

**Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Public Meeting for Draft Comprehensive Plan Update**

Panama City, Florida – Sept. 12, 2016

Principals:

Justin Ehrenwerth, Mimi A. Drew, Ann Mills, Ben Scaggs, Steve Giordano, Hank Burch, Debbie Devore

Additional Support:

Alyssa Dausman, Ann Weaver, Lisa Robertson, Heather Thomas, Kelly Samek, Nadine Siak, John Ettinger, John Bowie

The meeting started at 6:00 p.m. and lasted approximately 45 minutes. There were approximately 20 people in attendance, not including Council representatives, staff and support.

Introductory remarks:

Mimi A. Drew

Justin Ehrenwerth provided a PPTX overview of the draft Comprehensive Plan Update.

The public comment began at approximately 6:25 p.m. and lasted about 20 minutes.

Public comments (7 speakers):

Speaker name, Affiliation; comments

Janet Bowman, The Nature Conservancy, I am happy to see water quality and the estuary approach. This approach lays the framework for large scale projects to put together funding streams in a meaningful way. The collaboration meetings are a great addition. Upstream and downstream collaboration is more of stakeholder engagement. Upstream is coordination between agencies and project development activities. We would like to have more stakeholder engagement with the upstream. We are happy to see leveraging. We are creating financing to jazz up the yearly payouts. Creative financing should involve private financing, which would create more willingness from the political leaders. We are excited about that and appreciate the great draft you all have come up with.

Jim Muller, Bay County RESTORE Act Coordinator, Thank you for having the meeting here. The transparency aspect is important. Thank you for providing more updates so that the public doesn't forget your plan. Thank you for adding expert reviewers to have an additional panel for project interaction. Yes, to water quantity and yes to the watershed approach. Water quality is essential and will affect oyster restoration. Common water quality monitoring protocols, data archive access and sharing data are very important. It is also important to coordinator an overview of the watershed. I like the Gulf of Mexico estuary program. The bonding option is an important thing that we are talking to congress

about, based on BP's needs not gulf restoration. We need to consider the benefit sooner rather than later.

Kent Wimmer, Defenders of Wildlife, NWFL Representative, We support your update. We would like to encourage you to consider other tools to implement this plan. Specifically, projects that directly protect wildlife habitat. Use these resources to protect these habitats along the gulf coast. Important adjacent to other wildlife refuges, such as Tindal Airforce Base. Land acquisition dollars can protect areas that are already on the market and can potentially be lost. Existing conservation values, put that tool back in your toolbox. Florida Forever local programs, pot 1 funds, military base buffering funds. Partnering with land managers can help you ensure that these programs have success. Sea level rise is causing our estuaries to slowly disappear. We need to buy land uphill. Your wildlife need a place to live. Consider long-term future resiliency, focus on land conservation efforts.

Jessica Koelsch, National Wildlife Federation, I like the way you put it into perspective. The settlement is still the largest ecosystem restoration on the planet. It is important to keep that in mind. I commend the council and staff, and am pleased for the revision. I like the updates to the submission guidelines, best projects moving forward, linking, renewed commitments to prioritization to large scale projects. I like layering funding from multiple sources in focus areas, which will have a lasting benefit. Continue to engage the public in more stages of the process. Opportunities for public input were a little bit late in the early process. On the webinar and on the Florida TIG webinar, we heard both speakers talk about coordination among the different funding streams. We encourage you to continue to do that. Water quantity, watershed approach when different science reviewers aspects of the plan we support.

Jeff Helms, Adkins Consultants, RESTORE Santa Rosa County, A lot of people say it's a done deal and I say no, they are actually taking a pause to reevaluate where you're at to go forward. Thank you for doing that on behalf of Santa Rosa County. Transparency, voted to spend all of the bucket 3 funds on the Pensacola bay watershed. Santa Rosa Sound, water quality, want to focus the money, leveraging, would like to collaborate and get two to one or three to one, so they can tell the tax payers, look what we've done. You've sold our county in on the collaboration, science based. We need to have cooperation with UWF and UF. With water quality monitoring, you get what you pay for. Tell the public the benefits of how you reached your goals, estuary program. I've never seen where all the counties were working together to improve water quality in Northwest Florida, this is an opportunity for each watershed. We are competing with each other to have an overall plan, an estuary program, to find that so we can all work together. Thank you, we are committed to collaboration with the council.

Darryl Boudreau, The Nature Conservancy, Thank you for your dedication to do this right. EPA and Florida for the estuary program. I grew up here, I would have never believed that the panhandle would be as motivated. It's a huge deal to invest the funds on the right

things, to make the legacy that we want to have. I hope that you would create another one, if not three. Chamber of commerce has signed resolutions, local governments, NGOs. It will get everyone on the same vision. Thanks to Kelly for updating the swim plans getting the funding, completing the modification for these plans, building on each other to do the right things in the right places. Thanks for investing in that effort. Single most important decision that you've made.

Chips Kirschenfeld, Deputy Director of Natural Resources Escambia County, Thank you, positive collaboration with funding sources, great example is Pensacola Bay. Bayou Chico is one of the most impaired water bodies in the Gulf of Mexico. Allocated \$6M in Beach Haven. Northwest Florida has also allocated about the same amount, those two funding sources working together reach \$12M in project funding. This is a huge improve to water quality, leveraging of funds, Grover Robinson has directed staff to have a three to one leveraging goal for our direct component funds. Pot 1 \$70M in funding for the next 15 years. To turn that into over \$200M. If that can be done with all of the pots of money that would be tremendous. We can do a lot of good with that. I want to reiterate the estuary program. It's a shame that there is competition in Northwest Florida. There are so many good organizations. Find more funding to stand up two or three estuary programs.