

**Policy Board Meeting**  
**Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership**  
10:00 am – 3:00 pm  
March 27, 2015

NC DENR Green Square  
Training Room (1st Floor)  
217 W. Jones Street  
Raleigh, NC

Draft Meeting Notes

**Members Present:** Dr. Tom Allen, Joanne Benante, Matt Gibbs, Dr. Carl Hershner, Dr. Wilson Laney, Dr. Burrell Montz (sub for Dr. Kirk Havens), Todd Miller, Tom Reeder, Dr. Susan White.

**Staff Present:** Dr. Bill Crowell, Dr. Dean Carpenter, Jim Hawhee, Jimmy Johnson, Marie English, Katia Griffin-Jakymec

*Call to Order: Todd Miller, Chair*  
*Transition of Chair Todd Miller, Dr. Tom Allen*

Bill Crowell convened the meeting and thanked Todd Miller for his two years of service as the chair. Tom Allen has served as vice-chair for two years and now assumes being chair. Bill thanked Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) for providing the gavel for use today.

*Welcome & Introductions: Dr. Tom Allen, Chair*

Tom Allen noted that he has been serving APNEP for seven years and looks forward to continuing to serve, especially with regard to coastal research. He asked the Board members to introduce themselves, noting that Carl Hershner would be joining the meeting soon.

Board and staff members introduced themselves. Bill explained that Burrell Montz was sitting in for Kirk Havens, who this week is vacationing in North Carolina's mountains.

*Adoption of Meeting Notes (Action Item): Dr. Tom Allen*

The minutes were moved and seconded, and adopted without comment.

*Vice Chair & Board Vacancy (Action Item): Dr. Tom Allen*

Wilson Laney nominated Kirk Havens as vice-chair. Burrell, who is Kirk's proxy for the meeting, seconded the motion. Bill noted that Kirk was willing to accept the position. Wilson noted that probably set some sort of strange precedent administratively. The motion passed.

Bill noted that the local government position on the Board is vacant. A nomination from the governor's office has been expected, but not forthcoming. Filling the vacancies is really the Board's responsibility so they should move ahead at this point. Tom Allen mentioned Ben Woody, planning and community

development director for Currituck County. Bill mentioned potential candidates Lauren Herlsey, Assistant Town Manager for Beaufort, and Holly White, former assistant planner for Currituck, and is now with Nags Head, according to Jimmy Johnson. Bill indicated that he would contact these folks to determine their interest. He asked for any preference in terms of priority. Tom Allen suggested staff contact Holly White first. Todd Miller asked if Holly was the town planner for Nags Head, but Jimmy wasn't sure.

*STAC Report: Dr. Wilson Laney*

Wilson provided a summary of APNEP's [Science & Technical Advisory Committee](#) (STAC) activities during 2014 and the 2015 winter meeting. Wilson asked Burrell to elaborate on the details of the winter meeting, because he had missed it.

As a result of the STAC giving general approval to develop STAC-sponsored surveys to learn how science is delivered and used by environmental managers, Burrell explained that in the near term she and Jess Whitehead will be compiling information from relevant past surveys and notes.

*Director's Report: Dr. Bill Crowell*

Bill noted that his update will be somewhat longer than past reports. Willy Phillips had rotated off the Board. He explained Willy's role, and noted that he had been presented with a plaque of appreciation. He also noted that he would like to invite Willy to view some of the video material that the program had produced as Willy was a strong advocate for APNEP's Internet video presence.

Bill welcomed Dr. Susan White and noted that a [North Carolina Sea Grant](#) seat has returned to the Board as a result of the Board's action at the last meeting. Susan noted that she was glad to be here. Bill noted that Sea Grant and APNEP are working to create a research fellowship and collaborate on several projects.

Bill welcomed Tom Reeder, who has been involved with APNEP in his various capacities for quite some while. Tom is the new NC DENR representative on the Board, as currently the Assistant Secretary for the Environment. He is replacing Brad Ives.

Bill welcomed Matt Gibbs and the new at-large member, replacing Willy. Bill also noted that the Board has had representation from [North Carolina Cooperative Extension](#) in the past.

Bill gave us some background on the Partnership. The program is conducted under the auspices of the [US Environmental Protection Agency](#), and is one of 28 nationally. It was one of the first such programs, if not the first, and is the largest geographically. The watershed rivals that of Chesapeake Bay and Puget Sound. The name was changed in 2012 to "Partnership" from Program. The program began as the Albemarle Pamlico Estuary Study (APES) in 1987. The program accomplished about 97% of the previous (1994) CCMP the way it was written, and now we have a newer (2012) one. APNEP is moving to implementation, coupled with monitoring both the environmental aspects and management aspects.

Bill welcomed Carl Hershner to the meeting (Carl joined at 10:27). Carl is the designated representative of Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources.

Jim Hawhee will brief the Board after lunch on funding and the work plan. Bill explained that APNEP receives an annual grant, and works under a cooperative agreement with EPA. The annual grant is not competitive under the cooperative agreement. The new grant, under a new cooperative agreement, came in in October and staff has begun to implement it.

Susan White asked when the last five-year review occurred. Answer: during 2012-2013.

Bill noted that he, Jim and Todd attended Restore America's Estuaries. Many of APNEP's partners gave presentations and did mention APNEP, which was good to see. He spent much of his time in sessions on living shorelines and oysters. Jim primarily attended sessions related to communications and Chesapeake Bay issues.

The fall Association of NEPs and the EPA also held meetings during the conference. At the EPA meeting the NEPs were asked to examine the impact of climate change on each of the programs. More guidance will be coming out for that. Other issues that were hot topics were blue carbon and ocean acidification.

The International Shellfish Restoration Conference was held in South Carolina, with he and Jimmy attended that one. That aided them in participating in the [North Carolina Oyster Summit](#), which took place several weeks ago. They provided travel support to STAC member, Erin Fleckenstein (North Carolina Coastal Federation), chair of the Oyster Workgroup.

Bill attended the spring National Estuary Program meeting in Washington, DC and learned that APNEP's grant will be increased this year. At the meeting participants engaged in a mock climate assessment of their programs, and there was more discussion of blue carbon and ocean acidification.

There is new leadership in NC-DENR in 2015. A re-organization has been proposed by North Carolina's governor to move museums, aquariums and state parks from NC-DENR to the Department of Cultural Resources, which would then be renamed to something like the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, while DENR might become the Department of Energy and Environment.

While there were indications early that APNEP and the Office of Land and Water Stewardship would move, that is not presently proposed.

APNEP was assigned a new liaison in EPA headquarters, David Redford, who is the former Marine Pollution Control Branch Chief. The two previous liaisons, Marilyn Katz then John McShane, both retired. Bill speculated that David would be there probably no more than five years. The EPA-NEP Headquarters staff continues to shrink and only one position will be filled.

Bill noted that the NC Oyster Summit was well-attended and offered Todd the opportunity to comment. Todd felt the summit went well and noted that there are a couple of bills in the North Carolina legislature, which arose from the summit. Bill noted that there was a very nice and well attended reception in the [North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences](#).

Bill noted that the [North Carolina Water Resources Research Institute](#) (WRRI) conference was also held last week. Susan indicated that attendance numbered about 250. Bill participated on a large panel about careers. He noted that it was a large panel and he may have met some future staff there. Susan noted that it was WRRI's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the 17<sup>th</sup> annual conference. They had switched up the design a bit.

Bill noted that APNEP has not been allowed to fill the ecosystem analyst position that staff had hoped to advertise, so they are pursuing a contract position. One other APNEP position hasn't been filled as well. NC-DENR does not want to create any new positions given the potential for moving to a new administrative host. Staff has been struggling given that Bill has to handle CWMTF deputy director duties and Jimmy handles APNEP tasks only about a third of his time. Staff had managed to share the draft work plan with the Board early because the staff and board member calendars are jammed over the next months.

Joanne asked if Bill was considering whether to contract the other two positions as well. Bill indicated that APNEP was able to pick up an [AmeriCorps](#) position, and there will be another AmeriCorps position based in Pamlico County, which will some support APNEP as well.

Jim Hawhee noted that he just met APNEP's new AmeriCorps intern Katia for the first time a few minutes ago (Katia was present at the meeting). Marie English over the course of her service had done some video work for APNEP, and he is excited that staff now has more video capabilities. Tom Allen noted that the videos are the kind that are viewed on YouTube. Jim noted that they are designed to reach out to teachers and others.

Bill noted that Marie is working on a video segment entitled "What Does APNEP Do?" Just yesterday he learned that staff will be working on another new video, which may involve some of Board members. Staff will be asking what the sounds mean to stakeholders. The northern portion of the basin has Atlantic white cedar, and bald cypress, and much different vegetation than in the southern sounds. Their relationships with the sounds are similar even though the habitats are dissimilar.

Staff will also have another NC-DENR [Recruiting Exceptional Achievers for Career Horizons](#) (REACH) intern for the summer. APNEP will now be funding all of that position as Department has cut funding over the past two years.

Staff are working on a joint research fellowship with NC Sea Grant.

Staff are working with [NCDOT Photogrammetry](#) on the interpretation of the new (2014) SAV imagery, and that will hopefully be completed in the next month or so, and then enable an assessment of changes in bed extent.

The Board has some drafts in front of them for two studies: one for the "Costs and Benefits of Restoration and Enhancement of Shellfish Habitat and Oyster Propagation in North Carolina", and the second an "Economic Valuation of the Albemarle-Pamlico Watershed's Natural Resources". Board members questions should be directed to Jim Hawhee.

Bill will be in Michigan next week, participating in a Collaborative Science Panel for [National Estuarine Research Reserve System](#) grants.

[Shad in the Classroom](#) will be occurring soon. Over lunch, Board members will see a draft version of a video designed for viewing in a dome, which staff had hoped to set up but found out that they could not do so in the Green Square lobby due to some logistical constraints.

At the request of the Board, Bill has been exploring the possibility of a new host institution for APNEP. He has interviewed a number of national estuary programs and obtained copies of their agreements. APNEP does not have any agreement with NC-DENR. Susan White has been very helpful. There are several current options. One would be NCSU, and the other possibility would be the UNC General Administration, which is where NC Sea Grant and WRRRI are located. Bill will have more details for the Board on this issue later in the agenda.

Both the EPA and the various NEP directors stressed that there needs to be a written agreement in place. One aspect of this is that the Board should be the governing body, and the host institution should just have one vote on the Board. As APNEP moves along that line with new NC-DENR leadership, Bill recommended that the Board leadership meet with the new DENR leadership, who are currently preoccupied with the legislature in town.

There are several new focus areas coming out of USEPA. One deals with environmental justice, and of course there is the blue carbon, and then one is costal acidification.

Bill would like to discuss program strategy, and also would like to discuss CCMP implementation. He also would like to have a discussion on staff overload, and thus their inability take on any additional implementation workgroups. Staff would rather facilitate a few groups well than to facilitate many poorly. It takes a lot of staff time to service these work groups. Both Jim and Dean's time is being required and the staff just can't take on much more at the moment. Bill did not want to risk APNEP's good reputation with poor and ineffective work.

*Discussion of Program Strategy and Issues: Dr. Tom Allen*

Tom noted that the STAC during their February meeting cautioned against involvement in too many things at once. The STAC also has to be engaged in these workgroups.

Tom asked about the status of the two RFPs. Bill indicated that they would involve STAC members as reviewers. Susan asked about the project periods. She noted that one was blank and the other was only for a partial year. Bill explained how they have to work under the NC-DENR contracting constraints. EPA funding is generally one year. There is more time on the old grant so he has been able to move some funding around. He hopes to have more time on both of these grants after starting as soon as possible. The oyster project can likely be done in a shorter time frame. Susan indicated that the economic valuation project may require a lot more time. Bill hoped that time frames could be extended. Susan stated the time frame could influence who may apply.

Tom Allen asked about work outsourcing to post-docs or universities, noting that the timing can be somewhat dicey. Things need to be black-and-white and highly visible in order to avoid potential conflict-of-interest.

Bill stated that staff would prefer working with contractors with whom APNEP has experience. Marie since the end of her AmeriCorps term is contracting under [Temp Solutions](#). Contracting out is not viewed as personnel staffing. The timing on these is good because the school year is ending soon. Contracting is a short-term solution. Because APNEP is limited to a small staff, they do aid each other often. They are able to address immediate needs as a team but they need another person in-house. Staff hopes that the project manager position will be filled in house. Currently CWMTF staff member Terry Murphy is assisting with payment on existing APNEP contracts. Nevertheless, the absence of a

person focused on APNEP contracts is hindering staff. For example, he just found out this week that the oyster summit contract hadn't been mailed yet the summit was held a couple of weeks ago. Not starting any more workgroups limits CCMP implementation, which in turn adversely affects the partnership. There will be implementation activities yet for example action on fish passage may be delayed. APNEP had spent days on factor analysis to ensure that everything of importance was addressed the CCMP. It is a comprehensive plan. Bill personally believes there may be a need to pull back on some CCMP actions. Some core actions may even need to be dropped. Bill is interested in what Board members have to say. Bill noted however that he is not advocating the creation of a new CCMP.

Joanne noted that the [North Carolina nutrient criteria development plan](#) is also linked to APNEP. Bill indicated that while the process started slower than they hoped, he believes those CCMP actions are moving forward. State government administration changes have also played a factor in delaying CCMP implementation.

Jim Hawhee provided detail on APNEP's role in nutrient criteria development. Staff is working with EPA to acquire additional funding. APNEP's contaminant workgroup members are investigating whether have enough information to move forward with nutrient criteria in Albemarle Sound. The workgroup action plan actually runs out to the year 2020. The workgroup will be meeting via teleconference in another month or so. Workgroup process has been static for a while and Jim needs to do some internal work to get up to speed. Joanne stated that the workgroup has done great work thus far. Jim noted that the CCMP action doesn't align well with the [North Carolina Division of Water Resources](#) (NC-DWR) need. He was glad that APNEP could contribute because of its importance, but he stressed again that the alignment isn't good.

Bill noted that while the Contaminants Workgroup primarily has been addressing nutrient criteria, a minority of this group is addressing risk assessments of metals and emerging contaminants. Dean is the liaison for the metals and emerging contaminants sub-group.

Dean expressed concern for the newer members who are unfamiliar with APNEP's shift to an ecosystem-based management (EBM) approach that is a core element of the CCMP. One tenet is that partners must invest more resources and funding up front, in order to reap benefits in the longer term. Although the EBM approach was formally approved by the Board in late 2009, APNEP has not had more up-front investment in the interim: if anything, it has been reduced. Because the meeting is running ahead of the agenda's schedule on, Dean suggested that it might be advantageous for him to make his presentation prior to the Board discussing options. Tom Allen was in agreement that this would be helpful, especially in view of the discussion about moving to a new host institution.

#### *CCMP Implementation Workgroups Update: Dr. Dean Carpenter*

Dean noted that he was asked to give an update on the implementation workgroups, but given that we have some new Board members he wanted place implementation activities in context via an overview on the APNEP adaptive management cycle. Other agencies have the same kind of adaptive management approach, yet may emphasize different parts of the cycle. The APNEP cycle has only four steps: assess, plan, manage, and monitor. Each step had a number of associated activities. When Carl spoke at a national estuary program conference as an invited speaker about adaptive management in 2007, he had claimed that if any group could do it it would be the NEPs. During the initial phase of APNEP (called the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine Study or APES) there were lots more federal resources to boost the effort. APES sponsored an assessment in 1991. In the mid-1990's the Republican Revolution came along, and a

lot of federal resources went away so APES was hard-hit. Following the implementation activities they had one monitoring conference in 2000. In 2012 APNEP produced a new ecosystem assessment and the new CCMP. We then moved into the management quadrant, and began to establish the workgroups. All of the components should be in operation. Although a plan was indeed produced, APNEP really didn't get to the point of defining the indicators or of setting their benchmarks or targets. Dean noted that he still feels really good about the plan and believes that it doesn't need to be scrapped. Dean thanked everyone for their indulgence in allow him to give the Board some background.

Dean moved to CCMP implementation, noting that the fourth question in the plan focuses on specific strategies to make the Albemarle-Pamlico ecosystem healthier. The plan has a ten-year horizon. There are 58 CCMP actions. They are not very prescriptive and have a ten-year window. The actions have been super-aggregated into five components, which are on the CCMP cover. Actions are also aggregated into 15 objectives.

Dean provided the Board an example by referencing the Contaminants Workgroup. That group is responsible for four of the 58 actions. Two of these actions are aligned with the "restore" component and the other two actions aligned with the "identify" component. The outcomes are linked to these. To affect a particular ecological outcome, multiple workgroups are required to address them. An example water outcome is entitled "3b: Nutrients and pathogens do not harm species that are dependent on the waters".

Dean showed the workgroup kickoff schedule. The first two columns indicate the staff lead and support members who are assigned to facilitate each workgroup. Looking along a workgroup row, the box colored in dark green indicates the month when a workgroup had been launched. Subsequent meetings of that workgroup are colored in dark blue. Jim reminded the Board that the Contaminants Workgroup has two subgroups. Workgroup rows with light green boxes are cases in September 2014 where months were targeted for launch, but for which launch was subsequently delayed. The yellow indicates that groups who are now planned for launch during May to September 2015. Dean agreed with Bill that the delays should be imposed so as to avoid additional staff impact. He seconded the comment about the impact of having temporary staff do any of this work. Gaps in staff and turnover really have an adverse impact. This kind of work needs to be done by permanent staff, who can do the required work among partners and stakeholders.

Tom Allen noted that if you work backwards from the desired ecological outcome, using Outcome 3b as an example, it takes a lot to achieve it and a term person or contactor is unlikely to be able to facilitate the integration of necessary workgroups. Dean agreed. Tom asked which of the existing workgroups are going to be able to move the needle. Dean reminded the Board that legacy issues and the long-time frame required for changes could preclude rapid changes in some indicators, but at least there is a rationale for improvement.

Bill gave an example for the oyster workgroup. If APNEP were to pour all of their resources into those actions, the acreage target may be achieved but we may not see the ecological outcomes for five years or more.

Matt Gibbs asked how many APNEP staff he had to get these fifteen groups up and running. Bill said Matt was looking at them. Matt asked about priorities. Bill indicated that the CCMP actions together reflect a rigorous prioritization to achieve the partnership's goals. Matt indicated that 58 pages of a work plan seems very aggressive to him.

Bill reiterated that APNEP measures and indicator targets were incomplete. Granted there are “candidate” indicators. APNEP cannot support changes in monitoring design until partners commit to the metrics that should be monitored. APNEP partners must agree on what we are monitoring and why.

Bill noted that Tom Reeder has been the first partner to come to him and asked if APNEP can help with monitoring.

Todd noted that the original plan was to have staff chair the workgroups. If APNEP cannot hire staff, what happens to all of those funds?

Tom Reeder asked why Bill hadn't hadn't been able to hire staff. Bill explained that his supervisor has placed hiring APNEP staff on hold until APNEP figures where it should be located. Tom indicated that there was no reason to delay filling positions that were funded by federal funds. Tom indicated that Bill should talk to NC-DENR Secretary van der Vaart. Bill indicated that he didn't feel that he could do so and it was not consistent with his chain of command. Tom indicated that he would contact the Secretary.

Dean noted that the partnership should be set up so that all members of the governing body have an equal voice in determining its direction.

Tom Reeder asked for clarification that the program is falling behind in meeting its grant requirements, because they are at half-staff.

Carl noted that he had some questions regarding remaining where the program is, or being moved into a new home. It wasn't clear to him how Bill wound up a half-time director, and how Jimmy wound up one-third. He asked for an explanation because that seemed to be a major blow to the program.

Bill stated that the Skavarla administration in DENR approached EPA in January 2014 and indicated that they would like Bill to serve half-time as CWMTF deputy director, and an agreement with EPA was developed to permit that.

Carl asked if APNEP was to find a new home, what would happen then to Jimmy? Bill noted that Jimmy is provided to APNEP as match. He wasn't sure what would happen, because Jimmy is not funded by the APNEP grant. For Bill personally, it would have to be a personal decision how to proceed with APNEP or stay with CWMTF. He noted that he would have some options, and noted that Carl's questions were good ones.

Carl indicated that he had more questions, which could make Bill squirm more. Many of the CCMP outcomes were predicated on the belief that NC government would see the advantage of having an integrated program that could address common goals. The gap analysis demonstrated that APNEP could fill in gaps. Carl noted that he felt that the state's commitment never did really happen.

Bill stated that when the CCMP was developed staff met with each of the NC-DENR division directors, and also met with others like the NC-WRC and The Nature Conservancy. Staff anticipated that those partners would be working with them but then the landscape changed. In some cases relationships are still there and moving forward. In other cases, there is the need to rebuild relationships.



Carl noted that this is the case in every state. Now in the present circumstances, with minimal resources APNEP must take a second look and see on which workgroups APNEP needs to focus. He suggested that a group, maybe the Board in a facilitated way, could address this in a strategic way and decide on what to focus. If APNEP proceeds down that path, the Board would need the background so they know what can be anticipated. Carl thought that was all possible. But much will depend on who hosts the partnership.

Bill stated that no matter where the program is hosted there are still the issue of capacity and relationships.

Dean noted that with a government as host APNEP is hamstrung, or at least it is more difficult, for them to get additional funding streams from a non-governmental organization or some other entity.

Carl asked Tom Allen or Susan about targeting the UNC system as a potential home, at present.

Tom Allen indicated that there are other university issues that come into play. It is difficult to assess the costs versus benefits of leaving versus staying in NC-DENR. If NC-DENR supports filling the three core staff positions soon that would be good. But moving to the university would offer some advantages in terms of research and other program aspects.

Tom Reeder noted that one consideration is that the employees won't lose their benefits.

Bill noted that is why they are only looking at state institutions. Bill indicated that one thing he could do is bring in some other NEP directors to discuss their institutional arrangements with the Board.

Tom Reeder reiterated that he could help with the positions, but probably not the CWMTF issue.

Carl noted that he is the politically incorrect person here who won't suffer any repercussions (being the Virginia representative) so he will ask, what is the likelihood of locating the program within NC-DENR so that it can do what it needs to do?

Tom Reeder stated that he felt that the program could seek reorganization within NC-DENR, and felt that they would fare better in the Division of Water Resources. If an internal reorganization is desired, Bill should come and talk to Secretary van der Vaart soon. Tom Reeder indicated that he would talk to the Secretary this afternoon, especially about releasing for hire the three federally-funded positions.

Carl asked Tom Reeder what he meant about the program not getting any higher than it is now, within DENR. Tom felt that the program was about as independent as it could get now.

Bill explained the past history of the program. The program is sort of a middle-of-the-road program, between natural resources and regulatory programs. Moving the program further down into the bureaucracy makes it impossible for him to have a direct conversation with the Secretary. He noted that he wants to at least have the opportunity to answer questions.

Carl asked if the discussion could be had with Secretary van der Vaart.

Tom Reeder indicated that it was a very appropriate time to have this discussion with the Secretary, and any decision has to be made by July 1. Tom noted that it could be that if another Assistant Secretary is set up with EEP and DMF then it could be appropriate to include APNEP.

Carl asked how could the Board take Tom Reeder's advice and craft a message to the Secretary.

Bill asked Tom Reeder not to get him fired. Tom indicated that he would craft the discussion as having come from the Board.

Todd and Bill noted that this discussion has been ongoing for a while. Bill explained his relationships under past administrations. Tom Reeder noted that APNEP is kind of a square peg.

Todd noted that large number of workgroups may still be a stretch. Having the program is not an impediment to having outside partners involved. It was going to be hard to stimulate the workgroups even will full staff.

Bill noted that he felt that APNEP could make progress in some areas. He gave us some examples, one being the Policy and Economics Workgroup.

Wilson expressed appreciation to Tom Reeder for his willingness to go to bat for APNEP, and suggested that we wait on any further discussion about workgroups and slowing down until we hear back from Tom Reeder about Bill's ability to fill the three vacant positions. Wilson noted that all in the [US Fish & Wildlife Service](#) (USFWS) must deal with the same sort of staff shortages. Susan noted that the same is happening in the academic community as well. Wilson noted that there are a lot of other partners, like [South Atlantic Fish Management Council](#) (SAFMC) and [South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative](#) (SALCC), are all moving to EBM and that should help APNEP in some of its tasks.

*Working Lunch, "We are the River" Demo Video: Marie English*

Marie explained about the Shad in Schools program and the trip they made in 2014 during the spawning run and program implementation to show the "We are the River" video to students along the Roanoke. Board members viewed the video, which was produced by Art Howard.

Carl asked if APNEP had produced the video. It was produced by the NC Museum of Natural Sciences. Marie noted that viewing the video within the confines of the dome makes for a different viewing experience.

Bill noted that Tom Reeder stopped back by and indicated that he had already talked to Secretary van der Vaart, and that APNEP would be able to fill two of the three vacant positions. Tom Allen noted further that the Board could decide whether they wanted to celebrate by ending the meeting early.

Bill noted that he had asked Jim to give a quick overview of the projects that have been done under the FY 2015 work plan. Bill noted that these are covered in the work plan as well, but staff believes that this is a better and more effective way to give the Board an update.

Bill is pleased that APNEP has permission from the Secretary to fill two positions. He would give the Board an update on the positions next time. However he cautioned that in his experience, having verbal approval doesn't necessarily mean that the positions can be filled.

Carl asked about repositioning the program. Bill noted that Tom Reeder said that has been mentioned to the Secretary, and Tom Reeder and the Secretary will be meeting to discuss further. Carl asked about having some statement from the Board, which could be provided to the Secretary.

Bill noted that he reports to NC-DENR, and that means that his CWMTF duties will continue. He doesn't report to the Policy Board.

Carl asked Joanne, given that she is the EPA representative, from where the EPA guidance comes. Joanne noted that is the [EPA Southeast Region](#) representative, but the funds come from EPA. Carl asked about the EPA approval of Bill's split position. Joanne explained that the Southeast Region division director had written a letter supporting the split duties. Joanne indicated that we can definitely go back and she can discuss that issue if there are concerns about it working out. Carl stated that it is definitely a concern to him and an issue for the Board. He doesn't know about any other NEP that has a half-time director.

Bill noted that a EPA Southeast Region meeting is scheduled at the end of May, where representatives of all NEPs within the region will convene to talk with EPA staff. So that will provide an opportunity.

Carl suggested that the Board should push the half-time director issue as a concern.

Tom Allen suggested that the Board could at least send a letter to the Secretary to address several issues, such as the hiring of the three positions, the half-time director, and reporting to the Department.

Joanne stated that she didn't see why the three federally-funded positions couldn't be released. Susan stated that it was purely political. Wilson noted that under present circumstances, getting two-thirds was a major accomplishment if it actually comes to pass.

Todd asked if at the time Bill was asked to do this in January 2014, whether there wasn't some provision to reconsider his duties. Bill stated that was the verbal agreement, but no real assessment had occurred and the support for a deputy director had not materialized.

Carl noted that Board should express that they see some real opportunities here to advance NC-DENR's agenda.

Tom Allen indicated that he would write a draft and circulate it to the Board, and then they can finalize it within a week. Carl stated it would be good for the Board to go directly to the Secretary, around Bill. The Board should not expect Bill to carry it forward alone.

#### *2014-15 Program Activities Overview: Jim Hawhee*

Jim noted that there are some 40-45 initiatives listed in the work plan, and he will try to cover all of these, using a lot of pictures. Two RFPs for economic assessments of ecosystem services and oyster respectively are both on the streets at the moment or soon will be. The APNEP – NC Sea Grant research fellowship has come together during the last month. Jim noted that it has been great working with Susan and her staff. The APNEP web site details the program's current initiatives. Staff support for applied research: this is being done via NASA, and they do it for free. They recently looked at chlorophyll a data to quantify the extent of algal blooms during the last ten years. Also, they will be

looking at the entire region to quantify wetlands in the system. The Virginia Healthy Waters Program also extends into North Carolina. Todd Janeski is leading this effort. Jim noted that Dean has been part of a wetlands monitoring group, whereby NCSU picked up a grant that DENR turned down about a year ago. There is also a barriers restoration study in which Todd Miller has been involved. Hydrilla monitoring and outreach is another project. Marie put together an educational video. Marie, Gloria Putnam, and Rob Emmens are considering how we might be better able to address Hydrilla issues. They hope to extend the monitoring project from Pamlico County to a wider area. There is a lot of potential for citizen science involvement here.

A Hyde County resilience planning project is led by Jess Whitehead, who is a STAC member, and Board member Mac Gibbs has been involved. The project is evaluating the ramifications of putting a dike around Englehard, and is looking at farmland values and other issues. Mac, who was part of the initial planning group, felt that this would be a good program. He stated that when they drew out some things with local citizens, it was good to see how the proposal fit with things already under way.

Jim addressed the North Carolina Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP) and noted that it overlaps with APNEP's CCMP. The geographic scope of the CHPP is somewhat different than APNEP. Jimmy noted that CHPP is currently within a mandated five-year program review and the goal is to have it reviewed by December 2015.

Jim noted that the primary source of APNEP's funding match is from CWMTF. He showed the Board photos from several projects.

Restoration projects have been rather thin in the last couple of years. There is ongoing project to plant Atlantic White Cedar trees in the Dismal Swamp. They worked with Goose Creek State Park staff to plant bald cypress in an area that is becoming wetter.

With regard to Engagement, APNEP has been pretty well engaged especially when considering the limited staff resources. APNEP has sponsored several teacher workshops and institutes, where they have had a great longstanding relationship. Staff also participated in the [Scientific Research and Education Network](#) (SciREN) for encouraging young teachers. SciREN workshops have been done here at the museum and at the coast. Jim and Marie have attended these last year. They put together several lesson plans, including one on North Carolina's underwater grasses. Those workshops have been a lot of fun. They funded another workshop on Project WET. This is coordinated out of NC-DWR, who teaches other coordinators statewide.

Bill noted that most of APNEP's education efforts are to work with instructors to deliver training for trainers. This is the most effective method of engagement given that APNEP's region encompasses 36 North Carolina and 18 Virginia counties. This is in contrast to other NEPs of smaller jurisdictions who say they worked with one newspaper or one school district.

Jim showed some photos from the Shad in the Schools activity. Sometimes the NC-WRC staff do some electrofishing to show the adult fish. Carl wanted to know whether electrofishing is done before or after the fry releases. Jim invited Board members to let him know if they want to participate in any of the shad fry releases.

Bill stated that if any Board member learns of activities in which APNEP is involved and wishes to participate, please let staff know. Also, if members see things that they think the partnership should be interested in, please let staff know that as well.

Mattamuskeet crab research and outreach: conducted by Dr. Dan Rittschof from Duke University. His research has been useful in addressing water management issues there.

Education and Outreach Publications: Jim noted staff has provided the Board with several of the publications. Staff has produced some postcards, which some teachers are using. There are some of the postcards on the display in the Green Square hallway. APNEP provides a forum to distribute watershed fliers around the state.

With regard to AmeriCorps, Jim noted that Marie has done a lot of work for APNEP. He showed multiple photographs of Marie involved in various projects.

Jim addressed the partnership provided by the staff to [Atlantic Coast Fish Habitat Partnership](#) (ACFHP), the [Albemarle-Chowan Watershed Roundtable](#), the [North Carolina Watershed Stewardship Network](#), the [Saltwater Connections](#); and the [South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative](#) (SALCC). Jim noted that APNEP can support its mission most effectively by supporting other partnerships.

APNEP has provided a small amount of conference support, such as for the [North Carolina Oyster Summit](#), and other conferences. Jim mentioned several of these.

Seagrass Mapping and Monitoring: Submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) was monitored in 2014 and will be monitored in 2015. APNEP is supporting the use of side-scan sonar for boat-based SAV monitoring. SAV is one of APNEP's key ecological indicators.

APNEP is providing some bridge support with NC-DENR for [ModMon](#), whose data will assist NC-DENR. ModMon provides a lot of sophisticated information about the Neuse River Estuary. Dr. Hans Paerl has been a key participant in APNEP for many years and had recently returned to the STAC.

Recreational Water Quality Monitoring: APNEP has also provided bridge-funding support for this program to NC-DMF, due to funding cuts in that agency. APNEP has been funding some of the site monitoring. NC-DMF is continuing to do some of the monitoring around the Neuse and Pamlico estuaries. Bill explained that APNEP assumed funding because of the potential loss of monitoring sites in the sounds. The need was not in the work plan, but Board members weighed in and decided that it was worthwhile to provide support. When partners like this make such requests, APNEP should be sure to respond. APNEP simply doesn't have the funds to assume responsibility over the long-term, but some such gap-filling efforts have been lengthy, such as APNEP's support for the continuous water-quality monitoring stations on the Roanoke River.

Jim noted that he and Dean had worked with Dr. Michelle Moorman of USGS to document and gather data for the Albemarle Sound Monitoring Project. One of the follow-up projects is to assess and analyze the resultant data. Jim noted that regrettably Michelle has left USGS, but he hopes that she will continue to participate in the APNEP Water Quality Workgroup. Wilson noted that while Michelle's move is regrettable for USGS, his agency benefits because she came to work for us US-FWS.

Bill noted that it is great to see all the projects in which staff is involved. Jim noted that the presentation did not include the work that is being done through APNEP's workgroups. It also doesn't include the staff's routine work.

Carl noted that in his own experience, such as in the Chesapeake Bay Program, the boards would get reports like this, but it was hard to see how the projects are actually contributing to the strategic plan. While he can see in his mind how some of these APNEP activities are contributing, we should understand whether these activities are advancing any of the CCMP goals. Jim noted that those mappings are present.

Bill stated that the program does need to ask how any proposed projects relate to the CCMP, and what any funding provided will do. Bill referred the Board to page 15 of the proposed work plan and noted that it cross-references the CCMP objectives and other program aspects. This cross-referencing has been really helpful through time.

Carl noted that is great. He noted that one thing he hopes is that the staff can return to complete some of the EBM measures. He noted that meetings and reports don't necessarily mean progress toward the desired outcomes.

Bill noted that under the previous CCMP, they could conduct a critical step analysis and determine how far they had moved toward accomplishing objectives.

Mac stated that for every Cooperative Extension project in which he participated, they used surveys after every project completion to determine whether or not things worked. Extension staff would ask farmers to provide estimates of the economic value of a presentation. Extension staff would quantify acres affected, and what value farmers stated it brought to them.

Bill indicated that this topic was discussed yesterday. Staff can do pre-assessments as well as post-assessments. While the number of people attending a program is a nice metric, it doesn't tell you how much they benefitted. Mac explained how their survey worked. Bill noted that the WRRRI conference had a survey form they used.

Mac noted that numbers are important, regardless, suggesting that members go across the street and asked the legislature the importance of numbers.

Bill noted that APNEP is reporting some metrics. Some of the metrics he really doesn't like, such as extent of habitat protected or restored. Some of the improvements are largely done by partners and this has created some issues with EPA headquarters. Some of the numbers reported by APNEP were so large that EPA asked staff to scale them back.

Carl noted that you really do want to assess what you are accomplishing.

Todd suggested that to the degree we can integrate the staff into the workgroups, we will be able to better assess what they are accomplishing.

Carl stated that it has been a very painful exercise in the Chesapeake Bay Program to conduct this sort of review. In that case, the exercise educated all of the stakeholders about the program and resulted in more resources.

Tom Allen noted that the APNEP Decision Support workgroup has a task that will track all of the measures. [Puget Sound Partnership](#) has a tracking process but they have a lot of resources behind them.

Tom Allen confirmed completion of the update, noting that it was pretty impressive given the program is absent three positions.

*Presentation of Draft FY2015-16 Work Plan & Budget: Dr. Bill Crowell*

Bill referred the Board to page 42 of the draft work plan. Todd asked how much funding currently remains. Bill indicated that there is about \$550,000 available at present. The \$600,000 will become available in the new federal fiscal year (October 1). Around \$200,000 of currently available funds are encumbered. APNEP is actually doing pretty well at spending down remaining funds on the old grant. Funding for the two RFPs aren't yet encumbered.

Todd asked if the Board should be considering use of the unencumbered funds. Bill suggested not at this time because some additional potential projects are forthcoming.

Bill noted how APNEP has proceeded in the past. Under the Governor's executive order, APNEP is supposed to have a new advisory body: Implementation Committee. Staff has delayed constituting that committee to form the workgroups first and to avoid undue political influence. Bill believes that they can now move forward with at least part of this committee in consultation with the NC-DENR Secretary.

APNEP's proposed budget is detailed on page 42. Bill asked the Board to compare this budget to the one on page 43. The amount for 2016 is higher for reasons Bill explained. Support for Boards and Committees has declined and thus the cost has been less than previously budgeted. The number of meetings had also dropped. Additional support for board could come from the travel line item, if needed. The fall APNEP conference will cost around \$12,000. The conference center in New Bern has been reserved already, for November 3. Bill noted that staff is considering a living shorelines conference, with some of the other stakeholders in the region, including other NEPs.

Todd noted that there are a lot of living shoreline meetings planned during the next several years.

Bill noted that he is going to skip the implementation projects for the moment. The two engagement projects have been funded for a number of years and are worthwhile, but their support levels have been dropped a bit.

Back to implementation projects, Bill reminded the Board that the Implementation Committee will be responsible for deciding on those projects.

There has been a dramatic increase in indirect costs from last year. The rate DENR charges is negotiated with EPA and Bill noted that APNEP has no say in that. The rate is based on the number of filled positions. The amount paid will be less, due to the vacant positions. The indirect rate is high for APNEP. The first year he was here (2002), the rate was only 18 percent. He thought that was high at that time. Bill noted that he isn't happy about the increase and is questioning the process.

Susan White noted that academic institutions would be charging more, because the indirect costs can't be waived anymore. Bill noted that the indirect costs are one of the main issues for the other NEPs as well, and would need to be set in a host agreement.

Carl asked if there is a match requirement from the state. Bill indicated that there is a required one-to-one match. He has been able to use CWMTF projects for the match. He gave an example.

Carl stated that a reduced indirect cost can be used as a match in academia. If APNEP could secure such an agreement, that would keep more funds in the budget.

Susan noted that is also causing problems.

Tom Allen noted that it seemed odd to him that DENR is charging overhead to EPA.

Bill noted that in the past, APNEP would pay indirect up to 15% on contracts and grants. If someone comes to APNEP, there is no indirect. APNEP would pay directly billable costs. Bill gave an example. In talking to one of the universities this week, Bill noted that he had asked them to document direct costs and APNEP could pay for those.

APNEP has done a lot more of small projects this year. Many did not have to go through the contracting process. It is harder in some respects to track the larger projects.

Todd asked if the program pays rent to DENR.

Bill indicated they do. Also, if they leave a space, they have to find someone to take over the space. He noted that they actually are paying about a third of what they used to pay. They do pay rent in the form of "Transfer to Green Square" funds. This was not told to APNEP before the move. Staff used to be immediately next to the NC-DENR Secretary's office when they were in the Archdale Building. When staff moved to the new building in spring 2012, they were presented with a moving bill. That was a surprise and came out of their budget.

Burrell noted that APNEP pays both direct and indirect costs, then. Bill agreed and noted that he has raised both issues and will be discussing the rent.

Bill noted that APNEP must either match or leverage at a one-to-one ratio. EPA has deleted the leverage, and are now asking for a one-to-one match. APNEP can leverage federal money, like Michelle Moorman's time.

Todd asked if there are measures in place to ensure that CWMTF funds cannot be used for match. Bill indicated he addressed this several years ago and that they do have such measures in place. Todd noted that APNEP can use state funds as match for federal projects.

Bill noted that there may be opportunities for partner-type commitments of match or in-kind. It would be nice to diversity the funding stream. At other NEPs, organizations can actually provide funding at some level. While APNEP belongs to the national association of NEPs (ANEP), APNEP have not been paying dues because there are no non-federal funds. The current ANEP dues are \$4,000, but if they approach APNEP for those funds, staff should asked what they get for the \$4,000.



Todd Miller suggested that APNEP should ask about the NCCAT at Ocracoke Island. They actually bring teachers out there for education workshops. Bill noted that APNEP used to use the Office of Environmental Education funds as leverage for the project. That program is down from six to two people. APNEP had been able to tap into Superfund funding in the past in a partnership with the UNC Institute for the Environment.

Tom Allen noted that the Coastal Studies Institute may be a potential partner as well.

Carl asked if APNEP could apply for other federal funds. Bill advised they can so. Carl asked how they would find any match. Bill indicated that they could be creative and find match, and have done so in the past with some Regional Wetland Grants. Bill noted that they were going for a NASA/NOAA Global Change Grant, and had lined up the match, but APNEP was not allowed to apply for that match.

Bill stated that APNEP supporting a summer teacher institute is very beneficial. Todd felt that it was worth it, yet was also wondering how to reach more teachers.

Bill noted that in some cases APNEP has used language that allows some flexibility.

Todd stated it was a shame not to better utilize some of these funds. Bill asked Todd to address some of the constraints on using funds for teachers.

Todd explained the situation regarding NCCAT, who was told that for political reasons they should not focus any of their programs on environmental issues. They were not to use any funds for environmental issues. Todd wanted to make sure that if APNEP invested any funding with that organization, the focus was on APNEP issues. Mac noted that funding which had underwritten teachers was cut. Ocracoke has been underserved, but they tried to get in last year and couldn't get in, and they couldn't go prior to May.

Bill noted that APNEP can provide funding for the workshop and materials, but we can't pay for substitute teacher costs or transportation costs. Those restrictions come from EPA.

Todd noted that the EPA money doesn't get spent on restricted items.

Bill stated that the Board would be amazed at some of the things that the teachers have been able to take home with them as a result of partnerships. APNEP didn't have to pay for these things.

Bill that the quick review of the work plan was complete, then opened the floor for questions or discuss in more detail, if needed.

*Discussion of Draft FY2015-16 Work Plan & Budget (Action Item): Dr. Tom Allen*

Tom Allen asked if members had any other questions. He asked if hiring additional core staff would affect any of the numbers. Bill indicated that the budget was formulated under the presumption that the positions would be filled. He also noted that his position was budgeted at 1 FTE. If any funds remain, they are diverted into project funding.

Todd noted that the amount of funding actually administered for projects is really a lot larger.

Burrell moved, Carl seconded approval of the 2015-2016 APNEP work plan budget.

Susan White asked if she was a voting member. Bill advised that she was a voting member. Susan noted that wasn't specified on the membership roster.

Bill noted that they will do anything they can to avoid any conflicts of interest or perceived conflicts. He noted that they don't want to put any impediments against applying for APNEP funds.

*Old & New Business: Dr. Tom Allen*

Wilson noted that for those so inclined, the American Shad are biting on the Neuse at Milburnie Dam. At least they were biting last weekend.

Bill asked Wilson if he had any update on the Corps of Engineers oyster reef mitigation, for the Wanchese Harbor project. Wilson had not. Todd advised he had heard project was moving forward.

Susan invited Board members to attend the upcoming [North Carolina Coastal Conference](#), which will be held at the McKimmon Center on April 14. She noted that they do have some nice speakers coming. There is a \$30 registration fee and the schedule is online. The premise is that this is applicable to many partnerships around the table. It may become an annual event but it is hard to say at this time.

Bill noted that one of the handouts for the Board is actually intended for use as a placemat at restaurants, and was done in collaboration with [NC Catch](#). Folks can eat a hushpuppy and read about APNEP. Carl noted how customers can read about oysters and read about how they filter impurities from the water.

Jim noted that APNEP is supporting a series of presentations at the Daily Planet in the Nature Research Center this summer. The two talks scheduled will be by Dr. Joe Luczkovich (ECU) and Dr. Joel Fodrie (UNC). Tom Allen will be speaking as well.

Jimmy asked who was winning APNEP's "Marsh Madness" competition? Jim noted that this has been a fun social media experiment. APNEP is highlighting sixteen different estuarine species in a popularity contest. They are also testing use of some Facebook features. It is highlighting Spartina versus oysters, and striped bass versus sturgeon. They have had 60-70 votes on each one. When considering the value of investing in social media, this has provided pretty good engagement. Staff will do a write up on Monday, as well as updates through the course of the tournament. Jim noted that he has red drum going all the way, and Dean has SAV going all the way. Staff will keep it up for the next couple of weeks. They will continue testing some of the advertising features. NC-DENR's portal features are being updated and APNEP should have a new web site by year's end. Bill noted that he had to re-do his bracket. He used the charismatic megafauna approach in formulating his. Bill noted that the Natural Heritage staff was the first to vote, and they know all of the species. Bill noted that some folks don't what Spartina is. The Heritage folks are mostly botanists so they voted for the plants. Jim noted that stripers and sturgeons were neck and neck. Staff had cut the species list down to sixteen from 50. This is a good way to focus on some wonderful natural resources. Tom Allen noted that this was good work.

Bill Crowell recommended that next Board meeting be held in concert with the STAC's scheduled meeting on Wednesday, July 29. The location is TBD. Dean stated that he was trying to secure a venue, noting that it would be good to have a site amenable to the Policy Board as well. Burrell noted that she could probably find a location at East Carolina University.

Bill noted that upon adjournment staff wants to take a new group photo of the Board.

*Public Comments*

There were no public comments.

*Adjourn*

The meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.