



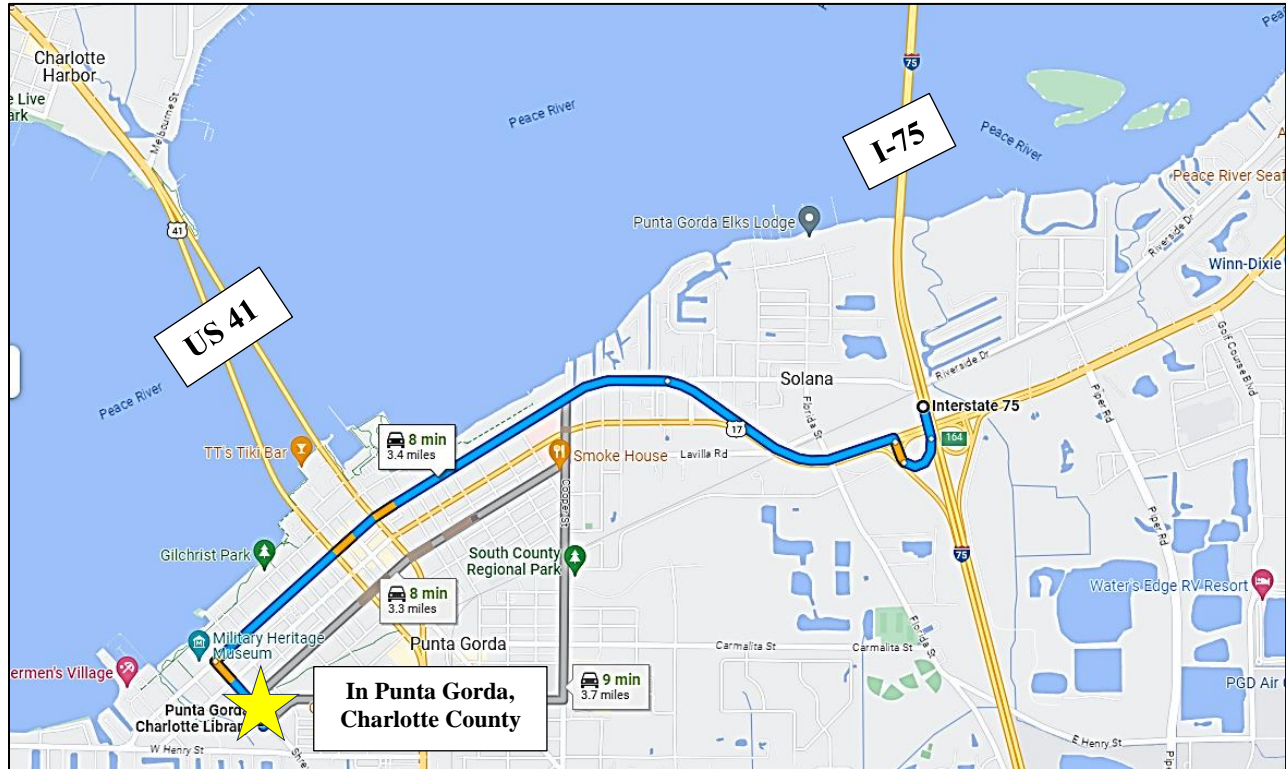
CHNEP Policy Committee Meeting
Thursday September 25th, 9:30 am – 1:00 pm
Punta Gorda Library meeting room
401 Shreve Street, Punta Gorda, FL 33950

AGENDA

- 1) Call to Order and Introductions — Elizabeth Sweigert, Co-Chair
- 2) Agenda Additions or Deletions — Elizabeth Sweigert, Co-Chair
- 3) Public Comment on Agenda Items — Elizabeth Sweigert, Co-Chair
- 4) Management Committee Report — Melynda Brown, Management Committee Co-Chair
- 5) CHNEP Update — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP
- 6) Consent Agenda — Elizabeth Sweigert, Co-Chair & Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP
 - a) Policy Committee May 22, 2025 Meeting Minutes
 - b) Amended FY26 Master Work Plan and Budget
 - c) 2026 CHNEP Legislative Priorities
 - d) 2025 CHNEP Executive Director Evaluation
- 7) Extreme Rainfall Events on the Rise — Ana Carolina Coelho Maran, Ph.D., South Florida Water Management District
- 8) Planning to Flood-proof Your Community from Future Flooding — Amy Wicks, Wicks Consulting Group
- 9) CHNEP Technical Projects Updates — Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP
- 10) Policy Committee Member Updates — Elizabeth Sweigert, Co-Chair
- 11) Public Comment — Elizabeth Sweigert, Co-Chair
- 12) Future Meeting's Topics, Location and Date — Elizabeth Sweigert, Co-Chair
Upcoming Meeting Dates: January 22, 2026, May 28, 2026, and September 17, 2026
- 13) Adjourn — Elizabeth Sweigert, Co-Chair

DIRECTIONS TO MEETING LOCATION

[Punta Gorda Charlotte Library, 401 Shreve St, Punta Gorda, FL 33950](#)



Coming from the North:

1. Take I-75 S to Exit 164, Take exit 164 toward Duncan Rd and Punta Gorda/Arcadia
2. Turn left onto US-17 S/ Duncan Road
3. Continue on to W Marion Ave
4. Turn left onto Shreve St
5. Turn right onto W Charlotte Ave, with Library on the right.

Coming from the South:

1. Take I-75 N to Exit 164, head onto ramp for US-17 towards Punta Gorda/Arcadia
2. Turn left onto US-17 S/ Duncan Road
3. Continue on to W Marion Ave
4. Turn left onto Shreve St
5. Turn right onto W Charlotte Ave, with Library on the right.

In-person committee member attendance is preferred for CHNEP Policy Committee meetings. If you are unable to attend in person, please contact jhecker@chnep.org for a virtual meeting link.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS

If any Policy Committee member would like to make an addition or deletion to the agenda, this item is the time to suggest such. Members will be asked to vote to approve the final meeting agenda.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

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

4. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

The Management Committee meeting was held on September 5th, 2025 and chaired by Committee Co-Chair Jamie Wolanin.

The Management Committee heard a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) report from TAC Co-Chair Mark Walton, who chaired the August 7th, 2025 TAC meeting. The first presentation was given by new TAC Co-Chair Arielle Taylor-Manges from Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) on the Charlotte Harbor Algae Working Group, which emphasizes the need for immediate, medium, and long-term approaches to effectively reduce and manage harmful algae. The next presentation was by Kevin Kalasz, of the US Fish & Wildlife Service, on the Southwest Florida Estuarine Restoration Team (SWERT) that fosters collaboration on habitat restoration efforts in the region. The third presentation was from Brooke Langston of Big Waters Land Trust on their new Strategic Conservation Plan centered around land and habitat restoration. The final presentation was from Jordan Varble and Gabby Santucci on the City of Sanibel's Surface Water Management Plan, which aims to mitigate the impacts of storm and sea-level rise through enhanced flood management infrastructure. Members said that the collective efforts discussed during the meeting underscore the interconnectedness of habitat restoration, community engagement, and infrastructure improvements in addressing ecological challenges. Videos of these presentations are available on the CHNEP.org TAC page to share or to view.

The TAC also held a Storm Season Follow-Up Discussion. Members discussed methods for improving water quality data collection and coordination within the CHNEP network, particularly in response to hurricanes. Key initiatives include developing a communication network to clarify partner roles and points of contacts, establishing standard protocols for post-storm data collection, and creating a GIS map for sharing access and resource availability information during and following emergencies. These efforts aim to enhance preparedness and foster collaboration among partners. The goal is to build a resilient framework for ongoing water quality management that can effectively respond to the challenges of increased storm frequency, ensuring seamless monitoring even after disasters.

The Management Committee then heard a Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) report from CAC Co-Chair Aaron Zimmermann, who chaired the August 20th, 2025 CAC meeting. This meeting was held as a workshop and focused on gathering insights from Committee members regarding their roles and communication strategies within the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP). This process ensures that the CAC remains focused on effective environmental stewardship and accurately represents the interests of local communities in CHNEP's initiatives. Members suggested a

guide to all CHNEP outreach, continued creation of tutorials on the Water Atlas, and delegating tasks to members to do between meetings to increase member involvement. Members expressed they valued CAC meetings as networking opportunities, highlighting the importance of collective action in tackling regional environmental challenges. The workshop also included a review of proposed updates to the CAC's bylaws and the CHNEP Communications & Outreach Strategy, aligning them with the objectives of the 2025 CCMP. The staff suggested revisions were largely approved, with minor modifications noted, and the finalized documents are set for a final vote at the upcoming December 2025 CAC Meeting.

Next, the Management Committee heard the CHNEP update and the Amended FY26 Work Plan and Budget, going over the staff amendments being proposed this cycle and adding two edit suggestions before voting unanimously to recommend that the proposed Amended FY26 Work Plan and Budget (with those edits incorporated) be approved by the Policy Committee.

The Management Committee then heard from Dr. Carolina Maran of the South Florida Water Management District on Extreme Rainfall Events on the Rise, a presentation coming before the Policy Committee as well. Following the presentation, questions were posed on if there were rainfall distribution changes across basins, changes in timing during the day (ex. Shifts from morning to afternoon) and changes in timing from daily to spurts of rain and dryness in the rainy season, and whether their analysis of the Ft. Lauderdale "rain bomb" event yielded any ideas as to what factors create such conditions favorable to extreme rainfall. Dr. Maran indicated that they are starting to see some differences between basins but that the data set from new rainfall patterns is not long enough to determine if these are statistically significant trends, that the data used is not taken frequently enough to determine shifts within the day, and that the USGS had looked deeply into the Ft Lauderdale event and determined it was an unusual meeting of offshore and onshore clouds and winds over the area that caused the precipitation to come down so heavily and rapidly – but that they do not have a sense yet of what factors would have to come together to create other extreme rainfall events.

Then, Amy Wicks of the Wicks Consulting Group presented on Planning to Flood-Proof Your Community from Future Flooding, which is also being presented to the Policy Committee. Members discussed the need for more integration of sustainable development practices in response to frequent storm damage and how to incentivize those in light of evolving housing market dynamics. Ms. Wicks highlighted some ideas for incentives including streamlined permitting processes, density credits, and water quality trading credits. She emphasized the need to do cross-planning with transportation, civil engineers, landscape architects, and environmental engineers, as well as looking for opportunities to add more storage wherever possible (such as in a sunken soccer field, roadway medians, etc.) She mentioned insurance is based on zip codes so Babcock is looking to have its own zip code so it can be insured based on rates appropriate to its higher flood protection design, which would benefit those looking to buy or existing homeowners there. Finally, the technical project and member updates were covered and the meeting was adjourned.

5. CHNEP UPDATE

The following represents program activity highlights since the beginning of the last Policy Conference cycle to the beginning of this one, with the exception of technical project updates that are covered in a separate item later in this agenda.

Program Administration

- Planned and executed both the Technical Advisory Committee Meeting (4/10), Citizens Advisory Committee meeting (4/23), Policy Committee meeting (5/9), and Policy Committee

meeting (5/22) including lining up presenters, drafting agenda packet, updating Committee webpage, creating PowerPoints, drafting minutes, etc.

- Sent on-boarding materials to three new Policy Committee members, Commissioner Barbara Langdon, representing the City of North Port, Councilmember Lloyd Weed, representing the City of Venice, Councilmember Jeff Hunt, representing the Village of Estero.
- Completed available Programmatic Appropriations Forms for FY26 federal finding and remitted them for consideration.
- Held meeting with new EPA Region 4 representative to CHNEP Felicia Burks.
- Submitted the CHNEP 2025 Program Evaluation Report and supporting documents can be found here: <https://www.chnep.org/2025-program-evaluation>
- Conducted the 2020-2024 CHNEP Program Evaluation May site visits, coordinating with local partners as well as EPA evaluation team members. Sent follow up emails and photos to all attendees.
- Final editing and design of CCMP was completed. It can be viewed online at: https://www.chnep.org/files/ugd/252fd8_a33bc404c3404c1da9b65d00a06ce771.pdf
- Secured all 2026 Policy Conference meeting dates and locations with venues.
- Outlook meeting invitations/meeting links for September Policy and Policy Committee meetings were sent out. Policy and Policy Draft Minutes from last cycle were completed.
- Drafted and sent out CHNEP ED Evaluation Form for Policy Committee member input.

Finance and Grants Policy

- Updated the [funding opportunities fact sheet](#) and sent out historic funding opportunities notification to all CHNEP Committees about a number of special large state and federal funding opportunities of interest.
- Did Excel budgeting tables and drafted Word [Draft FY26 Master Work Plan and Budget](#), [Draft FY26 EPA 320 Work Plan and Budget](#), and [Draft FY26 EPA IIJA Work Plan and Budget](#). These were input into host Grant Administrative Approvals (GAA) software for host review and approval to apply.
- Received and processed final CHNEP member FY25 local govt. contribution from the City of Fort Myers, as well as a few private donations from individual citizens.
- Submitted draft FY26 Work Plans to Charlotte County grant approvals system and submitted Legal Service Request for County staff review.
- Processed CHNEP Water Atlas Change Orders #1 and #2 were processed for additional task and work to supplement existing tasks. CHNEP staff also worked with the County to process Change Order #3 to remove \$900 from another Task, reducing work on that and moving to the coming fiscal year. Additionally, processed CHNEP Water Atlas Change Order #3 invoice to remove \$910 from a task, reducing work on that and moving to the coming fiscal year.
- Submitted FY25 FDEP Grant SD016 quarter 2 report and attachments.
- Submitted EPA CE-02D41623-3 Section 320 Midyear Progress Report and attachments.
- Submitted EPA 4T-02D4123-2 IIJA Midyear Progress Report and attachments.
- Submitted Upper CCHMN Quarter 2 report and field data deliverables to Southwest Florida Water Policy District.
- Compiled all approved habitat projects submitted to NEPORT in FY24 to produce the FY24 Annual GPRA NEPORT Report and provided to FDEP in grant reports.
- FY26 EPA 320 and IIJA Grant Applications processed for County Approvals and then entered into Grants.gov.

- The Sarasota County/CHNEP ILA received Charlotte County approval and was fully executed. Notification of the approval and hard copies of the agreement were transmitted to Sarasota County.
- Submitted Q3/Final report for programmatic support FDEP grant funding. These were subsequently approved. Working with County grants staff to gather documentation needed to submit final invoice.
- Submitted purchase requisitions and documentation for FY26 annual projects including Lower Charlotte Harbor Water Quality Monitoring and CHNEP Water Atlas Maintenance. Purchase orders were issued to vendors (Lee County and University of South Florida).
- Submitted purchase requisition for printing and mailing of the 2026 CHNEP Nature Calendar.
- Reviewed and processed Conservation Grant invoice for Lee County Pond Watch Project.
- Received draft FY26 Agreement for SWFWMD annual programmatic support funds. Submitted legal service request for County attorney review. Additionally, in response to proposed SWFWMD funding reduction, met with three Governing Board members individually as well as SWFWMD Executive Director, legal counsel and staff. Attended June 24th SWFWMD Governing Board meeting to request maintaining current funding level along with Big Waters Land Trust and Suncoast Waterkeeper (with Audubon, Conservancy of Southwest Florida and Heal Our Harbor sending letters of support); however, unfortunately the budget was approved with the funding reduction.
- Received and processed invoices for the following projects: Comprehensive Conservation and Policy Plan Update, Water Atlas quarter 2, Water Atlas FY25 Improvement Tasks, Upper CCHMN quarter 2, Lower CCHMN, Charlotte County Vulnerability Assessment project, Highlands County Adaptation Action Area project.
- Provided Charlotte County grants and finance staff with summary of changes to process for CHNEP grant drawdowns from federal ASAP account as shared by CHNEP's EPA liaison.
- Processed private donations received via check or PayPal.

CHNEP staff participated in the following meetings:

- 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)
- Science & Environmental Council (SEC) Meetings (multiple)
- CHNEP Water Atlas Monthly Meetings (multiple)
- Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative Meetings (multiple)
- GOAA and Gulf Estuaries Collaboration Meetings (multiple)
- One Water Commission Monthly Meetings (multiple)
- Southwest Florida Regional Ambient Monitoring Program (RAMP) Meetings (multiple)
- 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 Policy 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)

CHNEP Staff Presentations

- Presented on the *CHNEP Water Atlas 2.0* to the CHNEP Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting.
- Presented *The Health of Our Waters & Water Quality Trends* at the Barrier Island Parks Society Marine Pollution Forum.
- Presented on the *Lower Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Hydrological Restoration* during the EPA program Evaluations Site Visit.
- Presented on the *Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network* during the EPA program Evaluations Site Visit.
- Submitted an abstract for [Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation \(CERF\) Biennial \(National\) Conference](#) *Leveraging conventional partnerships with novel tools for holistic water quality and ecosystem Policy*, which has been accepted. Co-authored additional abstracts submitted: *Leveraging Long-term Water Quality Data and Partnerships for Assessment of the Greater Charlotte Harbor System* and *More than just monitoring: a co-production story to conserve sport fish habitat in Southwest Florida*.
- Presented *A Regional Approach to Restore and Manage Water* to talk about alignment between the work of the NEPs on natural resources and flood Policy in the built environment at the [Annual Florida Floodplain Managers Association 2025 Annual Conference](#).
- 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. This also included the creation of videos that can now be accessed on the CHNEP YouTube channel under the [CHNEP Water Atlas Tutorials Playlist](#).

Publications and Outreach Initiatives

- Sent out monthly Constant Contact emails to subscribers about relevant upcoming public engagement events in the CHNEP area.
- Shared new 2025 Comprehensive Conservation & Policy Plan on [website](#) and [social media](#).
- Shared posts for National Wildlife Week on CHNEP Facebook and Instagram showcasing Southwest Florida wildlife through local photography.
- 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. Also attended the [Ding Darling Conservation Carnival](#) in Ft. Myers, where staff had conversations about how to protect wildlife, shared resources, and did wildlife trivia with over 200 guests.
- Created and shared [infographics](#) breaking down water quality trends in Southwest Florida as highlighted in a recent [scientific article](#) CHNEP co-authored.
- Compiled relevant resources, project information, and maps and created Site Visit Booklets for the 2019-2024 Program Evaluation.
- Worked on narrative and shot list for upcoming CHNEP 30th Anniversary video. Created maps and other graphic content to appear in the video.
- Created a NEP informational handout highlighting national assets that the National Estuary Program helps to protect, for federal policymaker education.
- Launched the [2026 Annual Nature Calendar Photo Contest](#) on a number of platforms and continued advertising through June. This also involved receiving and organizing photos as well

as responding to inquiries. Also, finalized scope of work/request for bid documents for 2026 CHNEP Nature Calendar.

- Social media posts on EPA site visits as part of the Program Evaluation under the themes of the three EPA Pillars: [Strong Communities](#), [Clean Waters](#), and [Healthy Ecosystems](#).
- Conducted a media interview, with CHNEP's comments featured in [Sarasota Bay's sea grass population soars; setting benchmark for other marine reclamation efforts | WGCU PBS & NPR for Southwest Florida](#)
- Sent invitations to apply and information about CHNEP to prospective Citizens Advisory Committee members to fill open seats.
- Celebrated [World Oceans Day](#), sharing information about how CHNEP works to protect Southwest Florida's waters and wildlife.
- Celebrated [Pollinator Week](#), sharing resources from partners and sharing about work the CHNEP does.
- Continued improvements to the CHNEP website, such as organizing [CHNEP Summit and Workshop](#) pages and archives in a more intuitive and easily navigated format.
- Coordinated with Conservation Grant recipients to wrap up currently open grant projects. Received and reviewed final deliverables for Lee County Pond Watch project.
- Recorded 4 tutorial videos on how to use the CHNEP Water Atlas. The videos focused on topics including the home page and how to find a waterbody, waterbody pages, maps and data, and how to download data. Uploaded the videos to YouTube and created a public [Water Atlas Tutorials Playlist](#) for trainings and public reference.
- Held planning meetings with Florida Resilience Conference to coordinate on event location logistics and A/V for the CHNEP Southwest Florida Resiliency Summit which will precede the conference.

Digital Outreach Insights

- 5,809 subscribers for CHNEP educational mailings
- 2,079 unique visitors and 2,869 page views of CHNEP website since last cycle
- 16 new Instagram followers for a total of 634
- 32 new Facebook followers for a total of 2,050
- YouTube: 16,103 Views (+2.7k), 104 Subscribers (+16), 342 Videos (+17)

Media/Press

- [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](#)
- [Sarasota Bay's sea grass population soars; setting benchmark for other marine reclamation efforts | WGCU PBS & NPR for Southwest Florida](#)

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

Attachment:

[Final EPA Program Evaluation Letter](#)

6. CONSENT AGENDA

a) POLICY COMMITTEE MAY 22, 2025 MEETING MINUTES

This Consent Agenda item is to offer any potential revisions to and approve final meeting minutes from the previous May 22, 2025 Policy Committee meeting.

b) AMENDED FY26 MASTER WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

This Consent Agenda item is with regards to amendments to the CHNEP FY26 Master EPA320 Work Plan and Budget. For fiscal year 2026, CHNEP prepared a master EPA320 Work Plan approved by the Policy Committee on May 23, 2024, which was submitted to US EPA on June 1, 2025 to accompany the FY26 EPA grant applications for federal funding. As is customary, amendments are made throughout the year to reflect changes in funding amounts or timing, new identified projects coming online in need of approval, and other factors. Amended Work Plans and Budgets are posted on the CHNEP website once approved but are not formally submitted to US EPA, as the grant application Work Plan has already been submitted and is in the review/award process. Below is a list of the amendments to both being proposed this cycle:

Overview of Changes from Original FY26 Approved Work Plan and Budget

- Amendments related to updates such as adding date to cover, changing 2026 Publications to CHNEP Publications in Table of Contents and associated task narrative, updating Committee member names on Committee list page, adding details of an additional travel event in Table 5, completed projects being removed from Table 7 with totals being adjusted accordingly, as well as Water Atlas Improvements being moved from EPA IJJA to EPA 320 given importance of project and continued EPA IJJA FY26 funding uncertainties.
- Amendments related to SWFWMD changing programmatic funding support from \$130,000/yr to \$56,000/yr as well as removal of the SWFWMD Upper CCHMN project, which SWFWMD had been funding CHNEP to do but will now be done by SWFWMD in house. These amendments were in Tables 1, 3, and 4 as well as the CCHMN narrative section.
- Amendments related to increase of CHNEP events due to both the Resiliency Summit and the triennial Watershed Summit being in FY26. This increased CHNEP events budget by \$10,000 in Table 6, which will be paid for by local funds reducing amount to reserves by \$10,000 in FY26 (still \$52,000 to reserves at end of FY26).

More detailed description of each amendment

INTRODUCTORY SECTION

- On Cover, added “Amended September 25, 2025”
- In Table of Contents, changed “2026” to “CHNEP” before Publications
- Under Policy Committee list, updated Policy Member names to Mr. Craig Hesterlee for US EPA, Hon. Tim Stanley for Glades County, Hon. Petrina McCutchen for City of Fort Meade
- Under Technical Advisory Committee, changed one Co-Chair name to Ms. Arielle Taylor-Manges

TABLE 1

Revenue

- On Partner Revenue Contribution line, reduced from \$205,000 to \$131,000 due to SWFWMD programmatic funding contribution reduced from \$130,000 to \$56,000. This reduced the total from \$2,789,741 to \$2,715,741.

Expenditures

- On Research and Restoration (FY26 SWFWMD, Local, and EPA 320 Funding), reduced from \$947,821 to \$873,821 due to reduction of SWFWMD programmatic funding and removal of Upper CCHMN project. This reduced the FY26 Expenditures from \$2,727,741 to \$2,653,741 and the Total Expenditures from \$2,789,741 to \$2,715,741.

TABLE 3

- Removed CCHMN project and the associated budgeted \$74,000 for it that had been paid from CHNEP's SWFWMD programmatic funding.

TABLE 4

- Adjusted SWFWMD Funding from \$130,000 to \$56,000. This reduced Total State Revenue from \$205,000 to \$131,000, the Non-Federal FY26 Revenue from \$348,000 to \$274,000, and the Total FY26 Revenue being reduced \$2,107,800 to \$2,033,800.

TABLE 5

- Added October travel to RAE Living Shorelines Workshop, reducing local travel registration and estimated costs by same amount for the same \$25,000 annual travel total.

TABLE 6

- Increased CHNEP Events from \$4,500 to \$14,500 to account for having two large events planned for 2026, the Triennial Watershed Summit in Spring 2026 and the 2026 Southwest Florida Resiliency Summit in early Fall 2026. This increased the total from \$94,500 to \$104,500 accordingly. [Note: this is local funding that had gone to reserves, so decreases local going to reserves by \$10,000 such that it is now \$52,000 budgeted to be added to reserves at end of FY26 (similar to FY26's budgeted added reserve). With \$791,142 of existing reserves (based on current balance and anticipated FY25 funds added), this would bring reserve total at end of FY26 to \$843,142 – approximately a year of staff salaries and base operating expenses, the baseline reserve target standard.]

TABLE 7

- Removed projects complete/to be completed by end of FY25 including FY23, FY24 and FY25 Water Atlas projects, adjusting the totals accordingly. Also removed previous associated asterixis and footnote regarding these being anticipated to be closed out and removed then.
- Removed Upper CCHMN – Water Quality Monitoring with budgeted amount of \$74,000, so the SWFWMD, Local & EPA 320 FY26 Total reduced from \$947,821 to \$873,821.
- Moved CHNEP Water Atlas Improvements from 2026 EPA IJA to 2026 EPA 320, thus reducing EPA 320 FY26 Clean Water Research & Restoration TBD from \$753,000 to \$703,000 and increasing the EPA IJA FY26 Clean Water Research & Restoration TBD from \$480,800 to \$530,800.
- The FY26 Total Research & Restoration Project Budget was revised from \$1,857,621 to \$1,783,621.

NARRATIVE

- Task 2.3 Budget adjusted from \$4,500 to \$14,500
- Task 2.2 Title adjusted from 2026 Publications to CHNEP Publications
- Task 3.1 Budget adjusted from \$87,000 to \$13,000, with SWFWMD FY26 Funding of \$74,000 removed from FY26 Budget and Budget Details including In-Kind Contributions (added SWFWMD as an In-kind Contributor to CCHMN Water Quality Monitoring Project).

Management Committee reviewed the Draft Amended FY26 Master Work Plan and Budget in detail at its recent September 5th meeting, made two suggestions with regards to small edits to Table 6 and Table 7, and then voted unanimously to recommend to the Policy Committee that it approve the Draft Amended FY26 Master Work Plan and Budget with those edits. Those edits are reflected in the final Draft before Policy, which is a Policy Committee Consent Agenda item given the unanimous recommendation from the Management Committee.

c) 2026 CHNEP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

This Consent Agenda item is to approve the 2026 state and federal legislative priorities for CHNEP, that are consistent with prior CHNEP state and legislative priorities. These legislative priorities support the funding and implementation of the actions and activities outlined in the CHNEP [Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan](#).

Proposed State Legislative Priorities

- Continue and expand annual funding for the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership, including recurrent dedicated state funding.
- Create or strengthen nutrient and pollution reduction policies to reduce loads from wastewater, septic, agricultural runoff, reclaimed water, stormwater, fertilizer and internal “legacy loads”.
- Expand funding for innovative nutrient reduction projects, especially those that promote natural system solutions.
- Establish a statewide, long-term funding program through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection with sufficient funds for competitive, local cost-share projects for estuary restoration including:
 - Upgrading wastewater treatment to advanced wastewater treatment and increasing capacity
 - Septic to sewer conversion
 - Groundwater contamination remediation projects
 - Habitat protection and restoration (ex. seagrass, oysters, living shorelines)
 - Stormwater retrofitting projects
 - Legacy load / muck removal remediation projects
 - Resiliency projects and planning
- Support increased funding of Florida Forever and Florida Rural and Family Lands programs.
- Support of local governments’ continued ability to enact and maintain more stringent environmental protection ordinances.
- Support harmful algal bloom monitoring and emergency event response, prioritizing nutrient reduction efforts.

Proposed Federal Legislative Priorities

- Reauthorization of the National Estuary Program
 - Reauthorization of the Clean Water Act – Section 320 in 2026 (with funding levels of at least \$50 million for each fiscal year 2027-2031 for the National Estuary Program).
- Continued National Estuary Program and Competitive Grant funding under current authorization
 - Appropriate \$1 million annually for each of the 28 entities in the National Estuary Program, consistent with current authorized funding levels.
 - Appropriate at least \$2.5 million annually for the EPA Coastal Watershed Grants programs.
- Estuary Caucus Membership Expansion

- Support expansion of the bi-partisan Congressional Estuary Caucus to support water quality protection and vibrant coastal economies.
- Everglades Restoration
 - Support full funding of Everglades Restoration and projects that restore the Western Everglades including the Caloosahatchee River & Estuary.
- Additional Federal Funding
 - Support supplemental funding for priority restoration, research, and monitoring needs of the four Florida National Estuary Program entities (including for harmful algal bloom research and monitoring, water infrastructure improvements and new technology R&D, transformational infrastructure improvement projects that benefit water quality, habitat restoration and coastal resilience, etc.)
 - USFWS Everglades to Gulf Coast Conservation Area implementation.

The 2026 state and legislative priorities for CHNEP mirror those approved by the CHNEP Policy Committee last year. As a result, this item has been added to the Consent Agenda.

d) 2025 CHNEP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EVALUATION

The US EPA and the CHNEP's host organization's Human Resource Division (Charlotte County) require an annual evaluation to be conducted of the CHNEP Executive Director (ED). An evaluation form was sent out to all Policy Committee members in June, with responses requested by August 1, 2025. Ten responses were received, which have been compiled into a Draft CHNEP Executive Director Evaluation. The synopsis of scores and summary of comments received are below (the first 7 being Charlotte County's performance measures and the following final 3 being additional CHNEP performance measures):

| | COMMUN. | LEADERSHIP | INTEGRITY | OVERSIGHT | GOVT. RELA. | BUDGET | ORG. REP. | JUDGE. | OPERATIONS | OUTREACH |
|----------------|---------|------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------|-----------|--------|------------|----------|
| BRASWELL | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| CODO-SALISBURY | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| DOHERTY | 5 | 4.8 | 5 | 4.8 | 4.7 | 5 | 4.9 | 4.8 | 4.8 | 4.7 |
| GOSS | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| HARP | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| HOWARD | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| KEENE | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| KIROUAC | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| MILLER | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| SMITH | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| AVERAGE | 4.8 | 4.9 | 4.9 | 4.7 | 4.9 | 4.9 | 4.7 | 4.9 | 4.9 | 4.8 |

Scores for each category were averaged to derive the combined evaluation scores reflected on the draft evaluation. Additional Individual Policy Committee Evaluation Comments were also submitted, which are included in each category's comment section in the draft evaluation. As this evaluation is a compilation of Policy Committee scores and comments, it is a Consent Agenda item. CHNEP Executive Director Jennifer Hecker will be presenting this item.

Action:

Vote to approve the Consent Agenda including the Policy Committee May 22, 2025 Meeting Minutes, Amended FY26 Master Work Plan and Budget, 2026 CHNEP Legislative Priorities, and 2025 CHNEP Executive Director Evaluation

Attachments:

[Draft Policy Committee May 22, 2025 Meeting Minutes](#)
[Draft Amended FY26 Master Work Plan and Budget](#)
[Draft 2026 CHNEP Legislative Priorities](#)
[Draft 2025 CHNEP Executive Director Evaluation](#)

7. EXTREME RAINFALL EVENTS ON THE RISE

South Florida is experiencing an increase in localized extreme rainfall events. Recent headline-making floods—such as the April 2023 Fort Lauderdale event, which dumped over 25 inches in about 12 hours, and the June 2024 Invest 90L event—have overwhelmed flood control infrastructure and set new records. Rainfall events above 20-inches and equivalent to 500- to 1,000-year events, are reoccurring. Underpinning these trends is a warming atmosphere carrying more moisture—making rare, extreme rainfall events more frequent. For communities, the impacts are real. Months' worth of rain can fall in mere hours, inundating homes, airports, roads—and resulting in significant economic impacts.

In response, the South Florida Water Management District is doing cutting-edge modeling and ramping up both operational and structural flood control mechanisms. During heavy rain events like Invest 90L, they activate pumps and flood gates, lower canal levels, and coordinate with local agencies to enhance drainage and clear debris.

On the planning side, the District is working proactively through several initiatives:

- Resiliency planning, including tracking rainfall trends, sea-level rise, and the implications for flood control infrastructure and operations.
- Collaborations with the Florida Flood Hub, UM, FSU, FIU and USGS to model future extreme rainfall scenarios, informing infrastructure design and operations.
- Joint Flood Resiliency Studies with Broward County, Miami-Dade County and USACE to modernize the aging Central & Southern Florida (C&SF) flood-control system.
- Securing State and Federal Grants to upgrade pump stations, retrofit spillways, and enhance basin drainage—particularly in areas where systems rely increasingly on pumps over gravity due to rising sea levels.

Ana Carolina Coelho Maran, Ph.D., Division Director of Flood Control and Water Supply Planning and Chief of District Resiliency at the South Florida Water Management District, will be presenting virtually and answering member questions.

8. PLANNING TO FLOOD-PROOF YOUR COMMUNITY FROM FUTURE FLOODING

Babcock Ranch has become a model for flood-proof urban planning by approaching stormwater design differently. Rather than fighting water, the engineers of this master-planned community in southwestern Florida near Fort Myers and Cape Coral embraced it through innovative engineering and urban design so that it could withstand even the most intense storms. Some of the principles utilized included:

- Flood-friendly road design: The roads are intentionally built to flood during hurricanes, allowing water to flow naturally across surfaces without damaging houses or other infrastructure.
- Smart stormwater Policy: Babcock Ranch features an advanced network of remote-controlled dams and smart ponds that, in large stormwater events, are tied into large natural wetlands on-site. These systems can proactively adjust lake water levels—lowering them before storms hit—to reduce flood risk.
- Integration with nature: The town's layout preserves natural drainage patterns and green spaces. By working with the landscape rather than reshaping it, the infrastructure enhances resilience while minimizing environmental disruption.

As a result, Babcock Ranch has a proven track record of not having houses flooded despite having endured several major hurricanes—including Irma, Ian, Milton, and Helene.

Amy Wicks, a Water Resources Engineer involved in the design and engineering of the Babcock Ranch community, is coming in person to share her insights on lessons learned, challenges, successes and recommendations to other communities who wish to take additional measures to reduce or prevent flooding. She will also be available to answer member questions. [Note: this agenda item will begin with a showing of the 7-minute [Hurricane Proof Florida Town Video](#)].

9. CHNEP TECHNICAL PROJECTS UPDATES

In addition to the items featured earlier on the agenda, updates will be provided on other research and/or restoration projects (or phases of projects) recently completed or currently underway.

Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP Director of Research & Restoration, will be presenting this agenda item.

Attachment: [CHNEP Technical Project Fact Sheets](#)

10. POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

Each member will have time to update the Committee on projects and issues pertaining to the protection and restoration of natural resources in the CHNEP area. This time also serves as an opportunity for members to make general announcements or discuss other topics of interest to Committee members.

Policy Committee Co-Chair Elizabeth Sweigert will be leading and facilitating this discussion.

11. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

12. FUTURE MEETING'S TOPICS, LOCATION AND DATE

Please mark your calendar for upcoming Policy Committee Meetings on January 22, 2026, May 28, 2026, and September 17, 2026. To view upcoming meeting information, with videos from prior meeting and agenda packets posted one week in advance of next meeting date, go to <https://www.chnep.org/policy-committee>.

13. ADJOURN