



**CHNEP Management Committee Meeting**  
Friday January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm  
Charlotte County Centennial Park  
Large Multipurpose Room  
1120 Centennial Blvd., Port Charlotte, FL 33953

**AGENDA**

1. Call to Order and Introductions — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair
2. Agenda Additions or Deletions — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair
3. Public Comment on Agenda Items — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair
4. Management Committee September 6, 2024 Meeting Minutes — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair
5. TAC Report — Mark Walton, TAC Co-Chair
6. CAC Report — Aaron Zimmermann, CAC Co-Chair
7. CHNEP Update — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP
8. Final CHNEP 2025 Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) — Jennifer Shafer, PhD, Shafer Consulting
9. Myakka National Wild and Scenic Rivers Designation Update — Jaime Doubek-Racine, U.S. National Park Service
10. Peace National Wild and Scenic Rivers Designation Update — Jaime Doubek-Racine, U.S. National Park Service
11. Federal IRC Listening Session of CHNEP Member 2024 Hurricane Recovery Needs — Greg Vaday, US Economic Development Administration
12. CHNEP Technical Projects Update — Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP
13. Public Comment — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair
14. Future Meeting Dates and Topics — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair
  - Upcoming Meetings: May 9, 2025, & September 5, 2025
15. Adjourn — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair

# DIRECTIONS TO OUR MEETING LOCATION

[1120 Centennial Blvd, Port Charlotte, FL 33953](https://www.google.com/maps/place/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

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*In-person Management Committee meetings have resumed.*  
*If you are unable to attend in person or to arrange for an alternate do so, please email Jennifer Hecker at [jhecker@chnep.org](mailto:jhecker@chnep.org) or call (941) 833-6580.*

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1. **CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

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

2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS**

If any Management Committee member would like to make an addition or deletion to the agenda, this item is the time to suggest such.

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 SEPTEMBER 6, 2024 MEETING MINUTES**

This item is to review, offer any potential revisions, and approve final meeting minutes from the previous September 6, 2024 Management Committee meeting.

**Recommendation:** Approval of the minutes from September 6, 2024

**Attachment:** Draft September 6, 2024 Meeting Minutes

5. **TAC REPORT**

The TAC meeting held on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 was chaired by Mark Walton. The agenda and prior meeting's minutes were approved, and the meeting agenda then included presentations and discussions on the following topics:

- Dr. Jennifer Shafer, from Shafer Consulting, presented on the **CCMP Update**, which was previously brought to the fall Management Conference meetings where committee members heard how their input and comments were addressed. The presentation highlighted the changes made to the CCMP for the update and how the U.S. EPA comments were addressed after receiving the draft for review in the beginning of November. The EPA subsequently approved the draft with minor edits which were shared with the Committee. TAC members discussed whether their organizations should be added or removed as “Leads” for certain Activities depending on their involvement. One TAC member asked to review the Leads spreadsheet so that they could correctly attribute their “lead” or “co-lead” status, to which Dr. Shafer responded that she would provide the spreadsheet to CHNEP to share. Another member pointed out a typo where SWFWMD was listed as the Lead for an Activity twice, and Dr. Shafer said she would remove the extra “w” so that both Districts are credited as leads for that Activity. Another member suggested that NOAA Ocean Services should be included as a Co-Lead for Water Quality Activity 5.2 regarding harmful algal bloom detection and mitigation. These edits were made following the CHNEP TAC meeting and are included in the draft coming to the Management Committee today.
- Melynda Brown, from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Aquatic Preserves, shared an update from the Southwest Florida Estuarine Restoration Team (SWERT) regarding creation of a **Shellfish Restoration Working Group**. The SWERT met in August to review past and current restoration projects, what lessons have been learned, and the application to large-scale restoration projects with upcoming funding. The discussion was focused on forming a

Shellfish Restoration Working Group to begin working on a regional shellfish restoration design/permitting/restoration proposal using the original CHNEP Oyster Restoration Plan as a base to build off for the upcoming NOAA Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants to complete large-scale shellfish restoration. TAC members were encouraged to consider joining the Working Group if interested.

- Sarina Weiss, from the CHNEP, presented on the **CHNEP Water Atlas 2.0 Primer**. CHNEP recently finished a complete overhaul of the Water Atlas to make it more accurate, complete, and user-friendly. Pages are organized by waterbody, basin, and watershed, and are presented with their associated FDEP WBIDs, appropriate impairment status and water quality criteria, and all relevant publicly available data. The pages also include interactive maps with Water Quality, Hydrology, Wildlife Habitat, and Climate Change data to give a comprehensive overview of conditions in that waterbody. The pages are now live for over 600 waterbodies. There are also many topical pages such as on seagrass, clam habitat suitability, and habitat restoration needs to name a few. One member asked if there was any human population or census data on the new pages, to which Ms. Weiss responded that the basin pages do have population totals and will be updated when the latest census data is released. TAC discussion was focused on the impairment status and how the water quality snapshot and numeric nutrient criteria (NNC) are presented to ensure it is accurate. Ms. Weiss explained that CHNEP has been working with the FDEP Watershed Assessment team to ensure the criteria are accurate for each waterbody and said that FDEP is very enthusiastic about using the Numeric Nutrient Criteria Calculator tool themselves. Members also commented that it would be helpful for CHNEP to provide tutorial videos on how to use the Atlas. TAC members concluded that they are excited about the updated pages and that the CHNEP Water Atlas is a wonderful resource for members and the public alike. This [presentation](#) geared towards more technical audiences is available online on the [CHNEP Technical Advisory Committee webpage](#) to be viewed or shared.
- The TAC then engaged in a **2024 Storm Season Debrief** discussion. Members were asked to share any information they have on monitoring, flooding, methodologies, clean-up efforts and recovery done by their agency or municipality during their member update. Also discussed was the timing of the hurricanes which are coming later in the season and how areas fared in relation to Hurricane Ian from 2 years ago. There was also discussion on the collaborative efforts of partners and agencies and how CHNEP can play a role in bringing partners together for coordinating post-storm data collection and recovery efforts in the future. In response to this discussion, the CHNEP has created a new [Hurricanes Milton and Helene webpage](#) for partners to share and find resources related to post-storm recovery. There is also a [Natural Disaster Event Response](#) webpage and a [Hurricane Ian webpage](#) that includes planning and lessons learned guidance report out that came from the Hurricane Ian recovery discussion.

The TAC also heard the CHNEP Program Update and Technical Projects Update presentations and shared updates with each other on their respective counties and communities regarding natural resource-related activities and projects. There were no recommendations formed by the TAC pertaining directly to Management Committee agenda action items this cycle.

This presentation is by Mark Walton, TAC Co-Chair.

## 6. **CAC REPORT**

The CAC meeting held on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024 was chaired by Aaron Zimmermann. The agenda and prior meeting's minutes were approved, and the meeting agenda then included presentations and discussions on the following topics:

- CAC members welcomed the 3 **new CAC applicants**. From Manatee County, Brooke Langston is the Director of Land Protection for the Big Waters Land Trust (formerly Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast). She has previously worked for Sarasota County for 8 years in the Natural Areas Division and the Stormwater Division, during which time she was on CHNEP’s Technical Advisory Committee. From Sarasota County, Cheryl Cook, who has previously served on the Policy Committee for CHNEP. She has also served on advisory boards of the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority and the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council. She was involved in starting the process to preserve Orange Hammock in the City of North Port, working closely with the Conservation Foundation. Finally, from Highlands County, there is Zach Franco, who is the Conservation Partnerships Coordinator for the Archbold Biological Station and works at Buck Island Ranch. Archbold, located in Lake Wales Ridge at the headwaters of the Everglades, is aiming to grow in the way that they do conservation and is applying science and research to protect and understand the rarest and most endangered species. Their mission is to sustain grasslands, connecting large landscapes and wildlife corridors and addressing climate change. These applicants are proceeding to the Policy Committee for approval at their upcoming January meeting.
- Three **new Conservation Grant Applications** were reviewed and recommendations by CHNEP staff were provided for CAC review, discussion, and feedback. Two of the three grant applications were recommended by staff for funding:
  - The first new conservation grant application was for the Myakka River Management Coordinating Council website. The amount requested was \$220 and would support the domain registration and hosting of the mentioned website which is an educational resource about the watershed. It also supports the CHNEP mission to coordinate and publicly provide natural resource protection information.
  - The second new conservation grant application is for the “Citizen’s Pond Survey.” The amount requested is \$1,000. This grant involves improving an online survey application created for data collection from stormwater ponds by Lee County Pond Watch volunteers and expanding the reach beyond Lee County for potential use by the public in other counties.
  - The third new conservation grant application “Wildlife Conservation and Protection in an Audubon Certified Community.” The amount requested is \$9,500. This grant involves the removal of invasive plants and the installation of a microforest using Florida-friendly plants to attract bird diversity and other wildlife. The location is a 5,000 linear feet distance along the boundaries of Heritage Oaks HOA property adjacent to a public sidewalk in Sarasota County.

CHNEP staff recommended to fund the first two and not approve the third as it does not meet the approved criteria as the restoration site is on private property. Both recommended grants have deliverables with final reports and photos due after completion. After reviewing the projects and providing feedback, the CAC concurred with CHNEP staff recommendations to fund these two applications and deny the third, reaching out with resources for alternate funding pathways for HOA improvements.

- The CAC heard a presentation on **outcomes from Conservation Grant projects** completed at the end of the previous year (by or before September 2024). Russ Ringland from Future Forestry shared results and process behind the “Cape Coral Dry Retention Ponds Improvement Project.” This involved reconfiguring and planting a dry retention pond to collect and filter the runoff that is part of the Veteran’s Memorial Parkway in Lee County. CHNEP funded the purchase of native

plants, which were installed by volunteers and a local school group. This planting event also served as an educational opportunity. Future Forestry's mission is to rebuild the forest canopy in Lee County contributing to better air and water quality as well as make a great home for native plants and animals. CAC members had questions for Mr. Ringland on logistics of selecting sites and coordinating with the County. Lessons learned may be applicable when encouraging similar efforts in their own counties. Mr. Ringland said that the success of Future Forestry is largely due to long-term efforts and planning as well as building relationships with County staff and local volunteers.

- The CAC then heard a presentation about the **CCMP Update** from Dr. Jennifer Shafer, who will be presenting at this meeting as well. She spoke about how the EPA has approved the CCMP draft that the committees reviewed and revised last fall. The committee then heard information on updates that were made to address the minor comments given by EPA regional and headquarters staff. The committee then discussed what implementation looks like at their level-bringing topics of interest or research back to the Management Conference to share, collaborating on funding proposals or projects and letters of support and sharing the resources from CHNEP within their communities.

Finally, the CAC heard the CHNEP Program and Technical Project update presentations that are also coming before Management Committee today and shared updates with each other on their respective counties and communities and natural resource related activities and projects. There were no recommendations formed by the CAC pertaining directly to Management Committee agenda action items this cycle.

This presentation is by Aaron Zimmermann, CAC Co-Chair.

## 7. CHNEP UPDATE

The following represents program activity highlights since the beginning of the last 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 final draft and an EPA comment/response document being shared at this meeting. EPA sent a letter approving the Final Draft on 12/17/24.

#### 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)
- SWFWMD/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 CHNEP Calendar](#) design with printer, which has since been printed and 25,000 copies have been distributed to 10 libraries, mailed to 6,000+ subscribers, shipped to 80 partner organizations as well as some to CHNEP offices for use in CHNEP outreach events.
- 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 [Laishley 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](#)

This update is by Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP Executive Director.

## **8. FINAL CHNEP 2025 COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN (CCMP)**

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 briefed on 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 presentation is by Dr. Jennifer Shafer, from Shafer Consulting.

**Attachments:** Final Updated 2025 CHNEP CCMP Document  
CHNEP CCMP Update EPA Comments Document  
CCMP Updates to Leads and Co-Leads Document  
EPA 2025 CHNEP CCMP Approval Letter

## **9. MYAKKA NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS DESIGNATION UPDATE**

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was established by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, authorizing Congress to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. Congress has specified in some Wild and Scenic River designations, that rivers are to be administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the NPS in partnership with local governments, councils, watershed groups and non-governmental organizations, generally through the use of cooperative agreements. In these [Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers](#), communities

protect their own outstanding rivers and river-related resources through a collaborative approach. Designation safeguards the special character of these rivers, while also recognizing the potential for their appropriate use and development. It encourages river management that crosses political boundaries and promotes public participation in developing goals for river protection. Designation can potentially bring more federal conservation funding, as designated rivers are eligible for additional federal funding and grants to support conservation, restoration, and sustainable management efforts. These funds can stimulate local economies through projects and employment opportunities. Finally, designation can act as a catalyst to further engage and unite communities, agencies, and conservationists in the shared vision of preserving the Myakka River.

Federal wild and scenic designation typically starts with a study conducted by the relevant federal, state, or local agency to determine if the river meets the eligibility criteria. After the study, a recommendation is made to Congress for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Congress then decides whether to designate the river based on the recommendation. The Myakka River already has a study, completed in 1984, which proposes 37 miles of the Myakka River within the Myakka River State Park be included as a state administered component of the National Wild and Scenic River System, with the State of Florida continuing its current management practices to protect the natural and cultural qualities of the designated segment of the Myakka River within the Myakka River State Park. It also suggested additional segments of the Myakka River be designated as components of the National System if the state and local initiatives were put in place to provide permanent protection for the river corridor, as well as a “Myakka River Commission” established to coordinate efforts to conserve the Myakka River area. There now is such a body called the “Myakka River Management Coordinating Council” (their website is available at <http://www.myakkarivermanagement.org/>, and CHNEP is a participating member). [Note: Chris Oliver of the Myakka River Coordinating Council and Florida Department of Environmental Protection has been invited to participate in this agenda item discussion, and pending FDEP approval, may be available to answer Committee questions.]

This presentation is an update on this topic which was an agenda item on this committee’s agenda a year ago (1/12/24). At that time, the CHNEP Management Committee voted to recommend that the Policy Committee support the “partnership” wild and scenic rivers designation of the Myakka River to implement the 1984 Myakka River Study’s recommendation to designate at least the 37 miles of river within Myakka River State Park. [Note: SWFWMD voted nay and City of North Port, FWC and SFWMD abstained.] This informational update presentation will also be made to the upcoming CHNEP Policy Committee, who tabled the item and then asked for it to return to be included in this cycle’s agenda for their meeting.

This presentation is by Jaime Doubek-Racine of the SE Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers branch, U.S. National Park Service.

**Attachments:**            [1984 Myakka River Study](#)

## **10. PEACE NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS DESIGNATION UPDATE**

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was established by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, authorizing Congress to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. Congress has specified in some Wild and Scenic River designations, that rivers are to be administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the NPS in partnership with local governments, councils, watershed groups and non-governmental organizations, generally through the use of cooperative agreements. In these [Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers](#), communities

protect their own outstanding rivers and river-related resources through a collaborative approach. This is the approach being entertained for Myakka River's designations. Designation safeguards the special character of these rivers, while also recognizing the potential for their appropriate use and development. It encourages river management that crosses political boundaries and promotes public participation in developing goals for river protection. Designation can potentially bring more federal conservation funding, as designated rivers are eligible for additional federal funding and grants to support conservation, restoration, and sustainable management efforts. These funds can stimulate local economies through projects and employment opportunities. Finally, designation can act as a catalyst to further engage and unite communities, agencies, and conservationists in the shared vision of preserving the Peace and Myakka Rivers.

The designation process typically starts with a study conducted by the relevant federal, state, or local agency to determine if the river meets the eligibility criteria. After the study, a recommendation is made to Congress for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Congress then decides whether to designate the river based on the recommendation. The Peace River does not yet have a study, so that would be the first step for it to proceed towards potential designation.

This presentation is an update on this topic which was an agenda item on this committee's agenda a year ago (1/12/24). At that time, the CHNEP Management Committee voted to recommend that the Policy Committee support the "partnership" wild and scenic rivers designation of the Peace for the purposes of conducting a Study of the Peace River. [Note: SWFWMD voted nay and City of North Port, FWC and SFWMD abstained.] This informational update presentation will also be made to the upcoming CHNEP Policy Committee, who tabled the item and then asked for it to return to be included in this cycle's agenda for their meeting.

This presentation is by Jaime Doubek-Racine of the SE Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers branch, U.S. National Park Service.

#### **11. FEDERAL IRC LISTENING SESSION OF CHNEP MEMBER 2024 HURRICANE RECOVERY NEEDS**

The federal government Interagency Recovery Coordination (IRC) team, consisting of FEMA, US ACOE, USDA, US EDA, US EPA and other federal agencies, is sending a representative to personally listen to CHNEP Management Committee members with regards to the challenges they are facing with recovery from recent Hurricanes Helene and Milton. The IRC supports state, local, tribal, and territorial government in the development and pursuit of their resilient outcomes by providing federal recovery resources, technical assistance, and support.

After a brief introduction by the IRC representative, Management Committee members will each have the opportunity to share comments on their community recovery needs - with a focus on natural resource restoration and protection (shorelines, drinking and recreational waters, environmental lands/parks, wildlife, etc.). Member comments may include recovery priorities, projects, status of current recovery efforts, or ideas that could help the community manage risks from future storms. These member comments will inform the federal government as to how it can address priority community recovery needs in providing additional resources, technical assistance, services, etc. Following this meeting, CHNEP member comments will be compiled by CHNEP staff and provided to the IRC for the IRC to provide written follow-up responses and contacts. Once CHNEP receives the IRC's responses, CHNEP will then send the comment response document back out to CHNEP members to serve as a resource to them.

Additionally, CHNEP is working with the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council to co-host a day-long workshop listening session in February to focus on additional topics of recovery pertaining to aquaculture/agriculture, communities, infrastructure, small businesses, etc. CHNEP will send information about this February listening session to CHNEP Management Committee members as soon as it is confirmed.

The item introduction is by Greg Vaday from the US Economic Development Administration, with Co-Chair Dave Hutchinson facilitating member commenting discussion.

## **12. CHNEP TECHNICAL PROJECTS UPDATE**

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 online at:

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

This update is by Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP Director of Research & Restoration.

## **13. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

## **14. FUTURE MEETING DATES AND TOPICS**

Upcoming CHNEP Management Committee meetings in 2025 will be held on May 9, 2025 & September 5, 2025, in the same location as this meeting. Please hold these dates on your calendar, with other details including agenda being sent via email at least one week in advance. If you have ideas for future meeting topics, please send to [jhecker@chnep.org](mailto:jhecker@chnep.org).

## **15. ADJOURN**