potential approval. Once these are approved by Policy, the final EPA320 and IJA Workplans and Budgets will accompany the FY26 EPA application forms in Grants.gov before the June 1, 2025 grant application deadline. Should any FY26 grant look unlikely to be awarded by next cycle, an amended FY26 Master Work Plan would be brought to outline the reduction in revenue and associated expenses – for review by Management Committee and approval by Policy Committee.

One member inquired as to CHNEP removing positions from the budget rather than just keeping them unfilled and Ms. Hecker responded that it is not anticipated that those positions would be filled anytime soon due to likely reduction in federal funding. Another member commented in regard to Everglades Restoration, that CHNEP may play a pivotal role moving forward as that the restoration still has federal support and it is vital that CHNEP has the resources to be responsive – to which Ms. Hecker agreed. Another member inquired about how TBD research and restoration projects will be selected, to which Ms. Hecker stated that there are some previously identified potential new projects awaiting funding and if there is funding remaining, CHNEP will do a call for clean water-oriented projects. Those would then be brought to the committee in Amended Work Plan once those are internally vetted and ready for consideration of CHNEP funding. An Amended Work Plan would also reflect if there are any changes to funding levels. Another member asked if overhead fees are fixed, or workload-based and Ms. Hecker responded that the fees are workload-based as outlined in the MOU, with them to be increased or decrease in proportion to that workload.

RICHARD THOMPSON MOVED, SECONDED BY MATT DEPAOLIS, TO RECOMMEND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE APPROVAL OF ALL THREE OF THE FY2026 WORK PLANS AND BUDGETS. THE MOTION WAS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

Agenda Item #10 – Hurricane Recovery Follow Up with the Federal Interagency Recovery Coordination (IRC) Team — Leda Khoury, Federal Emergency Management Agency

Leda Khoury, from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, provided the Committee updates on the federal resources and responses from the Interagency Recovery Coordination (IRC) Team from member comments and recovery assistance needs after Hurricanes Helene and Milton. Highlights are as follows:

The Interagency Recovery Coordination Team (IRC) is deployed to assist with long-term recovery and resilience. Federal, State, and Local agencies work together to ensure effective and coordinated disaster recovery. There is also a coordination with voluntary, philanthropic, and private organizations. The IRC can facilitate provision of capacity building, community planning, and technical assistance and work directly with Florida Department of Emergency Management (FDEM) and other state agencies. There are several funding sources available such as Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program which provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas; Waste & Waste Disposal Predevelopment Planning Grant which helps eligible low-income communities plan and develop applications for proposed USDA Rural Development water or waste disposal projects; Special Evaluation Assistance for Rural Communities and Households which helps very small, financially distressed rural communities with predevelopment feasibility studies, design and technical assistance on proposed water

and waste disposal projects; and Single Family Disaster Home Repair Grants which provides grants to very-low and low-income homeowners to repair homes damaged in a Calendar Year (CY) to a Presidentially Declared Disaster Area. There are also other potential funding sources such as the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant (disaster-related), as well as other additional federal funding opportunities.

One member asked if the funding that Ms. Khoury spoke about is at risk with federal funding uncertainties and Ms. Khoury stated that since these funds have already been allocated by Congress, she did not believe they are at risk and that it is more a matter of waiting for the money to be released. Ms. Hecker offered that all comments, concerns, questions and responses generated from the last meeting cycle were available in the packet that the Committee members were provided with and the remaining information along with Ms. Khoury's additional comments and information will be added to the response document and uploaded on the CHNEP website.

Ms. Hecker mentioned that Policy Committee members had raised concerns with lowering the base floor elevations on the barrier islands as counties and cities are encouraging people to build even higher, with the perception that people can build lower based on FEMA base floor elevations. Ms. Khoury stated that for clarification purposes, the state should be contacted to provide that specific information, as it was the state who provided the LIDAR that FEMA relied upon to lower the base floor elevations. Ms. Hecker stated that the Policy Committee has indicated that they wish that FEMA would revisit this issue because as local governments, this affects them in potentially having to require/justify more stringent building codes than what FEMA requires in order to ensure buildings are build more safely for increasing storm surges. Another member asked Ms. Hecker if she knew the timing of the changes to the base flood elevation in the southwest Florida communities, whether it happened pre or post Hurricane Ian and whether the state or the individual communities were involved. Ms. Hecker said she did not know or recall if that was mentioned when the Policy Committee discussed.

Another member asked that if Ms. Khoury is representing FEMA today, mentioning they received a letter from the Office of Enhancement and Budget, and it seems to indicate that FEMA is recommending material changes to the disaster declaration's economic thresholds that impact short- and long-term changes to FEMA's funding in a way that could put more burden on local and state governments. The member also stated that there are a few million dollars at stake for every local government that is trying to anticipate whether these recommendations are going to be implemented. Ms. Khoury responded that this is a great question and even though she is unable to answer that question directly, she will add it to the list of questions because it is a concern for local governments, and it will be submitted it to the appropriate individuals or to the appropriate department who has the ability to provide the answer to that.

A member asked what the next steps would be that Ms. Khoury would recommend and whether or not organizations should coordinate with each other to facilitate discussions and problem-solving. Ms. Khoury offered that organizations could determine a point person and that responses can be garnered from streamlining specific questions so that answers may offer a targeted approach to solutions. The member then said that meetings among members where collective information is shared goes along way to help towards helping communities recover. Ms. Khoury also said that she could synthesize the comments and responses even further because many communities and organizations face the same issues. She added that after a disaster, eventually the task force demobilizes with those employees going back to their regional or federal positions but she could continue to be the contact for the federal Interagency Recovery Coordination team and there may still be more resources moving forward.

Agenda Item #11 – Water Quality Trends in Southwest Florida — Miles Medina, PhD, ECCO Scientific, LLC

Dr. Miles Medina from ECCO Scientific briefed the Committee on water quality and bioindicator trends in the CHNEP estuaries from 2000 to 2021 using data from the Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network (CCHMN). Water quality trends indicate elevated and/or increasing nitrogen levels throughout the Charlotte Harbor system. Nutrient enrichment appears to have shifted primary production away from phytoplankton (chlorophyll-a) and toward macroalgae. Subsequently, seagrass coverage has declined since 2017. As per Claussen et al (2009), eutrophication is driven by nutrient loads/fluxes and the direct effects are algal production, species shifts, chlorophyll, turbidity, etc. Indirect effects include habitat changes/losses, oxygen deficiency, algal toxins, changes of ecosystem structure. There are multiple lines of evidence, such as the amount of Nitrogen and Phosphorus in the water column, amount of chlorophyll (phytoplankton) and macroalgae, and seagrass coverage. The study focused on the coastal urban/residential Charlotte Harbor watershed which includes the Caloosahatchee, Peace and Myakka Rivers, and looked at Lake Okeechobee and its watershed that is mostly inland agricultural and phosphate mining lands. The CCHMN was established in the early 2000s, and it conducts monthly water quality sampling across 13 segments (“strata”) and consists of a stratified random sampling design. The trend analysis is focused on nutrients (TN, TKN, TP) and chlorophyll-a, however, the curated dataset also includes DO & BOD, apparent color, turbidity, TSS, Secchi depth, conductance, pH, salinity, temperature, and total organic carbon.

The GAM-based trend analysis involved three main steps: 1) Fit a GAM to the data with uncertainty, 2) estimate annual mean concentrations with 95% confidence intervals (CIs), and 3) estimate trends over a sliding 5-year window, with 96% CIs. Annual mean concentrations were categorized relative to thresholds based on segment-specific regulatory criteria (NNCs). For the trend result to be “above” the threshold, that means the CI is above the threshold. For it to be “near” the threshold, CI overlaps the threshold and for it to be “below” the threshold, the CI lies below the threshold.

The study found that nitrogen is elevated throughout the system (primarily organic N), but northern & southern segments show distinct characteristic behavior. Across the Charlotte Harbor system, inorganic nitrogen is low (often not detected in the water column), chlorophyll-a is low, and phosphorus is typically low relative to regulatory thresholds. Trends also show that there is macroalgal abundance. Annual data was collected along transects within each stratum by FDEP Aquatic Preserves. The annual median values were largely constant (zero) across most strata. The annual maximum values were more variable. The East Wall, Cape Haze, and Estero Bay transects exhibited significantly greater macroalgae abundance from 2014–2017 to 2018–2021. As for seagrass coverage, there were major seagrass losses across the system after 2017. This was driven by 2 major events - Hurricane Irma in September 2017, followed by a massive red tide event in late 2017 into early 2019. As for eutrophication & ecological shifts, the results are consistent with the general characterization of shallow coastal systems, in which nutrient enrichment shifts primary production from phytoplankton and seagrass toward light-limited macroalgal production (Burkholder et al. 2007).

Overall, the trend results are consistent with the hypothesis that nitrogen enrichment has resulted in macroalgal proliferation and seagrass losses. Nitrogen was already trending upward before Hurricane Irma and elevated nitrogen appears to be making the system vulnerable to profound ecosystem changes following major events. The northern and southern segments exhibited interesting differences, such as that Lake Okeechobee discharges and nitrogen loads remain a major concern, and that the Peace River and coastal urban areas also contribute substantial loads. As for the broader application, the GAM-based water quality trend analysis captures nuances in inter- and intra-annual dynamics, propagates uncertainty throughout the analysis, and is easily scalable to analyze many parameters across many locations.

One member commented that there could be impacts on the Caloosahatchee from the hurricanes and from LOSOM operational changes after 2021, and that he would be interested in seeing those updated results. Ms. Hecker said that maybe updates to hotspot analyses and trends could be presented to the group in the future. Updated trends will not take as long to be produced because data flow and curation was in the initial project set-up. Another member offered that he hopes that Dr. Medina can secure funding for additional studies as the last few hurricane seasons has been extremely active and it is vital that the ongoing information on these trends continues to be accessible.

Agenda Item #12 – CHNEP Technical Projects Updates— Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP

Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP's Director of Research and Restoration, provided the committee with a brief overview on project progress since the previous Management Committee meeting. Highlights are as follows:

CHNEP's Water Atlas now has a new Lake Okeechobee Waterbody Page which is live with a Release Levels Tracker. Several layers have been added to the CCMP Maps (which are found on each waterbody page) including: projections for changes in coastal flood levels from NOAA, daily Chlorophyll-a concentrations, daily Cyanobacteria concentrations in Lake Okeechobee, and the Florida Wildlife Corridor maps. Daily rainfall totals from Lee County rain gauges are presented on the Real-Time Data Map. The latest one week of daily rainfall totals will also be displayed on CCMP Maps accessible through individual waterbody pages. For the Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network (CCHMN), Q1-Q2 data has been collected and submitted. Upper Charlotte Harbor partners are working on a Data Management/ Optimization created electronic field entry form to streamline field data entry. Final field trials were completed in November and work continues building the support database. Fact sheets and infographics have been 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 Highlands, Hardee and DeSoto County Vulnerability Assessments, projects in partnership with CFRPC will identify Adaptation Action Areas for each county based on data gathered for vulnerability assessments. County Steering Committee meetings were held to review exposure and sensitivity analysis results and maps from baseline vulnerability assessment project. These outputs will also be used to identify and prioritize focus areas under current project. The CFRPC held community meetings to gather public input on vulnerable community assets and created public comment response memos. Input will be used in prioritization of focus areas for developing AAA plans. Project pages for County vulnerability assessments have been created and are accessible on the CHNEP website and include interactive maps created by the CFRPC. For the Polk County Vulnerability Assessment, the project is in partnership with CFRPC to conduct additional rainfall flood modeling for Polk County's Vulnerability Assessment. This includes 200/500-year, and compound flooding events which create a visual interpretation of the flooding events for community outreach. HEC-RAS model selected for additional flood scenarios. CFRPC has engaged a subcontractor for upcoming modeling work. HEC-RAS is widely used by FEMA, USACE, and other regulatory agencies for flood hazard mapping and mitigation planning. Development of methodology for selection of priority areas in the County which will be included in a visual interpretation of model results are underway. Blender was selected as open-source tool for 3D Visualizations. For the Charlotte County Vulnerability Assessment, the project is to conduct baseline Vulnerability Assessment for Charlotte County. The report on responses to input and questions from initial Public Outreach meeting has been finalized and all critically significant asset data has been aggregated and mapped (metadata has been standardized to meet state requirements). An 'Existing Data/Model Tools Sufficiency Analysis' was conducted for existing coastal flood modeling and topography data to identify data gaps. A precipitation

flooding model data is currently under review as well. The next steps are Modeling, Exposure & Sensitivity/Risk analysis for critical assets under different flood scenarios.

CHNEP produces and updates fact sheets on basin water quality, basin seagrass health, and state and federal research and restoration funding opportunities. NEPs are contributing to Gulf of America Alliance on their development of Interactive ESRI-based Estuaries Dashboard which will help answer questions related to seagrass and water quality at a regional scale, using local user input. Following the December TAC Meeting, CHNEP created a landing page for sharing post 'event' resources from partners in the region, including lessons learned and potential next steps. Additionally, CHNEP created Hurricanes Helene and Milton webpages to begin aggregating maps, data and resources related to those events as they become available in response to partner requests. Also CHNEP conducted NDVI Change Analysis for Hurricanes Helene and Milton using the HiForm Google Earth Engine (GEE) mapping tool and created publicly available dashboard to display results on ArcGIS Online and linked to dashboard on the Hurricanes Helene and Milton webpages. There were no questions or comments on this item.

Agenda Item #13 - Management Committee Member Updates — Melynda Brown, Co-Chair

Gaye Sharpe (Polk County): Polk County is updating its lab equipment so that it can be useful with the different types of algae in the area. That's going to expedite the process, and we will have quicker and better information. The other thing that we are adding is we have three or four new nominations on the Peace River for our Environmental Lands Program to evaluate - so there seems to be a lot of interest in those property owners. We've done a couple along there, and they're understanding how the program works with more interest working with us.

Charlie Hunsicker (Manatee County): A lot of things have been happening around our county. Sarasota Bay had a 19 % increase in seagrass recovery, and that is attributable to a higher level of attention to our nitrogen loadings from our wastewater systems and a few stormwater projects. It has been over a \$700 million investment in Manatee and Sarasota Counties as we move forward with wastewater improvements. Manatee County has been asked to reach AWT treatment for 70% of its watershed in 10 years. That's only about a \$700 million impact. At a much smaller level, we do have an active pond program working with HOA days, and we have probably improved over 17 miles of shoreline just within our local area on recovery of bankside erosion, plantings, and finding 30 to 40 percent nitrogen reductions in the ponds themselves because of that type of activity. On the land acquisition program, we have Crane Park on the Myakka River, and we were able to acquire approximately double the size of this park by acquiring the dry ground next to it. We are going to try to reduce, possibly eliminate the riverine mud bogging impacts that occur at that very location and try to move our recreation uphill to that area. As for Mossy Island Ranch, which is part of the Myakka River Corridor that CHNEP wrote a letter of support on, the owner is getting a little impatient for the Florida Forever program, and I think Manatee County is going to make the move to purchase a conservation easement over that 480-acre ranch. Eventually, they may have a partner. It is near Myakka River State Park. We also wanted to thank Congressman Donalds. He's been very supportive for this area's aquaculture industry, specifically clam and oyster farming. It has a lot to do with resiliency in our food sources among other things. He's joined the Shellfish Caucus in Congress, the American Seafood Caucus, and he really is a champion for our environmental causes here. He is a real positive resource to encourage and teach about our area. He also signed the NEP "Dear Colleague" letter for our federal funding last year. Also, we are pursuing the clearing of probably 120 miles of drainage systems with NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) support.

Ryan Pieper (North Port): The City of North Port has a couple projects going on. There is a recent initiative to clear out the Myakkahatchee Creek Environmental Park through Public Works and some restoration grants, to allow for better flow from the estates from north to south that went from the Estates Drive

essentially to the Pan Am Wastewater Treatment Plant. That has just been completed. We finished getting all those invasive pepper trees out that were backing up the flow. The Tree Fund was renamed the Environmental Fund. There are mitigation fees that were secured from developments across the city and now we're able to secure land acquisitions, not just tree-related efforts and initiatives. We can secure scrub jay, heritage tree lots, and gopher tortoise areas in perpetuity with this fund now. Also, reforestation efforts, areas that were cleared for the past 50 years that we're looking to return to native habitats can be done with this fund as well. There are some park shade initiatives that we're looking to implement with that fund too. We also recently were awarded a grant to restore the corridors that were affected with hurricanes so we can replant trees and prune trees to be more hurricane resilient.

Richard Thompson (Fort Myers): We just finished preparing our budget. We also just received the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Grant in the amount of \$6 million to clean out all of the stuff that hasn't been cleaned out yet. Just the sediment and debris removal alone will provide a better quality for our discharges going out to the river because we have got all that debris out of the canals. We've got three separate projects including the long-distance hatching for living shoreline (we don't know if we'll have grass in there or not). We received partial funding for all of those to get the feasibility studies done to determine what we can do, and that is just about along the entire eight miles of the city. We are ahead of schedule on removing our wastewater discharges from the river. My last discussion with Justin (Mahon) was that we are ahead of schedule on those. We have several resilient projects and every project we have includes a water quality component.

Ryan Riordan (Lee County): The county will be conducting a "Walk the Waterbody" event in June as part of the alternative restoration plan for of Beaver Creek and Hancock Creek to determine the source of fecal bacteria within the watershed. Lee County has submitted comments to the updated Caloosahatchee River and Estuary and Everglades West Coast BMAPs. The DEP recently performed an audit on the Lee County stormwater management program. The audit report came back, and Lee County satisfied all current requirements. Lee County has also submitted the draft for their county resilience study. We have the Lake Park treatment facility project that is underway, as well as other projects underway in addition to studies going on.

Matt DePaolis (SCCF): We are still working through some permitting issues such as more oyster restoration projects that the Marine Lab has going on. We have already done some nutrient hotspot analysis in western tidal fish hatchery estuaries.

Brandon Moody (Charlotte County): Special thanks to CHNEP and FWC who had been particularly in the matter of trying to get a restoration project off the ground here in this part of Charlotte County, was following the last and only natural crisis factor. There will be people out there clearing invasives regardless. We have also, in the last few weeks, put out four new tide gauges around the county. We have got a fifth one going up, and then several more beyond that. Those will be going live within the next couple of months. Appropriations for five or so USGS gauges that has, as far as I know, made it through the state appropriations process is still be worked on. We would like to start in June, but at least it hasn't been filled yet. We have been having a lot of conversations with federal representatives about getting a full-time NOAA gauge, which CHNEP submitted a federal appropriations request for. We did find a federal representative that was willing to support to get that done. We have been talking with people behind the scenes to address any concerns and we will see how that goes. Finally, right now I have added on a budget, money to start moving forward on more reasonable change plans in the area. We're targeting limited base, the first one for next year. So they're having conversations right now to kind of figure out timing.

Phil Flood (SFWMD): Since the last meeting, SFWMD has started many new big and critical projects that will actually go a long way to addressing water quality. In March, the governing board awarded \$19.5 million dollars for 3 local projects. The Palm Creek Filter Marsh and the Bob Janes Preserve projects are great projects. There is also the Frank Mann Preserve Reservoir and Filter Marsh. All of these will be starting very soon. The one that we have been waiting for that has been held up in permitting has been the Lake Hicpochee Phase 2 expansion. It is a \$126 million dollar contract to expand the existing facility. The flow equalization basin will be able to pull water right out of the river and run it through the full equalization basin and then across Lake Hicpochee. There is 8,000 acre-feet of storage along with water quality improvements. Our big reservoir – the C-43 reservoir – is an 18-mile above ground reservoir. It is very close to being finished. The SFWMD ordered and approved probably the last contract on that which is a \$28 million dollar contract to complete it, by closing out the last bit of work and also complete the recreation component to it. We are hoping for the ribbon-cutting in July. That will be tremendous – 170,00 acre-feet of storage and water quality component. Also, we bought a piece of property along the Caloosahatchee, about 1800 acres, with Lee County several years ago. We have been testing different ways of removing nitrogen from out of the river and we have settled on a plant-based wetland process. We have tested it in above ground tanks and now we are putting it in the ground. We are fully operational now on our test cells out there, and assuming that all goes well, we will expand it into about a 1,500-acre nitrogen removing filter marsh. We have a couple of years of monitoring on that and we will hopefully be building the filter marsh, putting the pump station out there and building the cells, getting all that ready to go. We will be hopefully awarding that contract in the next few months. We are getting ready to go out for solicitation for water storage in the Caloosahatchee watershed. We are looking at trying to partner with local governments or the private sector on one or more projects to increase our water storage and within the watershed. That solicitation will come out this summer.

Vivianna Bendixson (SFWMD): For the update on the Cape Haze restoration project, this is Phase 3 of the Coral Creek Project. There was a Phase 1 and a Phase 2 and Phase 3 has been renamed Cape Haze. We received the NOAA grant last year which is in place and we have 5 years to spend that money. We are about a year into that first of 5 years, so we anticipate it going out to solicitation shortly, maybe before the end of this fiscal year. Hopefully, it will soon be out to bid and under construction at the beginning of the next fiscal year. We are aiming for an October timeframe. The NOAA grant obviously has federal requirements associated with it but because the work is mostly earth work, we are thinking that it may not be impacted. We are keeping a close eye as well on those federal requirements and impacts to it. We have not heard that our grant is going to be impacted, but if it is, then we will have to revisit what that means for this project.

Melynda Brown (FDEP): We worked with Big Waters Land Trust, and we acquired a 37-acre parcel. It is mostly mangroves, but it also includes some submerged lands with seagrass and beach road up in Charlotte County near Englewood. We have been working with the Coastal Conservation Association to do some mangrove restoration. They donated 500 mangrove plants so we are planting those on two islands outside of the Pirate Harbor community on the East Wall of Charlotte Harbor that were rookery islands for colonial wading and diving birds, but Hurricanes Helene and Milton wiped them out. There are not a lot of mangroves left. We are hoping that these little seedlings can reestablish that rookery island. The Pirate Harbor community members were also helping with that. This year for our rookery monitoring, we have been finding that a lot of the birds have been nesting in other areas, mainly because of loss of vegetation. We have been finding new islands that they have been nesting on. It is good that they have been finding other locations. Next month is the 50th anniversary of the Florida Aquatic Preserve Act. This act standardized the aquatic preserve rule and how aquatic preserves are managed under DEP. We are up to 43 aquatic preserves, and one was one designated last year on the East coast. We are trying to

have celebrations year-round and then maybe in the fall after hurricane season, we are going to have a celebratory cleanup to get everyone together.

Harry Phillips (Cape Coral): We just finished up some aquatic vegetation harvesting in the freshwater canal systems. This is an ongoing project that has been going on for a few years now and we hope to have nutrient removal. We just started a series of mangrove restoration projects. We planted about 600 mangroves in the southwest part of the city and about 250 of those mangroves were donated by the Garden Club of Cape Coral and the city supplemented the rest with a purchase from Native Corkscrew. In June and all the way up to July, we are going to continue this restoration, and hopefully by next year, we will have planted about 3,000 mangroves in that area. We just received a grant from FWC for \$900,000. Whenever a contractor or a homeowner does a removal of a burrowing owl within the city, they have to provide money to a conservation fund. We applied for this grant since most of those burrows get collapsed within the city. With that money, we purchased a number of quarter-acre properties that were contiguous that have both gopher tortoises and burrowing owls on those properties. We have kept them in perpetuity because in Cape Coral, there is not a lot of green space and it is becoming apparent that if we can purchase these properties with these species on them, we will have a little more management of the betterment of these species. Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife has been doing this with their land trust and purchasing properties throughout the city for this same reason. Cape Coral has purchased the properties, but the Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife will manage them - it works out as a partnership.

Vanessa Bauzo (FDACS): We work with the BMP manuals, so we help develop and implement those manuals. We have updated all of our manuals this March, officially. We also adopted the new small farms manual, which focuses on those producers that are less than 50 acres and have multiple commodities on their properties. We are also going to be expecting our Florida statewide Agricultural Irrigation Demand report to be done in June. That is updated annually, and it is a 20-year water demand projection for agriculture. We have also commented on the updates that are happening. Manatee will be expanding their boundary, so they are going to be following the Tampa Bay route. That is going to add some implications in our program to get more producers enrolled as our producers are supposed to be enrolled if they are in a BMAP boundary area and/or they can do monitoring with the FDEP. With those BMAP updates, they are going to be adding an agricultural cooperative element or ACE. This is where agriculture is 20% or more of the load in those BMAP areas. If they are, then we must implement regional projects for these areas. We have been working on a regional project program; it is still in the development. We are going to be opening project applications this summer. This program is basically focusing on regional projects to help with water quality and water quantity with our cultural producers. We are still thinking of ideas when it comes to those outstanding Florida spring BMAPS because we have done surface water projects, but those spring projects are going somewhat difficult to figure out. We have a running list of people that want to be involved and give us their ideas.

Jamie Wolanin (FWC): FWC is getting down to the end of our fiscal year in June. We are working with SCCF to restore up to 3.48 acres of oyster reef in San Carlos Bay. We are working with Blue Terra and construction there is ongoing. They are estimating that they will be done with the work by early June. They have just gotten a bigger barge so hopefully they will be able to get material out there a little faster and stick to the timeline we have. That project is going very well so far. We are working with Charlotte County to do some stream bank restoration for Snapper Creek. That project has been very difficult to get off the ground. As I'm sure you all know, sometimes procurement just does not go as straightforward as you would like. We are very close to getting work done on the ground to remove those invasive species from the stream bank. We are hoping to tie it into the volunteer cleanup event, whether that's trash or just other invasive debris cleanup, and then sponsor a native tree planting all before the end of next month. FWC is purchasing materials to support Damon Moore and ORE's (Oyster River Ecology) large-scale

oyster restoration efforts for the Manatee River. We are working with him to help develop and buy materials for him to build those innovative oyster restoration techniques he's been developing with the nonprofit. With Cape Coral, it is sort of an internal project, but it's in support of the park. Construction going on at Crystal Lake in the City of Cape Coral. My section and our freshwater fisheries management section are putting in some fish attractors, signage, really hoping to boost the SAV population there - so that way future fish stockings go well and it is more of a fun resource for the public.

Kris Ramon (PRMRWSA): On June 4th, at our next board meeting, we will be doing an overview of every five years, and we update the integrated regional water supply plan. That will be presented to our board, and we are assuming that it will be accepted and then we will have it posted on our website for anyone who wants to look at that. We have got a nice long-term projection through 2045. We are looking at population growth, affordable water needs, looking at infrastructure needs, and then not just looking at only our infrastructure, but all our partners and how we are working together. It does call out reclaimed water and some alternative areas. It is a comprehensive document, and it provides a great overview of our region that we supply.

Jeff Devine (WCIND): We have recently ordered imagery survey equipment. Given the lag time and increasing cost of surveys, we are going to start doing some in-house. We have a list of things that we are going to do as soon as we get signed off and trained. After that, we will probably open it up to the counties that if they have things that they need surveyed. It will be invaluable to be able to do those small jobs and get that information a lot quicker than having to go through the full proposal process. We are working with Sarasota County on Philippi Creek on a stormwater/navigation dredge project. Henley Canal in Lee County is also in process. We did our dredge project there to investigate the geotextile map at the ramp that was damaged either from the storm or from the dredge contractor, or the DOT contractors, putting down their barge on the ramp. We are cooperating or working in conjunction with the Corps on several projects such as the Venice and Sarasota jetties. We are approaching getting shovels in the ground for our new headquarter building off Venice Island. We are just waiting for a couple of permits to get signed. We already have the contractor hired. The City of Venice started their anchorage limitation area which has to do with their vessels and trying to get people to not store their boats on the water. Cape Coral is getting to the point of putting one in place and I believe Bradenton is also doing it, mainly for vessels that could have some potential impacts on seagrass regrowth in areas where boats tend to congregate. We applied for two multi-million-dollar grants to deal with the lingering vessels from the Hurricane Ian, for which there is approximately 140 left. We did not get either one of them. I know FDEP and/or FWC also applied. We are still working on trying to find ways to get those boats. I would also say that if you are working with FDEM or other contractors, and you have the opportunity to cooperate, do so. Charlotte County had an issue with a contractor operating out of the Port Charlotte Beach complex and they had FDEM removed. As a result, Charlotte County is now at the bottom of the removal process because that contractor demobilized, mobilized in another county and is not coming back until he is done with every other boat. When you have an opportunity to work with an agency and you are receiving the benefits from that relationship, help the process. We have removed other vessels and Lee County has a facility that they let us use. Sarasota County has been amenable. We pull boats from Charlotte County out in Sarasota County because Charlotte does not want us to use their boat ramps. We have purchased two other properties, one's three and half acres and one is ten acres. Sarasota County was given first right of refusal for both. They have opted to purchase the smaller three-and-a-half-acre property. The 10-acre property will probably be offered to the adjacent neighbors or go out to brokerage. It is a part of the Venetian Trail so there will probably be some talk at some point with the City of Venice and Sarasota County to split it and they take part of it because otherwise it makes their trail dead end. If anybody has any pull with the county parks, trails or nonprofits that would want a small preserve area on Venice Island

it is available. It is the largest undeveloped area on Venice Island outside of the airport compound. We have other properties in Venice. The goal of the district at this point is to sell that property and acquire land strategically in Lee, Charlotte and Manatee counties. It is to give us places to pull boats out, launch equipment and stage out of. It is for sale for approximately \$6.7 million. It is on the intercostal, but the elevation is really high, not for a marina. We tried to get the county to buy it, but the price was probably too steep.

Steve Rabney (USACE): I just wanted to let you know that Mark Sramek retired so he is no longer doing any conservation recommendations for EFH. We are still sending consultations, but we are not getting any replies. On the project side, we have many projects having to do with Matlacha. That area was washed out during the hurricane by the bridge. A lot of the homeowners were concerned about rebuilding, and they needed to reclaim their land. FEMA told them that they could not get support do those piles-supported structures - half on land, half over the water. They now must build entirely on land. They had a town hall meeting with the Corps, Lee County and DEP. We talked to them about filling in up to where the property lines were. Apparently, they own submerged lands from the 1940s. It was granted to them, and they want to go ahead and seawall out to that property line and backfill that whole area around Matlacha. There are about 10 projects that came in area, and they are all being processed as individual letters of permission. It will be a lot of fill for that area. The response from NYPMHS is slow unless it is for emergency purposes. This will not go out on public notice. These will be letters of coordination to the adjoining property owners and then they will go out to certain agencies.

Sheila McNamara (CFRPC): Nicole gave most of our update talking about the work that we're doing on the vulnerability assessments, as well as working with CHNEP on the adaptation action plans. I did want to point out that we are finishing the Military Installation Resilience Review, and that will be done by July. That project area is the sentinel landscape project area that we've used. It is the Avon Park Air Force bombing range and then the communities that support the range. We were honored to host a national site visit and training event for all of the Sentinel landscape coordinators across the nation as well as support staff at the different sentinel landscapes. FEMA had joined as an official signatory on the national Sentinel Landscape program, but they did have to withdraw within six months. Unfortunately, we lost their support. Sentinel landscapes is an agreement between the Departments of Defense, Agriculture and Interior, and our local partners. The sentinel landscape training was with the intent of looking at resiliency issues that we have here in Florida that we are addressing through different best management practices and planning efforts and engagement efforts. They are supposed to take it back and try and adapt and apply it to their respective sentinel landscapes. We did just have new sentinel landscapes designated including Guam's, so we're up to 21 now across the nation. We had a lot of partners that really made that training event like a master's level training. It was very impressive. Dr. Brooks spoke as well as some of our other state partners. Those are steps to now look at states that have certain landscapes that do not have as much state support in programs like we do or Florida Wildlife Corridor or anything like that. The next step was to offer to have meetings and conversations about how Florida has done the Resilient Florida program and some of the other things and try and get other state leaders to see the value in initiating those types of things as well. We also are continuing with the CDBG Mitigation projects with the other regional planning councils and that involves rainfall modeling and impacts. We have several America the Beautiful Challenge grants, NIFWF grants and REPE grants. We have one that is just kicking off within the sentinel landscape for technical assistance, another one with payment for ecosystem services, and another one for prescribed fire. That is all including educational outreach on why those things are necessary to maintain conservation lands, agricultural working lands with best management practices applied, and threatened and endangered species. We are now working on hosting the fifth annual Landowner Assistance Expo, which will be in Sebring on June 10th. It is open to landowners regardless of size for within the CFRPC

service area. We have had people come from Manatee County and other places in previous years. The whole focus of this is to inform them and can speak with project managers from organizations that offer technical and financial assistance to landowners.

Felicia Burks (EPA): I just wanted to introduce myself. I am from the EPA region for Atlanta. I am joining after my coworker, Rachel Hart, took another job. Technically, I have been with you guys now for about a week. I am happy to be here to help you guys with any technical support work with the program, any grant support, technical assistance, etc. I am happy to be here to help, to be a part of this group. I am an environmental engineer, so this is not new to me to be part of the NEP. I sit on the management board for Tampa Bay and Sarasota Bay. I just look at it like it is just a natural succession, getting the other part of Polk, Manatee and Sarasota Counties to have a big comprehensive picture. I will be part of the group coming down to for the Program Evaluation visit that Jennifer spoke about and I hope to see some of you. Jennifer did a great job explaining the federal funding picture regarding moving forward.

Agenda Item #14 - Public Comment — Melynda Brown, Co-Chair

There was no public comment.

Agenda Item #15 - Future Meeting Date and Topics — Melynda Brown, Co-Chair

The upcoming Management Committee meeting for 2025 is September 5th. Members were asked to block the date on their calendars and plan to attend in person.

Agenda Item #16 - Adjourn — , Co-Chair

Meeting was adjourned at 1:11 PM.