



Draft Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

Aaron Zimmerman	Sarasota County Stormwater
Bridget Washburn	Growing Climate Solutions
Debi Osborne	Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast
Harry Phillips	Cape Coral Environmental Resources Division
Kayton Nedza	Hardee County Outdoor Classroom
Nicole Johnson	Conservancy of Southwest Florida
Phyl Wojcik	Heal Our Harbor
Tom Palmer	Ancient Island Sierra Club

Others Present:

Jennifer Hecker	CHNEP
Nicole Iadevaia	CHNEP
Sarina Weiss	CHNEP
Megan Sosbe	CHNEP
Keara Abel	CHNEP
Tonya Bramlage	Lemon Bay Conservancy
Falon Tabares	The Healthy Earth Organization
Church Roberts	Hendry County
Federico Vazquez	Suncoast Reef Rovers
Jim Beever	Retired Naturalist
Jane Collingwood	Lemon Bay Conservancy/Lemon Bay Watch
Tome Shaaltiel	Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center – Cedar Point
Tyler Sherknus	President of Suncoast Reef Rovers
Ashley Cook	Charlotte Harbor Center – Alligator Creek
Jennifer Rhemann	Community Member/Polar Research

Agenda Item #1 – Call to Order and Introductions — Debi Osborne, Co-Chair

Co-Chair Debi Osborne called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. Introductions were then made.

Agenda Item #2 – Agenda Additions or Deletions — Debi Osborne, Co-Chair

No additions or deletions were made to the agenda.

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

Agenda Item #3 – Public Comments on Agenda Items

No public comments on agenda items were made.

Agenda Item #4 – Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) April 26th, 2023 Meeting Minutes — Debi Osborne, Co-Chair

No changes were made to the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) April 26, 2023 meeting minutes.



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

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

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

CHNEP planned and executed TAC and CAC meetings in April as well as Management and Policy Committee meetings in May which included a *One Water: Theory v. Practice* presentation with interactive Committee discussion (which may be viewed on the Committee's pages via CHNEP's website). The amended FY23 EPA 320 Work Plan and Budget and amended FY22-24 BIL Work Plan and Budget were approved at the May 2023 Policy meeting. FY24 EPA 320 Work Plan and Budget, FY24 EPA Novated 320 Work Plan and Budget, and FY24-26 EPA BIL Work Plan and Budget – all approved by the Policy Committee in May – were submitted to the EPA with grant applications on June 1st.

CHNEP developed an "Equity Strategy" because the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) requires match for those funds unless there is an approved equity strategy that will ensure that 40% of the funding goes to disadvantaged communities. Thus, the CHNEP team created an Equity Strategy that was presented to and approved by the Policy Committee during the last cycle. The strategy along with maps highlighting those disadvantaged communities within CHNEP's area is available for viewing on the CHNEP website at <https://www.chnep.org/publications>.

All four future Committee meeting dates are scheduled and posted on the CHNEP website. All those interested are encouraged to come as these meetings are open to the public. Budget reminder letters were sent out to all those that made contributions to CHNEP so that they may incorporate their contributions into the budgeting cycle for the next year.

As for finance and grant management, CHNEP completed the FY20-22 EPA 320 "Grant Closeout" reports and documentation and submitted those to the EPA. This was part of the process to novate (transfer) the remaining City funds to Charlotte County which hopefully would then be rolled over into a new grant. Mid-year and 3rd quarter grant reports were submitted. Notices were sent to all last-round conservation grant awardees. The FY24 & FY25 budget was revised in coordination with the county fiscal team. All FY23 final quarter invoices for ongoing deliverable-based technical and outreach projects are being worked on with various entities.

CHNEP presented at the Manasota Beach club on *The Impact of Hurricane Ian on Charlotte Harbor and Other Estuaries in Southwest Florida* as well as participated as a key stakeholder in the South Florida: Clean Coastal Waters Act Listening Sessions, hosted by NOAA in partnership with the EPA, for the Interagency Working Group on the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act (IWG-HABHRCA). CHNEP served as a panelist at the Resilient Lee Recovery Task Force Critical Infrastructure Workshop on Natural Resources as well as served as a panelist at the FWC Landscape Conservation Summit Panel Discussion: *Leaders in Conservation – A Vision for Florida's Future*. CHNEP staff also gave a poster presentation on *Habitat Restoration Needs Planning*, gave an oral presentation on the collaboration to restore Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods, and served as sponsor of the FWC Summit and helped the event host plan a field trip to view projects in Charlotte Harbor and along the Peace River which included contacting presenters and holding coordination meetings throughout May. Finally, CHNEP presented at the



Greater Everglades Ecosystem Restoration (GEER) Conference on *Moving Water to Restore Rivers, Wetlands, and Estuaries in the Caloosahatchee Basin*.

Regarding outreach, CHNEP planned and hosted the 2023 Watershed Summit with approximately 300 registrants who gathered to discuss research, restoration, and environmental issues in Central and Southwest Florida (<https://www.chnep.org/2023-watershed-summit>). CHNEP attended the “Wild About Nature” Festival hosted by the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast (CFGC) and distributed educational materials to over 100 guests. CHNEP also attended the Conservation Carnival hosted by the Ding Darling Wildlife Society and hosted ‘Estuary Trivia’ and gave out prizes. CHNEP partnered with CFGC to host a volunteer and outreach event at the Myakka Headwaters Preserve in Manatee County. CHNEP also partnered with Keep Charlotte Beautiful, FWC, FDEP Aquatic Preserves, Sea Grant, and Charlotte County to host a post-Hurricane Ian Waterway Cleanup of Charlotte Harbor. CHNEP conservation grants funded a series of volunteer clean-up events including several in Venice which were hosted by the Suncoast Reef Rovers and another in Lee County which was hosted by The Healthy Earth Organization.

CHNEP staff drafted scopes and now have purchase orders for contractors to produce both the FY24 CHNEP Small Publications and the 2024 calendar. CHNEP held the 2024 Nature Calendar photo contest and the photo selection meeting with the CAC, with over 200 pictures to choose from. The calendar, which is one of CHNEP’s largest outreach efforts with over 26,000 copies, has been drafted, is now in design, and will soon be printed to be sent out in late November or early December. CHNEP also created Lower Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative and South Lee County Watershed Initiative brochures.

CHNEP drafted and sent out a call for abstracts for the 2024 Southwest Florida Climate Summit which is to be held on February 28th and 29th. People and organizations are encouraged to reach out if they have information to share (information may be found at <https://www.chnep.org/2024-climate-summit>).

No comments were made from committee members.

Agenda Item #6 – New Conservation Grant Applications — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP

Ms. Hecker, CHNEP’s Executive Director, gave an overview of the Conservation Grant applications received this cycle and staff recommendations regarding them. The goal of the Conservation Grant program is to increase the proportion of the population that supports and participates in the actions that aim to protect and restore estuaries and watersheds. Titled the “Conservation Grants” program, these efforts are designed to stimulate grassroots community natural resource protection and restoration, as well as foster non-profit partnerships. Preference is given to grants that seek to reach underserved communities and new applicants/projects. The new award amount has been raised to \$4999.

The first conservation grant application is for the project titled: Estero Community Park Shoreline Improvement. The amount requested was \$3,875 (of a total \$6,570 that is needed). This project will involve tree and littoral species planting on the shoreline of two ponds in Estero Community Park. Participants will be educated on the goals of CHNEP and how these plantings will benefit the environment. The CHNEP recommendation was to approve the grant request as long as the following deliverables are provided: 1) CHNEP must be notified of the planting date ahead of time; 2) Funding will be limited to the costs of plants and signs but not refreshments; 3) Metrics of the report will be documentation of 200 trees/plants planted at the park, photographs that are taken, and a list of all volunteers. One committee member encouraged the placing of signage or even possibly a kiosk which will serve in educating people as to why these plantings will benefit the community. The committee member explained that this will “further the message” that runoff can be mitigated by these planting initiatives.



The second conservation grant application is for the project titled: Lemon Bay Aquatic Conservation Project. The amount requested was \$2,993 (of a total \$4,625 that is needed). This project will monitor the water quality of Lemon Bay at Cedar Point Environmental Park by testing the water and monitoring the bird and marine organisms' biodiversity. In collaboration with the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center and Biotica Eco-Tours, the Lemon Bay High School Marine Club students will participate in three field trips to Cedar Point Environmental Park to conduct conservation surveys. The CHNEP recommendation is to approve the grant request if the following deliverables are provided: 1) A report which will include the results from student monitoring efforts of Rookery Island, marine organism survey, trash collected, and water quality testing and photos of the monitoring trips will be generated; 2) The grant will exclude staff time/program fees; 3) Proof of inventory will be required for any equipment purchased (e.g., kayak). A committee member shared that they are excited at the prospect of students playing an active role in this "fun" initiative and the benefits of this experience coupled with education will be long-term.

The third conservation grant application is for the project titled: Supplemental Wildlife Habitat in Urban Areas of Polk County. The amount requested was \$3,909.80 (of a total \$5,691.72 that is needed). This project focuses on engaging the general residents of Polk County in workshops to promote and implement the installation of supplemental wildlife habitats in urban and residential areas. While recognizing that restoring natural habitats in developed regions is often unrealistic, this initiative targets species that can thrive or survive in human-populated regions, such as wood ducks, eastern screech owls, and most of Florida's bat species. The recommendation is to approve the grant request if the following deliverables are provided: 1) The report must include both bat-house and nest-box workshop reports, maps, monitoring results with success rates, photos from the events and of the installed boxes/nests. Awardees also recognize that CHNEP will hold the right to publish any photos taken. A committee member commented that he has seen bats in Polk County but that they are mostly solitary creatures; one does not tend to see colonial species in urban areas. He expressed that there should be a stronger emphasis placed on the nest-boxes for screech owls because their environment has been greatly impacted. Ms. Hecker inquired if he would like her to make that recommendation (increasing nest-box placements) when speaking with the awardee and the committee member encouraged that. Another committee member encouraged using this opportunity to educate young people particularly regarding feasible placement of bat-houses and nest-boxes. Still another committee member offered that bat-house effectiveness depends on the species.

Committee members requested that they receive information sheets from each grant so that they can read the specifics of what each grant entails and discover if any of these projects may be beneficial in their respective communities. Applications and instructions can be found at: <https://www.chnep.org/conservation-grants>. Ms. Hecker thanked committee members for their valuable input.

Agenda Item #7 – Update on Conservation Grant Projects — Falon Tabares, The Healthy Earth Organization and Federico Vasquez, Suncoast Reef Rovers

Ms. Falon Tabares with The Healthy Earth Organization provided the CAC with an update on the Underwater Marine Debris Reporting and Removal Project. She introduced herself and her organization and stated that one of its goals is to clean up the reef by removing as much debris as possible, thereby helping maintain the reef's ecosystem by keeping it healthy and thriving. With more than 1,000 volunteers, 4,000 pounds of debris have been collected so far. This project involves 3 dives in total – one in July, one in August, and one more in September. The organization partnered with FGCU Water School's diving team to facilitate these dives. Taking off from Fort Myers, the divers visited the USS Mohawk, a tugboat, Charlie's Reef, and three school bus reefs. They recovered more than 110 lbs of debris. They have adjusted



their plans for this upcoming August dive by planning to stay closer to shore. They plan on visiting Edison Reef and barges, among others. All dives reach an approximate depth of 30 feet and the visibility varies from day-to-day, place-to-place. For the third dive the group may revisit a previous site due to debris still needing to be collected there.

Mr. Federico Vasquez with Suncoast Reef Rovers provided the CAC with an update on the group's current and ongoing endeavors. Suncoast Reef Rovers is comprised solely of volunteers – consisting of divers, kayakers, vessel operators and topside helpers who are dedicated to the removal of derelict, discarded, or lost fishing gear around and along the Venice area reefs. Their grant focused on 5 close-to-shore reefs at the following: V-1 artificial reef, V-2 artificial reef, V-5 artificial reef, and the Venice Mooring Field. These dives, comprised of about 6 divers and 2 topside volunteers, are not open to the public due to safety concerns. They have found numerous anchors, fishing gear, boat refuse, and even a kitchen sink. From all 5 dives, 7,702 lbs of trash was recovered, including 116 crab traps. Positive outcomes from this project include cleaner close-to-shore and anchorage areas, reduction in the number of traps that are actively “ghost fishing”, and reduction of entanglement risk for marine creatures, birds, and humans. An estimated 80% of the anchors, chains and derelict crab traps were recycled and were not sent to the landfill facility. The Venice community and government helped with the Venice Mooring Field clean-up. Mr. Vasquez concluded that the marine debris problem is worse than what it was thought to be, but it was proven that a small group of volunteers can have a huge impact on the marine ecosystem.

Committee members expressed their gratitude and applauded the efforts of these organizations. One member encouraged them to find new ways to deal with or use the debris collected. The committee member expressed that innovative ideas come from people working together. Ms. Hecker also expressed gratitude on behalf of the CHNEP team and expressed how honored CHNEP was to partner with these organizations.

Agenda Item #8 – Update on Proposed Establishment of the Southwest Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Area — Nicole Iadevaia on behalf of Julie Morris, National Wildlife Refuge Association

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is working on a new effort to establish a Southwest Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Area. If successful, a new conservation area would allow the USFWS to work with willing landowners to protect the lands most important to our water and wildlife in one of the most biologically diverse regions in our country. This landscape-level conservation effort would assist and complement the state of Florida's successful efforts to protect the Florida Wildlife Corridor. Southwest Florida faces increasing threats such as rapid population growth, intensification of land use, and climate change. A new conservation area would aid in recovering the Florida panther and protect many rare and endemic species, including 74 Federally and State listed Threatened and Endangered Species.

The USFWS recently completed public scoping meetings, which were attended by CHNEP staff (input given at these meetings will be included in the development draft plan and environmental analysis document). In accordance, CHNEP submitted a technical comment letter and GIS maps to be considered during the planning process. The Service will make the draft plan and environmental analysis document available for review/comment sometime this Fall before the next CAC meeting. CAC members were asked to share this with their respective communities and organizations so that they can submit comments and support during the upcoming public comment time.

The timeline thus far has been as follows: The Service conducted internal and external scoping in March and April of this year; a draft land protection plan and document were developed in late Summer 2023; The Service will make the draft plan and environmental analysis document available for review and comment in Fall 2023; public review and comment on the proposal will occur in late Summer/early Fall 2023;



comments will be evaluated and incorporated as needed so that a final plan will be developed in Fall of 2023. The draft land protection plan will be released mid-September and the public will have a month to comment on it. Final approval of the draft will happen in December. If any members would like more information, they can reach out to Julie Morris via email at jmorris@floridaconserve.org or visit <https://www.fws.gov/project/proposedsouthwest-florida-conservation-area>. CHNEP's technical comment letter (<http://www.chnep.org/letters-resolutions>) may also be used as a resource for members planning to submit comments.

CHNEP comments include asking the Service to consider prioritizing preservation and conservation opportunities (PCO), both native and non-native, from the CHNEP Habitat Restoration Needs (HRN) plan. The HRN plan guides habitat preservation/conservation, connectivity, management, restoration, sustainability, and resiliency throughout the CHNEP area. The plan identifies preservation/conservation and restoration opportunities as well as management/enhancement and restoration targets in each area. The plan was developed in partnership with CHNEP representatives from state agencies, members' counties, and cities and NGOs in the Central and SWFL region. Preservation and conservation opportunities are present where federal, state, and local land acquisition and easement programs can invest to save priority habitat areas. These potentially restorable lands would expand existing preservation and conservation lands into larger ecosystem units and consolidate major wildlife corridors within the region, moving toward landscape-level protection. Other priority areas include the Federally Endangered Species Habitat (panther); other essential habitat corridors; areas with the least potential protection mechanisms; areas with unique and dwindling habitats, and areas with coastal habitats impacted by sea level rise.

A committee member commented that this is exciting information because it is another tool for more money and more landowners conserving land.

Agenda Item #9 – A Persistence of Vision Protecting the Quilt of Habitats Drawn Together by the Threats of Water — Jim Beaver, Retired Naturalist

Mr. Jim Beaver, a Retired Naturalist focused on Central and Southwest Florida, gave an overview of the history of land acquisition and stewardship efforts in the region. Highlights are as follows:

Land acquisition and stewardship are a team effort requiring persistence over time. The CHNEP has been collecting data on land acquisitions and conservation land stewardship in the region since 1998. There has been great success in conserving land in the region largely due to citizen support and participation and the role of government in service to that support. The Southwest Florida Coastal Conservation Corridor Plan was established in 1990 as a partnership of three National Estuary Programs, one National Estuarine Research Reserve, 21 Counties, three Water Management Districts, state and federal agencies, and non-profit conservation groups. The vision was to conserve lands so that a Florida black bear could walk from Charlotte Harbor to Lake Okeechobee to the Big Cypress National Preserve. Today, many of the lands identified in this plan have been protected and restoration work is underway.

Mr. Beaver informed committee members that his presentation was formed from two sources: his referencing his original "Persistence of Vision" presentation from 2012 which highlighted the success of CHNEP achieving what was then its FW1 goal of 100% increase in conservation lands within what was then the boundaries of CHNEP and the emphasis on successful land acquisition. He used the quilt as a comparison of the interconnectivity of all habitats which are drawn together with the threads being the water that makes up southwest Florida and no one habitat being more important than another. Mr. Beaver explained that when the emphasis is placed one over another habitat, this results in the fragmenting of the landscape. He emphasized that his must always be a long-term "vision." There has been a 91% increase in



conservation lands from 1998 to 2012. Partnerships with the same goals as CHNEP have been helping to coordinate such activity. Mr. Beever explained that some years there is more activity from the state and other years there is more activity from the local governments. Since 1998, there has been a 213% increase in conservation lands. This success has surpassed the original FW1 goal. From 1930 to 2012, there has been a 415% increase in conservation lands with an overall increase of 530% from 1930 to 2022 (with real change being seen after FDR's New Deal).

Mr. Beever expressed that no major conservation effort in southwest Florida has succeeded without citizens' support and the role of government in service to that support. It is the citizens and the community that make or break any conservation acquisition project. Even one citizen could have the potential to derail a project. In the early 1960s, concerned citizens in Lee County began a movement to save Estero Bay from development. In 1966, the citizens who were members of the Lee County Conservation Association and the SWFL Conservation Clearinghouse succeeded in convincing the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (TIITF) of the State of Florida to pass the first aquatic preserve law in the United States. This law serves as a basis for all aquatic preserve laws throughout the country. Mr. Beever explained that sometimes it is necessary to stop the plans of others. Citizens, professionals, landowners, retirees, long-term residents, commercial and recreational fisherman came together to protect the Bay. They, in conjunction with local officials, were able to prevent developers from breaking ground on "The Estuaries" project (which were plans for developing mainland Estero Bay) even after it had been approved both federally and on a state level.

Mr. Beever has worked on 57 major and 36 somewhat smaller land conservation projects, from Hernando County down to Monroe and inland to the middle of the state, totaling about 691,458.84 acres. He emphasized the need to continue to look for land acquisition opportunities and be at the right places at the right time with the right tools and the right partners. He expressed that we must maintain a persistence of vision and conservation takes time. He urged committee members not to abandon the science and explained that it takes a variety of tools to achieve success and it is not always fee simple or conservation easement or land swamps. He also emphasized that public participation always makes the plan better when it engenders support. Land acquisition of any size cannot happen unless the public that uses that land already wants it to be preserved. Mr. Beever explained that land acquisition is the best tool for long term project protection and regulation will not work in the long term because governments change, laws change, lawyers show up, and things that are supposed to be regulatory-protected end up not being so. He reiterated that land acquisition and stewardship is a team effort. Unless land is acquired, it will be necessary to fight the same battles repeatedly. Even then, some people will not have the best intention when it comes to public lands.

Ms. Hecker thanked Mr. Beever and said she appreciated his words of wisdom and getting this perspective, both historical and up to the present, of the continuum of work that he and so many others have done through the years to get us to where we are. A committee member also expressed her gratitude to Mr. Beever for his lifetime dedication and commitment to land protection.

Agenda Item #10 – Games for Environmental Outreach Training — Megan Sosbe, CHNEP

Ms. Megan Sosbe, CHNEP Conservation Specialist, shared information on the power of games in the educational and public engagement setting. Ms. Sosbe highlighted a great interactive game developed by the Minnesota Sea Grant which is used to introduce the concept of watershed level management to students and stakeholders. She attended the Sarasota Watershed game "Train the Trainer Session." The role of games, specifically role-play-based games, is a teaching mechanism that has been studied for years and studies had found that suggesting and introducing such activities in the classroom can lead to the beneficial



development and increased understanding of the topic or focus of the game at hand. Games are fun, challenging, thought provoking, stimulating, and help improve reasoning and strategizing. The role of gameplay in the adult education setting has also been proven to break down barriers amongst stakeholders as a game-playing environment is typically more friendly and light-hearted when trying to introduce complex topics. The concept of role-playing games allows players to participate in a simulation of a serious situation and provoke innovative, experimental thinking in a lower-stakes environment. All these factors are extremely important when presenting watershed management and environmental stewardship, especially to gain new target audiences and increase the interest of children.

The Minnesota Sea Grant and University of Minnesota Extension developed the watershed game in 2006 with the goals of increasing the involvement of both students and local leaders in learning how to make informed decisions. Students and stakeholders who participate in the game are tasked with meeting a clean water goal by making a series of management decisions and implementing policies to mitigate nonpoint source pollution within their community, all while trying to stay within the confines of a strict budget. Participants in the game are given several pollution units that they must reduce throughout the game and a goal of several resilience units that they should strive for. If individuals can reduce their amount of pollution units as a whole community and meet the clean water goal, then they have ultimately won the game. The game also highlights the diverse and sometimes competing interests of various areas within a community by assigning players to represent different agencies and community member roles such as the agriculture side, industrial port, urban center, residential and rural coast. So as the need for the understanding of responsible management of water resources has grown, the coastal model of the watershed game was developed to enhance the entire curriculum series, which already includes a stream, river, and the lake model. The watershed game is intended to be facilitated by a trained host or educator and has been implemented in classrooms ranging from elementary to high school, as well as board policy and community planning meetings for students and stakeholders alike to increase their understanding of best management practices, to prevent and reduce impacts, and land uses within a watershed and their influences and collaboration across jurisdictions that are necessary to benefit the watershed in its entirety. There are two different versions, a local leader, and a classroom version. Both versions adopt the same clean water goal and role play management scenarios. However, the structures just differ slightly. The local leader version is designated for larger groups of up to 25 people geared towards appointed officials, members of watershed organizations, association members, and other community leaders. There is also one game board in this version and all the participants are gathered around one large table looking at the one board as they interact as a whole group. The interactive approach allows stakeholders to learn about the impact of various land uses on natural resources.

The classroom version is geared towards middle school students around but can be easily adapted to elementary and high school curriculums as well. This version of the game can be played in a smaller group, such as a classroom setting, splitting into multiple game boards by each part of the community as was mentioned earlier, such as the industrial port, agricultural, residential areas, so that three to five students are able to gather around one student's desk or smaller table to work in groups. This game is also designed to be played over many periods of a class. Also, instead of receiving all the game pieces at the beginning like the local leader version where they're passed out, students are asked to pick a runner. So, they will go up to the front of the classroom to retrieve the tool cards and anticipated event cards. The classroom version prompts students to understand the relationships between community connections, water quality, and land uses, all while emphasizing the need for collaboration and cooperative decision making and persuasive argument to reach a common goal. There is a paper written on the development of the watershed game. It was developed in 2021 which outlines the methods and processes of creating the game as well as the need for the coastal model and the specific development for that. The development of the coastal model utilized



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5 different methodologies which review reports about coastal issues, host a focus group of regional experts through interactive online platforms, create a survey for respondents that were sought out through relevant known contacts, list serves and conferences. create an online survey through C grant with respondents sought out through national C grant network, and finally pilot workshops which consisted of trial, game play and focus group discussions. All these approaches targeted audiences with experience from the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic regions, aside from the online Sea Grant survey, which was open to the entire Sea Grant network.

A brief overview of the results of using each of the methodologies and how they ultimately shaped the development of the Coast model are as follows: during the initial reviewing process, 30 reports were reviewed, which represented states such as Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Texas and Louisiana; after the review, the team concluded that there were 25 priority issues and then they further drilled down the top five, which ended up being land use change and development, water quality degradation, sea level rise, impact of storms and flooding. The focus groups, comprised of coastal professionals from the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic regions, yielded rich discussions and input with the general agreement that excess nutrients, flooding, climate change, sea level rise and coastal erosion were priorities and concerns of several coastal states. the regional Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic survey, created to determine more input on overarching coastal challenges, yielded around 117 respondents, and the National Sea Grant Survey, created to do the same thing only on the national level, yielded around 30. They do note in this paper that while more participation at the national level would have been preferred, there were still very useful data from each of the regions that was able to be used in development.

Finally, the pilot workshops (held in 2020 in Louisiana and Alabama) had 41 participants playing draft versions of the game and provided feedback. While the overall goal of the game is to reduce nonpoint source pollution, specifically phosphorus and nitrogen, input from all these methodologies and all the different organizations were used to develop the unanticipated event cards which could bring about unexpected development or even major storms that induce flooding during sporadic times during the game. Other components include the tool cards which were actions that players can take to protect their community against the previously mentioned unanticipated events. At the same time, they're trying to reduce the nonpoint source pollution. The tool cards represent policies, plans and practices that will guide players to hopefully reach their clean water goal. So how does this relate to public engagement priority actions? By discovering and sharing new ways to connect in the classroom or in outside educational settings, it continues to keep the finger on the pulse of new ways to engage children and adults while introducing sometimes complex or bigger picture topics into the conversation.

By utilizing the local leader version of the cost model, new target audiences may be reached such as policymakers and new potential partner/partnering agencies while implementing interactive activities like this into the initiatives. It also helps to face and learn to overcome the challenges of encouraging individuals to become more mindful of their individual actions to reduce cumulative impacts as well as breaking down the barrier of making difficult topics and concepts more approachable and relatable. The Watershed game may be purchased at <https://sea-umn.nbcstore.net/> and the link for upcoming training events, to find a facilitator, and to find and contact a trainer is <https://seagrant.umn.edu/watershed-game/training-events>.

Committee members inquired as to how long a game can take to which Ms. Sosbe responded that it usually lasts 2 to 4 hours, the difference being that often discussions arise at different points of the game which can extend the playing time. Committee members thanked Ms. Sosbe for her presentation and agreed that game would be a great way for people to get to know each other.



Agenda Item #11 – CHNEP Technical Projects Updates & New Tools — Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP

Ms. Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP Director of Research and Restoration, gave a brief overview on research and restoration project progress since the previous TAC meeting. Highlights are as follows:

The Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network (CCHMN) is a regional partnership of agencies that collects monthly surface water quality data in the open estuaries using consistent, technically sound sampling design. Participants agree to collect, analyze, and upload results from water samples to a state assessment database (FDEP WIN) at 60 randomly selected field sites throughout 10 waterbodies each month. CHNEP's role is to directly fund sampling efforts to fill data gaps, to host an annual CCHMN partners meeting; to house and update the network's SOPs, to conduct field sampling audits, to attend RAMP meetings, to upload data into the CHNEP Water Atlas and fund maintenance and trend analysis features on CHNEP Water Atlas pages on behalf of partners, and to ensure data comparability. CCHMN quality assurance activities include annual field audits conducted with each sampling partner; field and laboratory partner participation in the SWFL RAMP quarterly meetings and split-sample analyses; and CHNEP Management Conference review of data and statistical methods during regular water quality status and trends reporting. It is anticipated that further quality assurance measures will be implemented in the future as needed with each participating agency to ensure techniques are standardized and agreed upon which is in keeping with FDEP WIN requirements.

Regarding the CHNEP Water Atlas, CHNEP provided a new structure for the overhaul of the Water Atlas site. For example, waterbody pages will be presented with associated WBIDs and appropriate impairment criteria. The new Waterbody and Watershed pages will feature impairment status, criteria, water quality dashboard dials, associated data, and 4 interactive mappers. The CHNEP Water Atlas seagrass pages now feature updated acreage graphs through 2022 and updated transect graphs through 2021. They also feature algae and epiphyte graphs for all basins through 2021. The interactive mapper has seagrass and macroalgae maps, monitoring stations, transect data and graphs, and the FDEP propscar layer. CHNEP continues to add to the Water Atlas with new features. For example, the "Winter Haven Lake Assessments" component now appears on waterbody pages for those lakes within the City of Winter Haven. Also, coming soon there will be a landing page for the Place-Based Recreational Fishery Project.

The ongoing Myakka Headwaters Preserve Restoration is a 2022-2023 project in coordination with SWFWMD and the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast. The location of this restoration is 363 acres of conserved land within Flatford Swamp which is the Myakka River's largest forested wetland located in Manatee County. The objective was to remove exotic plants and replant native plants to restore the wetlands. If successful, the outcomes would be an enhanced aquatic habitat, flood protection, and improved water quality. Plantings and associated work at the two strategically selected sites were completed in December. The treatment of the exotic species in the 20-acre floodplain forest and 4-acre basin forest was completed in April during the dry season. Funding agencies followed up by conducting a site visit in May. Both sites were impacted by Hurricane Ian and downed trees complicated access. The treatment of lygodium macrophyllum or "old world climbing fern" (OWCF) was conducted with the two designated parcels totaling 24 acres. The treatment included poodle cutting (cutting large masses of OWCF growth from up the trees to the canopy) and herbicide treatment of heavier occurrence and direct spraying of smaller individual occurrences. Treatments of OWCF were successful relative to the treatment success rate in the agreement. CFGC continues to have volunteer workdays on the property to supplement the contract work. Those interested may sign up at <http://www.conservationfoundation.com/events/>.

Other CHNEP technical collaborations include:



- Submitted an abstract to the Coastal Estuarine Research Federation (CERF)
- Submitted an abstract to the Florida Resilience Conference
- Submitted a panel proposal to the Gulf of Mexico Alliance GomCom 2024
- Met with FDEP to discuss the Hendry Creek TMDL and provided FDEP with a spreadsheet with all the CHNEP waterbodies and their presumed nutrient criteria which FDEP staff reviewed and provided input on; this was then used by the CHNEP Water Atlas staff for the implementation of the Numeric Nutrient Criteria (NNC) calculator
- Met with the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) staff to provide input on their Geographic Response Strategies (GRS) for oil spills, and recommended environmentally sensitive areas that should be the priority for protection
- Worked with partners to gather habitat and leveraging data for the National Estuary Program Online Reporting Tool

A committee member advised those with any questions to follow up with Ms. Iadevaia or visit CHNEP's website.

Agenda Item #12 – CAC Updates & Roundtable Discussion on Topics of Interest — Debi Osborne, Co-Chair

Nicole Johnson, Conservancy of Southwest Florida: I just want to let everyone know that the 39th Annual Everglades Coalition Conference (hosted by the Conservancy) will be held January 25th through the 27th, 2024 at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point in Bonita Springs. The theme for the conference is "Everglades Restoration Rewards: Benefiting Ecosystems."

Phyl Wojcik, Charlotte County: Heal Our Harbor will be offering a Charlotte Harbor Ambassador program in the early part of 2024. It will be a six-day event held with classes. It is open to everyone, and it would be wonderful to get politicians to attend. I will keep everyone updated as I get more information. Also, the group has been teaching other communities that are interested in water sampling the different techniques they employ, what to look for, and what those particular parameters mean. There has been discussion with Team Punta Gorda about the possibility of working with those neighborhoods in the future.

Tom Palmer, Polk County: Polk County is in the process of trying to steer sewer plant waste and septic plant waste to the sewer plants (that are landfills). This is a significant issue that affects the environment. They have been dealing with BS Farm and Ranch which started 10 years go with no permits. It is supposed to be a soil manufacturing plant but in fact it is a dump for hundreds of tons of sewer plant and septic tank waste. This is on the property near Saddle Creek, just north of Lake Hancock. This is an evolving issue with the goal to keep this waste off the land and out of the water.

Kayton Nedza, Hardee County: Mosaic and FWC are working on a collection of lakes to create a fishing train that would allow people to get from one lake to another (for fishing and related activities). One of the Carlton families has signed a conservation easement on about 16,000 acres of land in the Horse Creek area. The Summer Marine Science event that took place in the Keys and included a couple of coral restoration studies went very well.

Aaron Zimmerman, Sarasota County: Since the last CAC meeting, we have brought forward a water quality level of service to our Board of Commissioners and they approved it. This level of service is something that we have been working on for a little while as an additional evaluation tool for looking at our waterbodies



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Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting

and determining if they meet this level of service to help us prioritize stormwater projects. These projects aim to improve water quality especially for those that don't meet the water quality level of service. We've also wrapped up our "Eyes on Seagrass" volunteer surveying for the summer. We conducted seagrass and macroalgae surveys in April and July. We're looking forward to looking at the results of that because it is a big part of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program's bay report card. On September 23rd, to celebrate the results and efforts we are having an event called "Bayfest" at Ken Thompson Park in the Sarasota Sailing Squadron. This is an event with people of all ages on the water with kayaking, boat tours, food trucks, eco and wading tours. The goal is to continue to provide education and outreach on our natural resources. Lastly, I wanted to mention that we continue to partner with the Healthy Pond Collaborative through our NEST program, which is our Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Team. That involved 5 planned programs with various HOA's with which we're doing pond planting. We are looking at water quality before, during, and after the plantings to see how their ponds have changed throughout that process.

Agenda Item #13 – Public Comment — Debi Osborne, Co-Chair

There were no comments from the public.

Agenda Item #16 – Next Meeting's Topics, Location and Date — Debi Osborne, Co-Chair

Topics: TBD, Date: 12/13/23, 4/24/24, 8/21/24, & 12/18/24; Location: TBD

Agenda Item #17 – Adjourn — Debi Osborne, Co-Chair

Meeting was adjourned at 12:13 PM.

**TOM PALMER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING, SECONDED BY DEBI OSBORNE.
THE MOTION WAS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.**