



CHNEP Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, Dec 18th, 2024 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Centennial Park, Large Multipurpose Room

1120 Centennial Blvd. Port Charlotte, FL 33953

AGENDA

1. Call to Order, Meeting Instructions, and Introductions — Aaron Zimmermann, Co-Chair
2. Agenda Additions or Deletions — Aaron Zimmermann, Co-Chair
3. Public Comment on Agenda Items — Aaron Zimmermann, Co-Chair
4. Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) August 21st, 2024 Meeting Minutes — Aaron Zimmermann, Co-Chair
5. Introduction of New Applicants — Aaron Zimmermann, Co-Chair
6. CHNEP Update — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP
7. CHNEP 2024 Storm Season Update — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP
8. Conservation Grant Applications — Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP
9. Overview of 2025 CHNEP Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) Update — Jennifer Shafer, PhD, Shafer Consulting
10. Update on Recently Completed Conservation Grants “Estero Community Park Shoreline Improvement Project” — Russell Ringland, Future Forestry
11. CHNEP Technical Projects — Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP
12. CAC Updates & Roundtable Discussion on Topics of Interest — Aaron Zimmermann, Co-Chair
13. General Public Comment — Aaron Zimmermann, Co-Chair
14. Future Meetings: Topics, Location and Date — Aaron Zimmermann, Co-Chair
Save the Date for 2025 CAC Meetings: Spring 4/23/25, Fall 8/20/25, Winter 12/17/25
15. Adjourn

DIRECTIONS TO MEETING LOCATION

[Centennial Park, 1120 Centennial Blvd. Port Charlotte, FL 33953](#)



Coming from the North:

1. Take I-75 S to Sumter Blvd (exit 182) in North Port.
2. Follow Sumter Blvd for 8 miles to US Hwy 41 S, then Turn left onto US Hwy 41 S
3. Follow US Hwy 41 S for 4 miles to Centennial Blvd., then Turn right onto Centennial Blvd.
4. Follow Centennial Blvd. ½ mile down, turn **LEFT** into Centennial Park/Pool Parking Lot.
5. Check in at Front Desk and they will direct you to the Large Multipurpose Room

Coming from the South:

1. Take I-75 N to Kings Hwy in Charlotte County (exit 170)
2. Use the left 2 lanes to turn left onto Kings Hwy (signs for Port Charlotte/Charlotte Sports Pk)
3. Follow for ½ mile, then Use the right 2 lanes to turn right onto Veterans Blvd.
4. Follow for 7 miles, the Turn right onto US Hwy 41 N
5. Follow for 2 miles, then Turn left onto Centennial Blvd.
6. Follow Centennial Blvd. ½ mile down, turn **LEFT** into Centennial Park/Pool Parking Lot.
7. Check in at Front Desk and they will direct you to the Large Multipurpose Room

In-person CHNEP CAC meetings have resumed.
If you are unable to attend in person or to arrange for an alternate do so, please email Nicole at niadevaia@chnep.org or call (941) 833-6580.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Aaron Zimmermann, CAC Co-Chair, will call the meeting to order. Members will introduce themselves.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS

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. CITIZEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Recommendation: Approval of the minutes from previous meeting.

Attachment: Draft August 21st, 2024 CAC Meeting Minutes.

5. INTRODUCTION OF NEW APPLICANTS

The CHNEP Citizen's Advisory Committee welcomes new applicants, who can use this opportunity to introduce themselves and give a brief background on their work or communities they represent as well as their interest in participating in the committee. Their applications were received by CHNEP and will be taken up for approval by the Policy Committee in their January 2025 meeting.

Applicants attending the Dec. 18th meeting include:

- Brooke Langston, Manatee County Applicant
- Zachary Franco, Highlands County Applicant
- Cheryl Cook, Sarasota County Applicant

6. CHNEP UPDATE

The following represents program activity highlights since the beginning of the Fall Management Conference cycle to the beginning of this one.

Program Administration

- Planned and executed both the Technical Advisory Committee Meeting (8/8), Citizens Advisory Meeting (8/21), Management Committee Meeting (9/6), and the Policy Committee Meeting (9/20) including lining up presenters, drafting agenda packets, updating Committee webpages, creating PowerPoints, drafting minutes, etc.
- Prepared Amended FY25 Work Plans and Budgets for EPA 320 and EPA BIL grants in preparation for the September Management and Policy Committee meetings, which were approved at the Policy Committee meeting (9/20).
- Organized a Charlotte Harbor Harmful Algal Blooms Working Group Meeting, which was held immediately following the TAC. CHNEP efforts included sharing resources and gathering input from members of the CHNEP TAC – inviting them to participate in the working group to discuss the current state of research, management, and mitigation work as well as needs.
- Sent new Committee member packet and email to newly appointed members including a new Policy Committee member (representing City of Winter Haven), a new Management Committee member (representing the City of Fort Myers), a new Citizens Advisory Committee member (representing DeSoto County), as well as to two new Technical Advisory Committee members (representing City of Punta Gorda and City of North Port)
- Conducted CHNEP staff annual evaluations, as well as sent out, collected and combined responses for CHNEP ED annual evaluation.

- Updated the [funding opportunities fact sheet](#) and sent out historic funding opportunities notification to all CHNEP Committees about several special large state and federal funding opportunities of interest.
- Note that staff had to prepare for and evacuate or work sporadically during Hurricanes Helene (9/25-27/24) and Milton (10/9/24), which caused significant severe flooding and wind damage across the coastal communities in the CHNEP area. To assist Hurricane Recovery efforts, CHNEP staff coordinated extensively with local partners including the other Southwest Florida NEPs, University of Florida, Water Management District and other state agencies, and counties to collect surface water quality samples. This included numerous meetings and contacting partners individually to assess their water quality sampling and analysis needs, that was used for building spreadsheets to identify spatial and data gaps as well as for sample collection and lab analyses over the course of the month until regular monitoring could resume in November. CHNEP also conducted outreach and citizen science data collection efforts following Hurricanes Helene and Milton.

Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) Update

- After receiving additional drafts and incorporating edits from the August and September Management Conference Committee meetings, the final draft, approved at the September Policy Committee meeting was sent to the EPA for review on 10/1/24. EPA returned its comments on 10/24/24, with those comments addressed in the red-lined revised version and an EPA comment/response document being shared at this meeting.

Finance and Grants Management

- Received Q3 and Q4 reports for FY24 Water Atlas project and processed invoices. Received revised final report for FY23 Water Atlas project and processed final invoice.
- Received Q3 report for FY24 Upper and Lower Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network (CCHMN) projects and invoices. Invoices were processed for reimbursement.
- Drafted and finalized FY25 Water Atlas Scope of Work and received executed purchase order to USF for FY25 Water Atlas Project.
- Drafted and finalized FY25 Upper and Lower CCHMN Scopes of Work and received executed purchase orders to FWC and Lee County to respectively undertake those services.
- Received SWFWMD FY25 agreement/award on 10/30/24, which is now in process by CHNEP's host for processing acceptance of.
- Received EPA FY25 award on 11/14/24, which is now in process by CHNEP's host for processing acceptance.
- Submitted FY24 Q3 & Q4 reports and deliverables for SWFWMD FY24 agreement.
- Submitted significant program accomplishments for all FY24 EPA grants (320, BIL, Novated)
- Submitted FY24 EPA annual End of Year report for both EPA 320 and EPA BIL grants.
- Held several trainings with County fiscal staff to onboard CHNEP team to use new financial management software for processing invoices, check requests and purchasing.
- Sent Sarasota County draft interlocal agreement information for processing, to move forward with collaboration and funding on future projects.
- Drafted project funding, project background, staff time contributions and return on investment documents for project funding meeting conducted with Southwest Florida Water Management District in October.
- Provided additional information for 2024 NEPORT Congressional Reporting Survey entries that were requested by the Regional and HQ EPA review teams.

- Drafted Hardee, Highlands, Desoto, and Polk Counties Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment Scopes of Work for work assignments with the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC).
- Closed out FY24 Conservation Grants, paying out all completed projects. Also drafted award emails for FY25 Conservation Grant applications received and considered by the CAC to date.

CHNEP staff participated in the following meetings:

- CHNEP Water Atlas Monthly Project Management Meetings (multiple)
- Charlotte County Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment Meetings (multiple)
- Hardee County Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment Meetings (multiple)
- Polk County Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment Meetings (multiple)
- Desoto County Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment Meetings (multiple)
- Heartland Counties Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment Meeting (8/1)
- Corkscrew Watershed Initiative Meeting (8/2)
- Heartland Resiliency Summit (8/6)
- Southwest Florida Regional Ambient Monitoring Program (SWF RAMP) Harmful Algal Blooms Subcommittee Meeting (8/6)
- Charlotte Harbor Harmful Algal Blooms Working Group Meeting (8/8)
- Southwest FL Estuarine Restoration Team (SWERT) Shellfish Restoration Mtg (8/14)
- DinoShield Workshop Meeting (8/15)
- CCHMN District Funding Meeting (8/16)
- CHNEP/CFRPC Coordination Meeting (8/19)
- Florida Sea Grant Advisory Committee Meeting (8/20)
- ANEP External Communications and Legislative Activities Committee Meetings
- SERDP & ESTCP Development of Assessment Tools for Downscaled Global Climate Models (8/22)
- VOLO Foundation 2025 Climate Summit Sponsorship Meeting (8/26)
- Florida Water Quality Summit (8/27)
- Florida WCA Recent Advances in Lake Okeechobee Science: Insights for Restoration and Climate Adaptation (8/27)
- EPA Recovery - CHNEP Meeting (8/28)
- CCHMN Annual Meeting (8/28)
- SFWMD Resiliency Coordination Forum Meeting (9/4)
- Tampa Bay Times Trend Analysis Discussion (9/6 & 9/17)
- GOMA Data & Monitoring Quarterly All Team (9/9)
- Triennial Review of State Surface Water Quality Standards Public Workshop (9/10)
- North Port Vulnerability Assessment Steering Committee Meeting (9/10)
- Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative Quarterly Meeting (9/11)
- COASTWISE/Gulf Futures Challenge Meetings (9/11 & 9/18)
- Florida Resiliency Conference (9/11-9/13)
- Army Corps. Of Engineers Coastal Risk Management Study for Charlotte County Briefing (9/12) and Charette (9/18 & 9/19)
- Nutrients & Red Tide Symposium - Steering Committee Meeting (9/16)
- Pine Island Flatwoods Project Meeting (9/18)
- Myakka River Management Coordinating Council Meeting (9/20)
- RESTORE Coastal Sportfish Ponds Team Meeting & Site Visit (9/23-9/24)
- Lee County Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment Meeting (10/2)

- LAMSID Project Funding Meeting (10/3)
- Florida Resiliency Conference Meeting (10/3)
- Restore America’s Estuaries Coastal & Estuarine Summit (10/6-10/10)
- Post-Hurricane Milton Water Quality Sampling Coordination Meeting (10/14)
- EPA Hurricanes Helene & Milton Impact Meeting (10/14)
- EPA/CHNEP Post-Hurricane Meeting with Mr. Tom McGill (10/15)
- West Florida Estuary Water Quality Coordination Meetings (10/21, 10/28, & 11/4)
- SFWMD Water Resources Forum Meeting (10/22)
- UF/IFAS Meeting on Harmful Algal Blooms (10/23)
- SFWMD/CHNEP Leadership Meeting (10/24)
- Sunseeker Marina Meeting (10/25)
- Charlotte 580 Land Acquisition to Support Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative Objectives Meeting (10/28)
- Water Atlas Sponsor Annual Workshop Meeting (10/29)
- Joint SFERTF Working Group/Science Coordination Group Meeting (10/30)
- Charlotte County Vulnerability Assessment Public Meeting (11/6)
- Association of National Estuary Programs Tech Transfer Meeting (11/13-15)
- One Water Summit (11/18)
- Nutrients & Red Tide Symposium Steering Committee Meeting (11/18)
- Hardee and DeSoto County CVA Kick-off Meetings (11/19)
- Charlotte County CVA Meeting (11/20)

CHNEP Staff Presentations

- Presented on the *CHNEP Oyster Habitat Restoration Plan & Other Resources* (including Clam Habitat Suitability and other Maps on the CHNEP Water Atlas) at the Southwest Florida Ecosystem Restoration Team (SWERT) meeting. This meeting was focused on Shellfish Restoration- Reviewing past and current restoration projects, lessons learned and application to large-scale restoration projects with upcoming funding. CHNEP shared links to webmaps as well as funding and project fact sheets.
- Presented on *Advancing Climate Resiliency in Florida’s Heartland* at the Central Florida Regional Planning Council’s Heartland Resiliency Summit.
- Presented *Lessons Learned from Large Scale Restoration and Watershed Planning* as well as *The CHNEP Water Atlas: An Interactive Estuaries and Habitat Report Card* at Restore America’s Estuaries (RAE) 2024 Coastal & Estuarine Summit in Washington, D.C.

Publications and Outreach Initiatives

- Sent out monthly Constant Contact newsletter with information on events, conferences, and volunteer opportunities in the CHNEP area.
- Received and reviewed deliverables for FY24 Conservation Grant recipients. Also, reviewed Fall Cycle applications for FY25 Conservation Grants with Citizens Advisory Committee input. Finally, shared results and progress of Conservation Grants via social media. ([CHEC Conservation Grant](#); [ECNP Conservation Grant](#))
- Attended the [Wildcat Tailgate in Wauchula](#), where we shared CHNEP resources with over 150 visitors.
- Added accessibility statement to CHNEP website and continued making updates, including the creation of a new management system for publications and an interactive home page map embedded from GIS.

- Attended an evening workshop at the Florida Lake Management Society Annual Technical Symposium, which CHNEP was a sponsor of, to run a Mentimeter audience input session for our partners.
- Participated in National Estuaries Week across our social media, a collaborative effort led by the National Estuarine Research Reserves, Restore America’s Estuaries, National Estuary Programs, and National Environmental Education Foundation.
- Facebook Posts: [Myakka Headwaters Tree Planting](#), [Charlotte County CVA](#), [International Coastal Cleanup](#), [Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network](#)
- Coordinated speaking engagements for next year with partner organizations including Peace River Audubon and Manatee Park.
- Finalized 2025 Nature Calendar design with printer, which has since been printed.
- Coordinated and hosted the [Kids Fishing Clinic at the Arcadia Rodeo](#) with the help of volunteers. Over 50 kids received Fish Florida rods and tackle boxes after completing four educational stations focused on stewardship, habitat, knot tying, and casting.
- Coordinated a [post-hurricane volunteer cleanup](#) at [Laisley Park](#) in Punta Gorda with Keep Charlotte Beautiful. This includes replenishing supplies for heavy debris removal (such as leather gloves) and coordinating with partners to ensure cleanups are being done in high-priority areas that are safe for the public to access. Staff also coordinated and attended a [kayak cleanup at Coral Creek](#) with Keep Charlotte Beautiful – volunteers helped clean over 600 pounds of trash from the water and shoreline.
- CHNEP had a booth at [Alligator Creek Fest](#) in Venice hosted by the Science and Environment Council and Sarasota County. CHNEP spoke with 160 guests about conservation and habitat restoration while making native wildflower seed bombs for visitors to take home.
- Created handouts and [social media posts](#) encouraging residents to submit high-water mark data through our survey form which will be used to help improve flood prediction models.
- Partnered on a [volunteer planting event](#) at Myakka Headwaters Preserve restoration site.
- Conducted interviews with the Boca Beacon and Fox4Now on Water Quality following Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton.
- Provided Letter of Support for SCCF’s continued and enhanced monitoring and prediction work for Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) events in the lower Pine Island Sound and Caloosahatchee estuary.
- Provided Letter of Support for the FGCU project to improve understanding of “Impacts of estuarine discharges on water quality and benthic infauna on the West Florida Shelf.”

Digital Outreach Insights

- 5,881 subscribers for CHNEP educational mailings
- 5,065 unique visitors and 8,980 page views of CHNEP website since last cycle
- 22 new Instagram followers for a total of 618
- 44 new Facebook followers for a total of 1,996
- YouTube: 12,001 Views (+1.2k), 78 Subscribers (+10), 307 Videos (+8)

Media/Press

- [Study links volume of water released from Caloosahatchee River to expansion of red tide](#)
- [Circle B in Lakeland remains closed as reserve stores water overflow from Lake Hancock](#)
- [After Hurricane Helene: Nature’s Powerful Surge, Not Sewage!](#)
- [City of Punta Gorda: Surge not sewage released after Hurricane Helene](#)

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

7. CHNEP 2024 STORM SEASON UPDATE

Hurricanes Milton and Helene occurred in quick succession at the end of the wet season and Hurricane Debby, all of which have had devastating impacts for so many throughout the CHNEP area. CHNEP and partners sprang into action to support recovery efforts; including creating an [online survey](#) to gather real-world data of high-water marks - information vital for calibrating and improving flood mapping and modeling going forward. The high-water mark map is available on the [CHNEP Hurricanes Helene and Milton webpage](#). Additionally, CHNEP surface water quality sampling partners shared information on when, where, and what was being sampled post-event to help coordinate efforts, as well as met several times with the University of Florida to coordinate assistance and equipment to address sampling gaps in the region.

CHNEP reached out to formally request federal assistance and funding; this included requesting EPA to deploy a mobile water quality lab unit to assist with water quality of sampling of ambient waters, particularly of bacteria for public health and safety. Funding assistance continues to be sought from federal partners for (1) tide gauge(s) along the stretch of coastline from Venice to Ft. Myers, including Charlotte Harbor, (2) emergency post-event bacteria and nutrient water quality sampling to measure these pollutants immediately post-storm, and (3) funding for community technical assistance specialists to assist local governments in our region with accessing and utilizing additional federal grants and resources to assist with short and long-term recovery.

CHNEP Executive Director Jennifer Hecker will be presenting the 2024 Storm Season Update.

8. CONSERVATION GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership's (CHNEP) goal for Public Engagement is to increase the proportion of the population that supports and participates in actions to protect and restore estuaries and watersheds. Since 2001, CHNEP has offered grants to help establish and maintain environmental education efforts and further partnerships to help implement the CCMP. Applications and instructions can be found here: <https://www.chnep.org/conservation-grants>.

CHNEP staff will share new applications that were submitted this cycle to seek CAC input on associated funding awards. The CAC role as related to this program is to seek out groups within their respective communities to make them aware of the CHNEP Conservation Grant program and how it can be beneficial to their projects and programs. Preference will be given to partners and to projects in communities that have been historically underserved.

<i>Project Name</i>	<i>Application Deadline</i>	<i>Project Deadline</i>	<i>Organization & Applicant</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Amount Requested</i>	<i>Expected Match</i>
Myakka River Management Coordinating Council (MRMCC) Website	12/1/24	9/1/25	Myakka River Management Coordinating Council, Chris Oliver	Support the domain registration and hosting of above which is an educational resource about the watershed and supports the CHNEP mission.	\$220	In kind staff time
Citizen's Pond Survey	12/1/24	9/1/25	Lee County Hyacinth Control District / Pond Watch Program, Ernesto Lasso de la Vega	Improving a survey tool to evaluate and collect data of storm water pond by Pond Watch volunteers and citizens in Florida.	\$1,000	\$500 (+in kind staff time)
Wildlife Conservation and Protection in Audubon Certified Community	12/1/24	9/1/25	Heritage Oaks Golf & Country Club, Michael Barbour	Removal of invasive plants and the installation of a microforest. The microforest is a process following the Miyawaki procedure and involves Florida-friendly plants in a dense configuration to include ground cover, sub-canopy, and canopy plant species to attract a bird diversity and other wildlife to our community. The location is a 5,000 linear ft distance along the boundaries of Heritage Oaks and Sarasota County property with a public sidewalk.	\$9,500	\$98,667

Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP Director of Research & Restoration, will be giving an overview of the Conservation Grant applications received this cycle and staff recommendations.

Recommendation: Gather CAC input on Conservation Grant Applications
Attachment: December 2024 Conservation Grant Applications

9. OVERVIEW OF 2025 CHNEP COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN (CCMP) UPDATE

The US EPA recognizes that National Estuary Program (NEP) Comprehensive Conservation Management Plans (CCMP) are critical components of their model of adaptive management as it facilitates a continual process of integrating new data and results. CCMPs are living documents and as such should be re-examined on a regular basis. Updates should be made to capture the latest science as well as the consensus on the direction of the Partnership's collective work to further water quality and habitat goals for the region. The CHNEP is in the process of finalizing an updated CCMP that guides how programmatic or funding support will be used over the next five years to assist partner research, restoration and public engagement efforts outlined therein.

The CCMP Update was previously brought to CHNEP committee meetings where committee members gave input and heard how their input and comments were addressed – culminating with the Policy Committee approving the final draft last cycle to be sent to the US EPA for its review. The EPA reviewed and provided comments, with which the CHNEP consultant created a comment/response document to explain how they were addressed in a final revised draft – both of which are being presented this cycle. The Policy Committee will be requested to approve the revised updated final CCMP, which will subsequently be sent to the printer in early 2025 with new copies provided to Committee members and partners afterward.

This overview will be given by Dr. Jennifer Shafer, from Shafer Consulting.

Attachments: Final Updated 2025 CHNEP CCMP
CHNEP CCMP Update EPA Comments Document

10. UPDATE ON RECENTLY COMPLETED CONSERVATION GRANTS

This agenda item is intended to share outcomes from completed 2024 Conservation Grant projects and will feature a presentation on the “Estero Community Park Shoreline Improvement Project.” The presentation will include information on anticipated short-term/long-term impacts, main takeaways, future considerations, and lessons learned that may be helpful for members of the committee interested in engaging in similar work in their communities. Following the presentation, CHNEP staff will be sharing updates on results from other Conservation Grant projects that wrapped up in the fall.

This presentation will be given by Russell Ringland, Executive Director for Future Forestry.

11. CHNEP TECHNICAL PROJECTS UPDATES

In addition to the items featured earlier on the agenda, recent progress, or completion of other CHNEP-funded research and/or restoration projects will be given as part of these CHNEP Technical Project Updates. Project fact sheets are available on the CHNEP website:

<https://www.chnep.org/chnep-fact-sheets>.

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

12. CAC UPDATES & ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON TOPICS OF INTEREST

This is a Round-Robin style discussion for CAC members and new applicants to engage on environmental topics as they pertain to counties they represent and to organize on working toward mutual issues of interest. After learning about available CHNEP resources, discussion may center on what can be done through the CAC to advance Water Quality Improvement, Hydrological Restoration, Fish Wildlife & Habitat Protection, and Public Engagement in the region.

This also serves as an opportunity for CAC members to discuss impacts to their communities and priorities for recovery and resiliency moving forward following the 2024 Storm Season.

Aaron Zimmermann, CAC Co-Chair, will be leading and facilitating this discussion.

13. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

14. FUTURE MEETING'S TOPICS, LOCATIONS AND DATES

Please Save the Date for 2025 CAC Meetings: **Spring 4/23/25, Fall 8/20/25, Winter 12/17/25**

If you have ideas of topics for a future presentation, please email them to CHNEP Director of Research & Restoration Nicole Iadevaia at niadevaia@chnep.org.

15. ADJOURN