



Draft CHNEP Management Committee Meeting Minutes

Friday May 10th, 2024, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm

Charlotte County Centennial Park

Large Multipurpose Room

1120 Centennial Blvd., Port Charlotte, FL 33953

Members Present:

Rachel Hart	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Mike Taylor	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Melynda Brown	Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Jamie Wolanin	Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
Jerri Sackett	Central Florida Regional Planning Council
Phil Flood	South Florida Water Management District
Vivianna Bendixson	Southwest Florida Water Management District
Jeff Devine	West Coast Inland Navigation District
Dave Hutchinson	Sarasota-Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization
Matt DePaolis	Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation
Kris Ramon	Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority
Brandon Moody	Charlotte County
Misty Nichols	Gasparilla Island Conservation & Improvement Association
Lisa Kreiger	Lee County
Gaye Sharpe	Polk County
Paul Semenech	Sarasota County
Maya Robert	City of Cape Coral
Ryan Pieper	City of North Port
Holly Milbrandt	City of Sanibel
Chadd Chustz	Town of Fort Myers Beach
Mark Walton	Southwest Florida Water Management District (CHNEP TAC Co-Chair)
Debi Osborne	Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast (CHNEP CAC Co-Chair)

Others Present:

Jennifer Hecker	Coastal & Heartland Natural Estuary Partnership
Nicole Iadevaia	Coastal & Heartland Natural Estuary Partnership
Sarina Weiss	Coastal & Heartland Natural Estuary Partnership
Keara Abel	Coastal & Heartland Natural Estuary Partnership
Daniel Sensi	Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Kali Spurgin	Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation
Danny Quick	City of North Port
David Shafer	Shafer Consulting

Agenda Item #1 – Call to Order and Introductions — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair

Co-Chair Dave Hutchinson called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM.

Agenda Item #2 Additions or Deletions — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair

PHIL FLOOD MOVED, SECONDED BY MATT DEPAOLIS, TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS AS PRESENTED. THE MOTION WAS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

Agenda Item #3 – Public Comment on Agenda Items — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair

There was no public comment.

Agenda Item #4 -- Management Committee January 12th, 2024 Meeting Minutes — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair

There was a brief discussion regarding the abstentions on agenda items at the previous Management Committee meeting on January 12th, 2024. SWFWMD reaffirmed its initial “nay” vote for Agenda Item 9. Also for Agenda Item 9, there was clarification from those that abstained. City of North Port abstained due to a potential conflict with professional duties, SFWMD abstained because it is outside its jurisdiction, and FWC abstained due to a potential conflict with professional duties. For Agenda Item 10, although SWFWMD initially abstained from the vote, it subsequently voted “nay.” The Committee discussed that the minutes sections related to Agenda Items 9 and 10 votes should be clarified and revised accordingly.

WITH REVISION TO AGENDA 9 AND 10 VOTES, A MOTION BY PHIL FLOOD, SECONDED BY PAUL SEMENEC, WAS MADE TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 12TH, 2024 MEETING MINUTES. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

Agenda Item #5 – Management Committee Election — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair

As stated in the bylaws, Management Committee co-chairs are elected on an alternating basis annually each Spring for 2-year terms. By staggering terms, a new co-chair is paired with an experienced co-chair and the duties are shared. Nominations were sought in advance of the meeting with the direction that members could suggest other members for the position or nominate themselves. Also, additional members could be nominated during the meeting. Only one nomination was received – Melynda Brown – Florida Department of Environmental Protection. She accepted the nomination

A MOTION BY HOLLY MILBRANDT TO ACCEPT THE NOMINATION OF MELYNDA BROWN AS THE CO-CHAIR OF THE CHNEP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE, SECONDED BY PHIL FLOOD. THE MOTION CARRIED UNIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

Agenda Item #6 – CHNEP Update — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP

CHNEP’s Executive Director, Jennifer Hecker, presented on programmatic activity occurring since the last Management Committee meeting.

CHNEP planned and executed the Winter committee meetings. The CHNEP Policy Committee approved updates to the Committee bylaws and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Charlotte County at the January meeting. CHNEP reached out to participating agencies, cities, and counties with committee vacancies to designate new representatives. Based on the responses, all internal lists for each committee were updated and new member emails and packets were sent out. CHNEP received USEPA Region 4 and HQ approval for 2023 NEPORT (National Estuary Program Online Reporting Tool) Congressional Report for annual partner conservation, management, and restoration accomplishments. CHNEP provided 2 letters of support for projects relating to stormwater improvements and septic-to-sewer conversion; updated CHNEP conservation grant application to reflect increases to available funding which is now at

\$10,000; and sent out custom budget reminder letters to all CHNEP members who make contributions. CHNEP also provided a letter of interest/acknowledgement for the following research project proposals focused on the CHNEP area: *Testing the effectiveness and suitability of Vallisneria spiralis plantings in stormwater canals for improving water quality in a southwest Florida estuary and Coastal Habitat Monitoring*. At the request of FWC, CHNEP served on the Management Advisory Group for the Babcock Webb WMA Plan update, providing comments and data to assist in the development of management intent, goals and objectives, and challenges and strategies for their 10-year Management Plan. Over the past cycle, CHNEP fully executed SD015 FDEP Funding Agreement, Central Florida Regional Planning Council Interlocal Agreement, and Lee County Interlocal Agreement. FY24 Q1 reports for SWFWMD FY21 and FY24 were sent and after these were approved, CHNEP prepared the final reimbursement request that was received, closing out the SWFWMD FY21 agreement. CHNEP worked with the EPA to update the FY24 BIL Work Plan and submit a revised grant request package for FY24 BIL funds from the EPA, which is expected to be processed shortly; worked with the EPA and the City of Punta Gorda to update a grant request package for novated funds from FY22-23 from EPA, which is presently being processed by the EPA; received the SWFWMD FY24 Cooperative Agreement which has recently been approved by CHNEP's host for acceptance; received and processed annual CHNEP member contribution checks for FY24; and received and processed 40 private individual donations in the total amount of \$1,995.

CHNEP staff attended several partnership meetings since last cycle. In addition, CHNEP attended and presented at numerous events which included as a Plenary Panelist at the 2024 Eco Summit (hosted by the Science and Environmental Council in Sarasota) on the *Recharging Nature with Estuary Restoration* panel along with other Florida Gulf Coast NEP (National Estuary Program) directors; as a session proposer/host at the Gulf of Mexico Conference (GOMCON) with Auburn University – session title: *Advancing Coastal Resiliency through Watershed Planning and Hydrological Restoration*; presented on hydrological restoration planning initiatives in the CHNEP: *Moving Water to Restore Rivers, Wetlands and Estuaries* at the Gulf of Mexico Conference; presented on updates to the CHNEP Water Atlas in *CHNEP Water Atlas: An Interactive Estuaries Report Card* presentation at the 2024 AWRA Geospatial Water Technology Conference; presented on the *CHNEP Water Atlas: An Interactive Estuaries Report Card* at the Coastal Habitat Integrated Monitoring and Mapping Program Workshop; had a poster presentation on *CHNEP Habitat Restoration Needs Plan* at the Coastal Habitat Integrated Monitoring and Mapping Program Workshop; and submitted abstracts for Restore America's Estuaries Conference 2025.

As for outreach updates, CHNEP hosted and organized the 2024 Southwest Florida Climate Summit in Punta Gorda, which had 200+ attendees each day; prepared science communication/education tools and resources that were sent to each CAC member to assist them in their community outreach efforts; attended Water, Wings and Wild Things Festival at Circle B Bar Preserve in Polk County which had over 200 students from schools throughout Polk County; co-hosted the Myakka Headwaters Preserve Tree Planting with the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast and SBEP (volunteers planted 600+ tree saplings in 2 hours; provided environmental educational materials for partner events including LAMSID, Wings over Water Festival, Cape Coral Waterways Festival, Lemon Bay Conservancy Open House and the City of North Port Public Works Road-E-O; held exhibitor booths at the One Charlotte One Water Workshop, the Annual Southwest Florida Water Resources Conference, and the Everglades Coalition Conference; distributed calendars, fact sheets, CCMP brochures, upcoming volunteer event information, 2024 Southwest Florida Climate Summit fliers, and also assisted Charlotte County in gathering stakeholder feedback related to water quality via surveys at the One Charlotte One Water Workshop and provided educational materials to the public and policymakers present; attended the Highlands Hammocks Civilian Conservation Corps Festival where over 300 people visited the CHNEP booth which included a bird trivia wheel, Backyard Bird Week information, kids' scratch-off ocean crafts, and more; attended the Swamp Cabbage Festival in LaBelle where over 60 people came to the CHNEP booth and children received educational materials about CHNEP, calendars, CCMP brochures, and kids' activity books; attended the

Chalo Nitka Festival in Moore Haven where over 40 people came to the CHNEP booth where children played a fish habitat game and learned how to measure popular game fish; attended Wild About Nature Festival hosted by the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast and made 120+ native wildflower seed bombs with families and distributed Kids' Activity Books; attended the Ding Darling Conservation Carnival at Lakes Park in Fort Myers where visitors won 140 native wildflower seed bombs as well as other prizes and Kids' Activity Books after participating in a bean bag toss game and pollinator trivia (over 240 people visited the booth throughout the event); updated the Funding Opportunities Fact Sheet to distribute to stakeholders, community members, and anyone who can benefit from utilizing current funding opportunities; celebrated and recognized #IHeartEstuaries month in February with a series of posts on Facebook and Instagram highlighting estuaries and projects; and attended the Hardee County Schools' Field Trip to Charlotte Harbor and assisted in providing hands-on environmental and water resources education to 50 4th grade students and provided 50 copies of the CHNEP Kids' Activity Book to the Hardee County Water Resources Education Program.

CHNEP staff were interviewed and featured in “*Experts: Flooding puts flat Florida at risk*” – Charlotte Sun Newspaper and “*Experts will gather in Punta Gorda next week to present the latest climate science and the public is invited to attend*” – WGCU National Public Radio's Gulf Coast Life program. CHNEP has 1,951 Facebook followers with 1,714 total likes, 6,041 subscribers for the educational mailings, 3,124 unique visitors and 4,742 page visits to the CHNEP website this year, 10,209 YouTube views with 65 subscribers and 299 videos, and 584 Instagram followers.

One member commented that the total number of students from Polk County that attended the Water, Wings, and Wild Things Festival at the Circle B Bar Preserve was 2000. There were no further committee questions or comments.

Agenda Item #7 – TAC Report -- Mark Walton, TAC Co-Chair

Mark Walton, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Co-Chair, provided a report from the April 11, 2024. TAC's co-chair election was held, and Mark Walton was re-elected co-chair for a new 2-year term. The Committee heard from Dr. Madison Trowbridge of the Southwest Florida Water Management District who presented on *Iron: A Limiting Nutrient for Benthic Microalgae in Florida Springs?* This presentation focused on the Rainbow River and how it was determined that the growth of filamentous macroalgae in that river is not limited by nitrate alone; it can be stimulated from iron that is present in the sediment and the porewater from the aquifers. As for the CCMP update and input from TAC members, the Committee supported all the staff's suggestions. The suggestions for Water Quality Improvement were endorsed the focus on bioindicators; updating of language regarding septic tanks; adding “Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plants;” adding PFAS and PCBs in the narrative on “Emerging Pollutants/Contaminants,” and adding language to reflect recent updates to stormwater rules. For Hydrological Restoration the Committee recommended adding language to support community use of “low impact design,” mentioning extremes in timing (e.g. drier dry seasons, wetter wet seasons); including the C-43 reservoir's progress; adding information regarding Lake Okechobee Service Operating Manual; encouraging the engagement of stormwater hydrologic engineering projects; adding language to encourage floodplain connectivity projects; and adding language about the hydrologic restoration component of upstream coastal ponds. For Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Protection, the Committee recommended adding language to encourage seagrass trends; adding language distinguishing between clam and shellfish restoration; encouraging the development of Estuarine Habitat Condition Index; incorporating Wessel et al. 2022 tidal creek work; and adding the consideration and utilization of living shorelines as alternatives to seawalls. For Public Engagement, TAC suggested using public information officers and outreach staff to extend its reach; changing “monthly emails” to “monthly communications;” inviting new residents to participate in volunteer events and provide information about the watershed; and updating text to reflect that SCCF (Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation) recently absorbed the Sanibel Sea School.

Agenda Item #8 – CAC Report — Debi Osborne, CAC Co-Chair

Debi Osborne, Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Co-Chair provided a verbal report from the April 13, 2024 virtual meeting that she chaired. CAC’s co-chair election was held and Aaron Zimmerman, as the only nominee, was unanimously elected for a 2-year term. The CAC was presented with the single new conservation grant application. It is from the Environmental Conservancy of North Port for Stewardship Funding for Neighborhood Land Management of conserved lands. The amount requested was \$2,150. The CAC agreed with CHNEP staff to fully fund the land management plan and thus the grant itself. As for the CCMP update and input from CAC members, the Committee supported all the staff’s suggestions. For Water Quality Improvement, the CAC suggested adding more discussion of *Lyngbya*; it supports a shift to holistic management strategies; and adding more information about public-friendly water quality information on the CHNEP Water Atlas. For Hydrological Restoration, the CAC had no additional recommendations. For Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Protection, the CAC suggested adding language on “Habitat Restoration Needs” in the narrative. Finally, for Public Engagement, the CAC recommended that the narrative should outline all the ways that the CHNEP reaches out to officials at every level; amending staff recommendation of annual meetings with elected officials to also include “and other communications” and adding “Water Quality Economic Report” into the narrative.

Debi Members announced she is retiring from Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast after 36 years in land conservation and that the Director of Land Conservation position is open for those interested. The Committee thanked Debi Osborne for her many years of service – not just as a CAC member and Co-Chair but also as respected part of the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast organization.

Agenda Item #9 – FY2025 EPA 320 Work Plan & Budget — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP

Ms. Jennifer Hecker presented the FY2025 EPA 320 Work Plan and Budget and outlined pertinent removals, carryovers, decreases, updates, and overall adjusted funding in detail for both revenue and expense portions with narrative task descriptions to reflect the changes.

The list of amendments for the FY2025 EPA 320 Work Plan & Budget are as follows: in Table 1, changed the table title from “Income Statement Summary” to “FY25 Budget Overview;” included \$2,000 for total personnel budget line, paid for by local finds to cover D.C. Congressional Hill visits regarding annual Congressional appropriations for funding the National Estuary Program; FY24 Novated EPA 320 funds shown in the revenue category as they have just been received but have to be approved for acceptance by CHNEP host in May and will not be expended (for personnel) until FY2025 so it will be carried over to budgeted carryover revenue; and overall “Revenue and Expenditures” changed from \$2,272,800 in FY24 (without Novated Funds) to \$2,431,675 in FY2025 (with Novated Funds). In Table 2: changed table title from “Fiscal Year 2024 Overhead Administrative Costs Budget” to “Fiscal Year 2025 Administrative Budget; “Meeting Support” increased from \$7,000 to \$10,000; “Communication Software & Fees” increased from \$9,000 to \$12,000; and “Overall Administrative Budget” increased from \$250,869 to \$256,869. In Table 3: changed year in table title; and overall anticipated revenue remains the same at \$338,000. In Table 4: updated year in table title as well as the anticipated staff travel conferences and locations based on best currently available information; and “Overall Travel Budget Costs” remain the same at \$25,000. In Table 5: increased sponsorships from \$6,500 (which had been decreased due to Hurricane Ian) to \$10,000; increased “Conservation Grants” from \$24,500 to \$30,000; changed “Calendar” and “Calendar Support” to “Publications” and “Publication Support;” removed Harbor Happenings to mitigate rising print and mailing costs of publications and move to more digital communications; increased “CHNEP Events” from \$4,238 to \$16,214 to account for rising costs associated with annual Climate Summit and other CHNEP-hosted events; and overall “Public Outreach Budget” decreased from \$115,068 to \$106,321. In Table 6: changed table title from “Technical Projects Funding Table” to “Research and Restoration Projects Budget” in FY2025; added FY23 EPA 320 item

for Water Quality Trends project paid for by these unexpended carryover funds; removed FY23 EPA BIL item for “CHNEP Water Atlas Maintenance & Improvements” as that year’s contract is anticipated to be completed prior to the next fiscal year; adjusted 2024 EPA 320 “TBD Restore/Restoration” (\$14,491 to \$49,491) to reflect the current amount of unexpended unappropriated funds available for this; added “2025 Lower CCHMN – Water Quality & Assistance in amount of \$13,000 and “Caloosahatchee Basin SAV Restoration and Water Quality Project” for \$260,000 paid for EPA 320 funding; added “FY2025 Upper CCHMN – Water Quality Monitoring” in amount of \$13,000 paid for by SWFWMD funding; added “2025 TBD Project Costs” in the amount of \$20,000 paid for by local funding; added 2025 EPA BIL funded projects including Sarasota and Manatee Vulnerability Assessments each in the amount of \$200,000, next year’s “CHNEP Water Atlas & Maintenance & Improvements” in the amount of \$85,000 and “FY2025 Restoration Project TBD” in the amount of \$141,800; and overall “Research & Restoration Projects Budget” increased from \$1,021,291 to \$1,342,675 – this is the result of the Novated EPA 320 funding paying for a large amount of FY2025 personnel costs, allowing regular EPA 320 funding to go to added research and restorations projects and initiatives. Other Work Plan highlights include: added FY24 “Previous Year Accomplishments (to date, will be updated in next cycle’s amendments with accomplishment through the remainder of this fiscal year); staff organization chart is unchanged – the only unfilled budgeted position is Restoration Specialist which is reliant upon full BIL workload to become clearer before deciding whether to hire; and EPA 32 FY24 Novated Funds will be used towards FY2025 personnel – this will allow those funds to be expended and closed out in the a timely manner within the remaining grant timeframe. These identified changes that have been outlined were carried forward into the appropriate areas of the narrative task descriptions.

One member commented that he was glad to see that the events budget has been increased and he suggested that CHNEP may want to amend the travel expenses allocation in the future due to rising costs. Ms. Hecker said that with 10 counties to cover, CHNEP staff are routinely traveling whether regionally or nationally. It is vital to get the information into the hands of decisionmakers and technical professionals in other areas that may benefit. CHNEP will make amendments as needed especially with a growing staff. Another member referenced Table 3 – Local Government Revenue – and asked when the last time that local membership dues/contributions were increased to accommodate rising costs. Ms. Hecker responded that in the budget reminder letters that are sent every year, each CHNEP partner is asked to consider increasing their portion. Several partners have increased their contributions in recent years, and there has been feedback from other partners that they are still recovering from Hurricane Ian and have no spare funds within their respective budgets at this time. The member then mentioned Table 6 – the Sarasota and Manatee Vulnerability Assessments and noted that “county” needed to be added after Sarasota. Another member asked about the 2025 SAV water quality study in Table 6 and what is about or if the details are still being worked out. Ms. Iadevaia responded that this project came through previously and it regarding understanding nutrient uptake in the sediment, water column and the plant tissue. There were a few canals (specifically dead-end canals in the Caloosahatchee Basin) selected and researchers were hoping to work with some of the counties and university researchers to compile the nutrient uptake numbers.

WITH AMMENDMENT TO ADD WORD “COUNTY”, MISTY NICHOLS MOVED, SECONDED BY PHIL FLOOD, TO RECOMMEND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE APPROVAL OF AMENDED FY2025 EPA 320 WORK PLAN AND BUDGET. THE MOTION WAS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

Agenda Item #10 – FY2025 EPA BIL Work Plan & Budget — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP

Ms. Jennifer Hecker presented the FY2025 EPA BIL Work Plan and outlined pertinent removals, carryovers, decreases, updates, and overall adjusted funding in detail for both revenue and expense portions with narrative task descriptions to reflect the changes.

The list of amendments for the FY2025 EPA BIL Work Plan & Budget are as follows: in Table 1: updated the year in the table title; “Revenue & Expenditures” same as FY24; modified expenditures to remove “Yucca Pens Hydrological Restoration Project Phase 1,” and “DeSoto and Hardee County Vulnerability Assessments” as they are FY24 funded projects; and modified “Expenditures” to add “Sarasota County and Manatee County Vulnerability Assessments” as FY2025 BIL-funded projects. In Table 2: updated the year in the table title; updated the year in the table title as well as the anticipated staff travel conferences and locations based on the best currently available information; and “Overall Travel Budget Costs” remain the same at \$10,000. In Table 3: changed table title from “Technical Projects Funding Table” to “Research and Restoration Projects budget” in FY2025; added FY23 EPA 320 item for Water Quality Trends Project – paid for by these unexpended carryover funds; removed FY23 EPA 320 BIL item for “CHNEP Water Atlas Maintenance & Improvements” as that year’s contract is anticipated to be completed prior to the next fiscal year; adjusted 2024 EPA 320 “TBD Research/Restoration (\$14,491 to \$49,491) to reflect the current amount of the unexpended unappropriated funds available for this; added “2025 Lower CCHMN – Water Quality Monitoring & Assistance” in the amount of \$13,000 and “Caloosahatchee Basin SAV Restoration and Water Quality Project” for \$260,000 paid for by EPA 320 funding; added “2025 Upper CCHMN – Water Quality Monitoring” in the amount of \$13,000 paid for by SWFWMD funding; added “2025 TBD Project Costs” in the amount of \$20,000 paid for by local funding; added 2025 EPA BIL funded projects including Sarasota and Manatee Vulnerability Assessments each in the amount of \$200,000, next year’s “CHNEP Water Atlas Maintenance & Improvements” in the amount of \$85,000, and “FY2025 Restoration Project TBD” in the amount of \$414,800; and overall “Research & Restoration Projects Budget” increased from \$1,021,291 to \$1,342,675 – this is a result of the Novated EPA 320 funding paying for a large amount of FY2025 personnel costs, allowing regular EPA 320 funding to go to added research and restoration projects and initiatives. These identified changes were then carried forward into the appropriate areas of the narrative task descriptions.

The same committee comment was made to add “county” so it is after both Sarasota and Manatee vulnerability assessments. Another mentioned that in Table 1, the travel line for \$10,000 needed to be added and the total was accurate as it reflected that. Ms. Hecker said that the line for travel under “Expenditures” and the word “County” after Sarasota would be added as requested.

WITH AMMENDMENTS TO ADD WORD “COUNTY” AND TO ADD A TRAVEL LINE ITEM IN AMOUNT OF \$10,000 TO TABLE 1, PHIL FLOOD MOVED, SECONDED BY JAMIE WOLANIN, TO RECOMMEND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE APPROVAL OF AMENDED FY2025 BIL WORK PLAN AND BUDGET. THE MOTION WAS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

Agenda Item #11 – Overview of the CHNEP Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) 5-Year Update — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP

The US EPA requires a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) from each National Estuary Program entity to receive and guide federal funding to the region. The USEPA requires each CCMP to be reevaluated every 5 years to see if it needs a “revision” or an “update.” “Revisioning” is major substantive changes like adding priority actions such as requiring lengthier more extensive review and approval by the EPA. CHNEP did this in 2017-2019 when the entire CHNEP CCMP was rewritten over 2 years with committee input over multiple meeting cycles. “Updating” is for minor substantive changes and updates and requires less of the EPA review process. Since it has been 5 years since the 2019 CHNEP CCMP was approved, CHNEP staff was required to review the CCMP to determine if updating or revisioning was needed. It was determined that only an update is needed. Updating the CCMP is important because it guides CHNEP funding and staff time; it enables continued federal funding for resource protection in the CHNEP area, some of which is distributed to CHNEP member municipalities/agencies and partner organizations; it is intended to capture the latest science and consensus

on the direction of the Partnership's collective work to further water quality and habitat goals for the region; and these updates are not obligating partners to actions, but instead are used to guide how the NEP can provide programmatic or funding support for research, restoration, and public engagement efforts outlined therein. CHNEP staff read through the entire document and formed an initial list of staff recommendations on the updates that are needed (all graphics with data will also be reviewed and updated with newer information as it is available at the time of updating). The CHNEP CCMP 5-year update timeline is as follows: April/May – staff recommendations presented to CHNEP Management Conference committees (TAC, Citizen's Advisory Committee, Management, and Policy) and all committee members' comments are collected; in June/July, there is the procurement of contractor services to create an updated CCMP together with a comment/response document to committee comments, graphics updating, editing, layout, etc.; in August/September, the final draft is brought back to the Fall Management Conference meetings for final review and approval; and in October/November, the updated CCMP is sent to the EPA for final approval (once final draft is approved, it will be printed and distributed in 2025). In preparation for this meeting, committee members were asked to review the 2019 CCMP and staff recommendations. This meeting is the opportunity to provide comments and suggestions relating to the CCMP update. Update suggestions could include adding new and emerging research or issues that the Partnership is working on to reflect the state of the science; removing outdated information or text relating projects and initiatives that have since been completed or retired; and/or making any needed adjustments to an "activity," including adjusting the metrics to reflect current capacity and priorities.

Agenda Item #12 – Action Plan 1 Update: Water Quality Improvement — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP

WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

VISION: Waters that meet their designated human uses for drinking, shellfish harvesting, or swimming and fishing, while supporting appropriate and healthy aquatic life.

GOAL: Water quality improvement.

OBJECTIVE: Meet or exceed water quality standards for designated uses of natural waterbodies and waterways with no degradation of Outstanding Florida Waters.

STRATEGY: Support comprehensive and coordinated water quality monitoring programs, and projects and programs that reduce pollutants entering waterways.

Action 1: Support a comprehensive and coordinated water quality monitoring and assessment strategy.

- 1.1 Maintenance or increase of the spatial and temporal extent of ambient water quality monitoring data collection with appropriate QA/QC.
- 1.2 Updates of water quality data to the Water Atlas at least twice per year, and continuous public online access to water quality via the Water Atlas.
- 1.3 Creation and dissemination of water quality status summaries for all basins in the CHNEP study area at least once per year.
- 1.4 Establishment of sampling and analysis protocols; periodic water sampling using established sampling and analysis protocols at targeted locations.

Action 2: Develop water quality standards, pollutant limits, and cleanup plans.

- 2.1 Restoration of water quality in at least 5 impaired waterbodies, demonstrated by water quality data indicating they are fully meeting the water quality standards for their designated beneficial use(s).

Action 3: Reduce urban stormwater and agricultural runoff pollution.

- 3.1 Increased number of green infrastructure projects developed and implemented.
- 3.2 Increased agricultural stakeholders enrolled in SWFWMD-FARMS, USDA NRCS, and FDAC Programs for their commodity.

Action 4: Reduce wastewater pollution.

- 4.1 Reduced sanitary sewer system overflows and releases.
- 4.2 Reduced the number of septic systems and small package plants threatening surface and groundwater

Action 5: Reduce harmful algal blooms.

- 5.1 Tracking and dissemination of information about occurrences and reduction of harmful effects from algae blooms, including influencing factors and impacts of climate stressors on HABs.

Overview of TAC & CAC substantive Water Quality Improvement Action Plan recommendations:

- Endorsed the focus on bioindicators (TAC)
- Updating the language regarding septic tanks (TAC)
- Adding “Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plants” (TAC)
- Adding PFAS and PCBs in the narrative on “Emerging Pollutants/Contaminants (TAC)
- Adding language to reflect recent updates to stormwater rules (TAC)
- Adding more discussion of *Lyngbya* (CAC)
- Support a shift to holistic management strategies (CAC)
- Add more information about public-friendly water quality information on the CHNEP Water Atlas (CAC)

Overview of CHNEP substantive Water Quality Improvement Action Plan recommendations:

WQ-1.3: Assess and report water quality status and trends:

- Revise 5-Year Performance Measure from “Creation and dissemination of water quality status summaries annually” to reflect new CHNEP Water Atlas capabilities (tools, pages, etc.) that assess and report water quality status and trends on a real-time basis and include water quality criteria and data, bioindicators and habitat.

WQ-2: Develop water quality standards, pollutant limits, and cleanup plans:

- Remove “NNC Development and Implementation Facilitator” update responsible parties to FDEP only and update 5-year performance measure metric to remove language of 5 impaired waterbodies meeting Water Quality standards.

WQ-2.1: Encourage review, development and implementation of additional water quality criteria and targets:

- Revise narrative section on bioindicators to remove tools no longer in use due to paradigm shift in the region related to water quality and bioindicators, for example, instead of only using seagrass spatial extent and targets (related to water clarity) add in holistic management strategy shift to examine seagrass quantity and quality, macroalgae growth to uptake excess nutrients with water column data and other related habitat or species indicators.
- Carry forward to similar section in the Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Protection Action Plan.

WQ-5.1: Reduce Harmful Algal Blooms:

- Adding “including macroalgae” after HABs in activity header. Narrative – expand language on macroalgae to reflect how it has increased in our region and other scientific evidence of its impacts.

Also, revise to reflect growing scientific evidence/consensus on role of anthropogenic nutrients on red tide severity, frequency, and duration.

Climate change considerations incorporated into each section:

- Add any new climate change consideration information based on science in the last 5 years related to Water Quality Improvement Actions (including coastal acidification, rainfall changes, storm intensity and frequency, etc.).

Management Committee Member Recommendations:

- Adding language about incorporating resilient systems approach that will lead to coordinating protection of natural systems with other critical infrastructure within the region. (Nature-based solutions in concert with critical infrastructure to increase resiliency.)
- 4.1 and 4.2 – Adding language about identifying opportunities to encourage stormwater and wastewater improvements and/or relocation of lift stations to a higher elevation to accommodate climate change effects such as sea level rise.
- Adding an activity to develop and support the implementation of the recommendations that come from vulnerability assessments to protect water quality; participate in regional collaboration to address vulnerabilities identified in VAs and increase resiliency.
- Adding an activity to reflect CHNEP’s role to bring partners together, provide resources, and coordinate natural disaster and episodic events response and recovery efforts.

Public comments:

- 5.1 Broadening language to include other sources (not just anthropogenic).

Management Committee Updates to TAC and CAC Recommendations:

- Recommend changing the language to be less specific. *Lyngbya* is too specific, could broaden to *Dapis* but there are other regionally specific issues such as *Caulerpa fastigiata* in Charlotte Harbor; suggest using “Biological Indicator of Impairment” to broaden it; remove CAC bullet regarding *Lyngbya*.
- Recommend modifying CAC suggestion to “add language to reflect recent updates to stormwater rules” to reflect if Senate Bill 240 is signed and updates to stormwater rules go into effect.
- Update language regarding water clarity tool to “appropriate water quality tool.”

PAUL SEMENEC MOVED, SECONDED BY MATT DEPAOLIS TO SUPPORT THE WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE. THE MOTION WAS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

Agenda Item #13 – Action Plan 2 Update: Hydrological Restoration — Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP

HYDROLOGICAL RESTORATION ACTION PLAN

VISION: Appropriate freshwater flow across the landscape to sustain healthy wetlands, rivers, and estuaries.

GOAL: Enhanced and improved waterbodies with more natural hydrologic conditions.

OBJECTIVE: Adequate aquifer recharge and freshwater volume and timing of flow to support healthy natural systems, meet water quality criteria, and protect the designated use.

STRATEGY: Support data-driven watershed planning and hydrologic restoration projects to protect and restore natural flow regimes and provide sufficient fresh surface water and groundwater to natural systems.

Action 1: Conduct data collection, modeling, and analyses to support hydrologic restoration.

- 1.0 Updated estuarine mixing, surface water, and groundwater models to support MFL development and recovery strategies and creation of regional watershed restoration plans where needed. Increased number of surface and groundwater level and flow gauges in areas with limited data to monitor natural variations in flow and impacts of man-made barriers and alterations (including mining, ditching, channelizing, and damming).

Action 2: Increase fresh surface water and groundwater availability to support healthy ecosystems.

- 2.1 Increased number of recovery strategies and projects to reduce or eliminate MFL exceedances.
- 2.2 Increase in long-term average annual levels in aquifers.
- 2.3 Increased water conservation.

Action 3: Protect and restore natural flow regimes.

- 3.1 Increased number of completed plans with hydrologic restoration projects that are ready for implementation.
- 3.2 Increased acres or linear miles of hydrologically restored or reconnected habitat, while maintaining or improving water quality and flood protection.

Overview of TAC & CAC substantive Hydrological Restoration Action Plan recommendations:

- Adding language to support community use of “low impact design” (TAC)
- Mentioning extremes in timing (e.g. drier dry seasons, wetter wet seasons) (TAC)
- Including the C-43 reservoir’s progress (TAC)
- Adding information regarding Lake Okeechobee Service Operating Manual (TAC)
- Encouraging the engagement of stormwater hydrologic engineering projects (TAC)
- Adding language to encourage floodplain connectivity projects (TAC)
- Adding language about the hydrologic restoration component of upstream coastal ponds (TAC)

Overview of CHNEP substantive Hydrological Restoration Action Plan recommendations:

- Add information about completion of LCHF and SLCWI models (how now folded into Cape Coral and Yucca Pens Project) that support Action HR1; conduct data collection, modeling, and analyses to support hydrologic restoration.
- HR-3: Preserve and restore natural flow regimes:
- Add information about completion of the Warm Mineral Springs (could be similar and replace deleted “Estuaries Report Card” inset page). Update Watershed Initiatives information/remove those no longer active and associated agencies in parentheses.
- Climate change considerations incorporated into each section: add any new climate change consideration information based on science in the last 5 years related to Hydrological Restoration Actions (including reductions in freshwater flows, reduced wetland function due to temperatures and EVT, accelerated sea level rise numbers, rainfall changes, etc.).

Management Committee Member Recommendations:

- Take the activity from WQ that related to VAs and copy it in this section but change from water quality projects to hydrological restoration.
- Also copy the WQ activity about regional collaboration.
- Fold in concept about relocating critical infrastructure facilities, involvement in recovery process, consider not just putting things back in the same place/state, both proactive and reactive.
- Balance hydrologic restoration with flood protection and water supply and leverage support to push those projects forward.

Management Committee Updates to TAC and CAC Recommendations:

“Lake Okeechobee Service Operating Manual” is actually “Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual.”

- Suggest changing “mentioning extremes in timing” to “mentioning extremes in conditions”

PHIL FLOOD MOVED, SECONDED BY HOLLY MILBRANDT TO SUPPORT THE HYDROLOGICAL RESTORATION ACTION PLAN IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE. THE MOTION WAS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

Agenda Item #14 – Action Plan 3 Update: Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Protection — Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP

FISH, WILDLIFE, AND HABITAT PROTECTION ACTION PLAN

VISION: A diverse environment of interconnected, healthy habitats that support natural processes and viable, resilient native plant and animal communities.

GOAL: Natural habitat protection and restoration.

OBJECTIVE: Permanently acquire, connect, protect, restore, and manage natural terrestrial and aquatic habitats.

STRATEGY: Promote and facilitate permanent acquisition and effective protection and management of critical natural habitats including wildlife dispersal areas, movement and habitat migration corridors, wetlands, flow ways, and environmentally sensitive lands and estuarine habitats.

Action 1: Protect, restore, and monitor estuarine habitats.

- 1.1 Increased created and restored oyster reefs, living shorelines, and seagrass meadows.
- 1.2 Improved understanding and additional data on habitat condition and function for supporting native aquatic life.

Action 2: Protect, restore, and monitor environmentally sensitive lands and waterways including critical habitat areas.

- 2.1 Updated and adopted Habitat Restoration Needs Plan that includes priority projects. Increased acreage of conserved land.
- 2.2 Increased acres of restored aquatic, wetland, and upland habitat and habitat under maintenance phase management.

Action 3: Assess and promote the benefits of land, waterway, and estuary protection and restoration.

- 3.1 Updated cost-benefit and/or ecosystem services analyses of natural resource conservation and

restoration.

Overview of TAC & CAC substantive Fish, Wildlife, & Habitat Action Plan recommendations:

- Adding language to encourage seagrass trends (TAC)
- Adding language distinguishing between clam and shellfish restoration (TAC)
- Encouraging the development of Estuarine Habitat Condition Index (TAC)
- Incorporating Wessel et al. 2022 tidal creek work (TAC)
- Adding the consideration and utilization of living shorelines as alternatives to seawalls (TAC)
- Add language on “Habitat Restoration Needs” in the narrative. (CAC)

Overview of CHNEP substantive Fish, Wildlife, a& Habitat Action Plan recommendations:

- Protect, restore, and monitor estuarine habitats, FW-1 – In narrative, replace Seagrass Restoration Targets/Water Clarity Report Card Tool with more appropriate metrics (this may include the real-time assessment of water quality and habitat status and trends on the CHNEP Water Atlas).
- Similar discussion in WQ Section, changes needed to reflect paradigm shift in the region related to water quality and bioindicators. Instead of only using seagrass spatial extent and targets (related to water clarity) add in holistic management strategy shift to examine seagrass quantity and quality, macroalgae growth to uptake excess nutrients with water column data and other related habitat or species indicators.
- Protect, restore, and monitor environmentally sensitive lands and waterways including critical habitat areas, FW-2 – Add language on CHNEP Habitat Restoration Needs (HRN) Phase II and Results. This was not available at the time of the previous CCMP revision in 2019.
- Assess and promote the benefits of land, waterway, and estuary protection and habitat restoration, FW 3.1 – Revise 5-year performance measure: “Provide technical support and comments in support of land conservation initiatives, to advance implementation of HRN” to reflect current actions underway as the original listed performance measure natural resources economic valuation study was completed.
- Climate Change Considerations Incorporated into each section: Add any new climate change consideration information based on science in last 5 years related to Fish Wildlife and Habitat Protection Actions. (incl. habitat shifts or loss, species range expansion, etc.)

Management Committee Member Recommendations:

- Adding activity to consider mangrove and salt marsh trends as another biological indicator of ecosystem health and fisheries (ex: snook or redfish habitat).
- Adding activity to track, map and analyze habitat (mangrove, salt marsh, etc.) migration.
- Adding activity to conduct periodic shoreline surveys to track changes to shoreline hardening.

Management Committee Updates to TAC and CAC Recommendations:

- Recommend not getting rid of seagrass acreage targets. Look at seagrass targets in addition to seagrass trends in quantity and quality.

MATT DEPAOLIS MOVED, SECONDED BY HOLLY MILBRANDT TO SUPPORT THE FISH, WILDLIFE, AND HABITAT ACTION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE. THE MOTION WAS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

Agenda Item #15 – Action Plan 4 Update: CCMP Public Engagement — Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

VISION: An informed, engaged public making choices and taking actions that increase protection and restoration of estuaries and watersheds.

GOAL: Public education and engagement.

OBJECTIVE: Increase the proportion of the population that supports and participates in actions to protect and restore estuaries and watersheds.

STRATEGY: Promote environmental awareness, understanding, and stewardship to the general public, new target audiences, and policymakers; and strengthen non-profit partner collaboration in education and engagement programs.

Action 1: Promote environmental literacy, awareness and stewardship through expanded education and engagement opportunities for the general public.

1.2 10 research, restoration, or outreach initiatives showcased in educational materials, presentations, or at public events per year.

1.3 10 CHNEP volunteer activities hosted per year.

Action 2: Engage underrepresented and underserved communities, businesses, and other priority stakeholders in estuary and watershed protection activities and educational programs.

2.1 An event or activity annually that is focused on business and/or other priority stakeholders.

2.2 An event or activity annually that is focused on underserved communities.

Translation of educational materials to multiple languages or formats.

Action 3: Strengthen non-profit partner collaboration in education and engagement programs.

3.1 5 new non-profit collaborative projects over 5 years

Action 4: Increase outreach to policymakers to enhance understanding and support for CCMP Implementation.

4.1 Provide regular updates and information to policy makers.

Overview of TAC & CAC substantive Public Engagement Action Plan recommendations:

- Using Public Information Officers and outreach staff to extend its reach (TAC)
- Changing “monthly emails” to “monthly communications” (TAC)
- Inviting new residents to participate in volunteer events and provide information about the watershed (TAC)
- Updating text to reflect SCCF recently absorbing the Sanibel Sea School (TAC)
- Narrative should outline all ways CHNEP reaches out to officials at every level (CAC)
- Amending staff recommendation on annual meetings with elected officials to also include “and other communications” (CAC)
- Adding Water Quality Economic Report into the narrative (CAC)

Overview of CHNEP substantive Public Engagement Action Plan recommendations:

- Provide regular updates and information to policymakers, PE-4.1 – Revise 5-year Performance Measure from “10 meetings with elected or appointed officials or governmental entities per year to “Annual meetings with interested elected or appointed officials of governmental entities” to account for policymaker interest and availability.

- Update references from old CHNEP partner outreach tools and initiatives, replacing with new and adapted outreach and environmental education methods to better reflect current efforts in changing community landscape in the region. This can include any new Climate Change tools and materials.

Management Committee Member Recommendations:

- Suggest carrying forward any new actions related to regional collaboration and resiliency.

Management Committee Updates to TAC and CAC Recommendations:

There were no additional recommendations from the Management Committee.

PHIL FLOOD MOVED, SECONDED BY DEBI OSBORNE TO SUPPORT THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE. THE MOTION WAS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

Agenda Item #16 – CHNEP Technical Projects Updates— Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP

Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP’s Director of Research and Restoration, provided the committee with a brief overview on project progress since the previous Management Committee meeting. Highlights are as follows:

The CHNEP Water Atlas is a publicly accessible online tool providing regional water resource data and information about the historical and current conditions of our watersheds and ecosystems. The objective is to translate water quality and other data collected by partners into one place to give a holistic management picture to create live ‘reports’ of status and trends, by water quality, hydrology, wildlife/habitat, and climate stressors. New waterbody, basin and watershed pages are coming soon. The pages will be presented with associated FDEP WBIDs and appropriate impairment criteria (which is currently being updated with the most recent IWR Run information), WQ snapshot dials, and associated data on the 4 interactive mappers. Map layers include water quality, hydrology, aquatic habitat, terrestrial habitat, and climate change. CHNEP also produces and updates water quality and seagrass fact sheets by basin as an additional communication tool for partners and the public.

The Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network (CCHMN) is a regional partnership of agencies that collects monthly surface water quality data. CHNEP funds sampling, coordinates the Network, conducts field sampling audits, and uploads data into the Water Atlas. Q1 data and report deliverables and Q2 data are completed. Upper Charlotte Harbor Partners are working on data management/optimization to create electronic field entry to streamline field data QA/QC by integrating checks into the data entry. There was field and laboratory partner participation in the Southwest Florida RAMP quarterly meetings and field/lab for method comparison to support data validation. CHNEP contributed comments to the manuscript for trend analysis of CCHMN data.

As for the Myakka Headwaters Preserve Restoration, the wetland habitat restoration/enhancement project was recently completed. This project was on 363 acres of conserved land within Flatford Swamp (Myakka Headwaters Preserve) which is the Myakka River’s largest forested wetland located in Manatee County. The partners are SWFWMD and the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast. The project plantings and treatment of exotic species is completed, and the final site visit was held in December 2023. A project report with detailed methods, results, and discussion with recommendations for future land management is now available on the CHNEP website.

CHNEP is now collecting data for the 2024 National Estuary Program online reporting tool (NEPORT) to report on annual conservation, management, and restoration accomplishments. Partners are asked to contribute at <https://www.chnep.org/neport-project-reporting>. CHNEP produces and updates fact sheets

on basin water quality, basin seagrass health, and state and federal research and restoration funding opportunities as additional resources for partners and the public.

One member said that the tools and fact sheets are great resources and that maybe CHNEP staff could send out an email blast when there are updates and new features. Ms. Iadevaia said that CHNEP staff are working on getting out the information regarding real-time updates. Another member suggested that when the vulnerability assessments are done that they could be posted on the website and linked to the University of Florida's sea level rise sketch planning tool where numbers could be inputted to see what inundation in different areas may look like. Ms. Hecker said that was a great idea. Project fact sheets are created for all projects and that the hotlink could be incorporated into the sheets as well.

Agenda Item #17 - Management Committee Member Updates — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair

Lisa Kreiger (Lee County): Lee County is working on some alternative restoration plans for watersheds along the Caloosahatchee Estuary. This year, there will be a “walk the WBIDs” along the estuary. There is some money that came through the Water Management District from the state for Bob Janes and Palm Creek for water quality restoration projects as well as some money for Frank Mann Preserve that will go to the Lehigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District. Bob Janes and Palm Creek had some issues with the 404 permitting so there may be some delay. We are anticipating that Senate bill 70-40 which is the ratification of the DEP's rules and regulations relating to stormwater will be signed by the Governor.

Matt DePaolis (SCCF): SFWMD governing board has approved the usage of EPA funds to study oyster modeling in the Caloosahatchee Estuary. Dr. Milbrandt at the Marine Lab is one of the co-sponsors along with USF (University of South Florida). The Marine Lab has put out a paper on the nutrient concentration within the Caloosahatchee watershed and it highlights that the inputs coming from the watershed are more consequential than the nutrient inputs from lake releases. It pushes back on the narrative that fixing the lake will solve all problems on both coasts.

Melynda Brown (FDEP): There is still marine debris and vessels that remain after Hurricane Ian. It is still trying to be worked out as to who will remove them. There are many in the mangroves and there are 36 in Estero Bay. We are working with partners and are trying to secure funding. The Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve boundary was recently codified through legislation, but it is expected to come through the legislature again. The Estero Bay Buddies has been very involved in getting the word out so that people know the importance of the aquatic preserves.

Vivianna Bendixson (SFWMD): We are conducting the seagrass mapping and the imagery acquisition has been completed. Weather conditions made for a very challenging year. The imagery looks good and there will be increases as it is later in the year. It will be important to look at the trend and not at the acres. We will know more as we continue to pore through the process. Some time can be made up, but the maps will come out later than expected. Both the Sun Coast and the Springs Coast were done this year. It was a challenging year and what is usually done by the end of January possibly February took till April. As soon as the information is compiled, partners will be notified that the information is available, probably around this time next year.

Phil Flood (SFWMD): The Quarterly Resiliency Coordination Forum will take place on May 29th. We have just started the Corkscrew Watershed Initiative. It is a 3-year planning process looking at developing a comprehensive strategy for ecological restoration in the Corkscrew system. It also incorporates some flood risk, and it will be assured that it will not adversely affect the water supply within the region as well. The first meeting is scheduled for June. The legislative session finished in March and there is good environmental policy and funding legislation available. There is a bill sponsored by the DEP on the Governor's desk that includes several program changes across the whole agency. SV1638 passed regarding the funding of environmental resource management. It takes gaming monies and puts

it to environmental resource management. It will commit \$100 million a year in land acquisition, \$100 million a year to land management, \$100 million to Resilient Florida, with the remaining money going towards the water quality improvement grant.

Brandon Moody (Charlotte County): We are building the foundation for water quality and quantity monitoring and assessment in the region. The ambient monitoring program is reaching its 2-year anniversary. There is an appropriations request for implementing a comprehensive flow and water elevation monitoring network for the canals and tidal creeks. Some of the appropriations that FGCU (Florida Gulf Coast University) Water School were received about a year ago to do a comprehensive water quality assessment of the Peace River basin – from Polk County to Charlotte. Charlotte County has been working with them extensively to get them any and all data that is out there so that they will be as successful as possible and provide an accurate picture of what is happening in that basin. They are looking to do additional data collection to help in those areas where we know there are gaps in our knowledge of what is going on.

Holly Milbrandt (Sanibel): The island is still focused on recovery from Hurricane Ian. Progress is made daily, but it is a slow process. From a natural resource perspective, as of April 30th, Sanibel has finished placing sand on its beaches for its first ever island-wide beach renourishment project. There is still some work to do around the Sanibel lighthouse which is anticipated to be done in the fall due to breaking for sea turtle nesting season. About 400,000 tons of sand was put down from Bowman’s Beach to the Sanibel lighthouse. There are many other ongoing projects that are FEMA-funded, and storm-related as well as new projects that will begin this summer into the fall including a stormwater master plan which will be valuable. El Nino years tend to show you the weaknesses in the stormwater plans. There has been the desire to do a more detailed hydrological analysis of the west end of the island to look at how the current stormwater policies have potentially impacted or had unintended consequences on conservation lands.

Paul Semenech (Sarasota County): There is a Public Works strategic initiative which is run by the stormwater team. The title is “Options to Improve North to South Waterflow and Flooding” and the description is “research what options might exist to improve (alleviate) flooding in south county (North Port) using existing county-owned lands.” This was tasked by Sarasota County Administrator – Jonathan Lewis (former City Manager of North Port). This will not propose anything to address the level of impact that resulted from Hurricane Ian. We are thinking about what we can do on county-owned lands but are proposing to expand that to include SWFWMD, and perhaps some privately-owned lands such as the Carlton Ranch. The focus is on developing options that include the use of Big Slough, Walton Ranch preserve and perhaps the Carlton Ranch. Right now, we are about a 30,000-level view and are working on what we can do north of the City of North Port. We are thinking to rehydrate the wetlands to get them to act as sponges again. We are considering stream restoration along the Myakkahatchee. There’s a major drainage canal east-west on the north side of the city and it makes an abrupt 90 degree turn south towards the west side of the city. We are proposing that some consideration be given to pushing that further west onto county and SWFWMD properties to alleviate the flooding not only within the city. We have the plans about 90 percent complete to send to Jonathan for his review. This will determine what sort of direction we get from administration. Initially, the idea was to build a giant reservoir, but the stormwater team is advancing other ideas. When the go-ahead for the plans is given, there will probably be a presentation at some point to the TAC and Management Committee.

Ryan Pieper (North Port): There is the formation of the new Natural Resources Division which is comprised of the Natural Resources Manager – Stefan Kalev, 2 environmental specialists, 2 city arborists, and me, an urban forester. I will be tasked with creating some re-forestation projects within the city. This will be to cut down some of the wide-open areas and restore it back to what it once was. There has been canopy mapping utilizing the U.S. Forest Service tools and i-Tree software to identify where we are as a baseline and the best usage of tree fund monies to reforest the city.

Dave Hutchinson (MPO): The long-range plan update effort is moving forward. Sarasota and Manatee are projected to be just under 1.3 million people by 2050. With all that growth, congestion will not be going away. I am participating in an effort that the U.S. Department of Transportation has partnered with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials for. It is a coalition of surface transportation professionals, and it is focused on the growing issue of climate resilience with transportation. Since 2019, half a billion dollars has been spent on natural disaster impacts along with aging infrastructure and fluctuating day-to-day weather impacts, and it has highlighted the need to look at resilience. Over the past 10 years, there have been 3 federally funded efforts to address resilience and identify some of the challenges and opportunities.

Jeff Devine (WCIND): The District has completed its Hurricane Ian direct project in Venice – removing 1700 cubic yards of material from the side slope of the Venice Airport that sloughed off into the waterway. There is a contract out for the removal of 9 derelict vessels most of which are down in Lee County. We are working with the AP, Lee County, FWC, and DEP in the coordination of the removal of the 36 boats that Mindy mentioned (in Estero Bay) in the mangroves. WCIND will be one of the co-applicants for the NOAA money to help fund the removal. We are involved with several counties with trying to expedite FWC's derelict vessel grant process that would allow us to get the vessels out faster. That should be going before the 4 Boards of County Commissioners of the Management Committee members' areas in the upcoming board meetings.

Debi Osborne (Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast): As one of the few accredited land trusts working in this region, we appreciate CHNEP looking into supporting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's new Everglades to Gulf conservation area, the Wildlife Corridor, and the funding for the rural and family lands. All these lands are critical to implement the CCMP and Conservation Foundation is glad to be partner with many of these organizations.

During the Management Committee updates, several attendees used the opportunity to introduce themselves to the group: Jamie Wolanin (FWC), Mike Taylor (USACE), and Kris Ramon (PRMWSA).

Agenda Item #18 - Public Comment — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair

There was no public comment.

Agenda Item #19 - Future Meeting Date and Topics — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair

The upcoming Management Committee meeting for 2024 is September 6th. Members were asked to block the date on their calendars and plan to attend in person.

Agenda Item #20 - Adjourn — Dave Hutchinson, Co-Chair

Meeting was adjourned at 1:12 PM.