

APNEP Policy Board Meeting

Walter B. Jones, Sr. Center for the Sounds
205 South Ludington Drive
Columbia, NC 27925

March 14, 2012

Attendance

Policy Board members: Tom Allen, Bill Cox, David Knight, Charles Bass, Tom Stroud, Todd Miller, Willy Phillips, Timmy Baynes, Marjorie Rayburn, Kirk Havens, Tony Reevy

Other attendees: Rhonda Evans, Noah Hill, Linda Pearsall, Gloria Putnam, Beth Cranford, Ladd Bayliss

APNEP staff: Bill Crowell, Scott Gentry, Dean Carpenter, Jim Hawhee

Welcome: Tony Reevy, Chair

Tony thanked Willy Phillips and Tom Stroud for their assistance with setting up this meeting.

Midge Ogletree, deputy mayor, provided a few welcoming comments on behalf of mayor F. Michael Griffin and the Town of Columbia. She highlighted several recent initiatives taken by the Town including waterfront improvements along the Scuppernong River with the help of a grant from the NC Division of Marine Fisheries, a growing arts community highlighted by the Pocosin Arts Partnership, and implementation of a low impact development (LID) project with the assistance of the NC Coastal Federation.

Howard Phillips provided a welcome from the US Fish & Wildlife Service. The Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge encompasses 110,000 acres in Hyde, Tyrrell, and Washington Counties. The Pungo Lake Unit functions primarily as a habitat for wintering waterfowl while Lake Phelps conserves pocosin and wetland habitat. Prior to becoming a refuge, the area was largely covered by an extensive ditch drainage system. Much work has been done to restore the hydrology to these peatland areas.

Public Comments: Tony Reevy

Tony opened the floor for public comments. No comments were made.

Tony reminded the Board to avoid conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest. There was none.

Given the Policy Board will be voting on several items, including approval of the CCMP and Assessment documents, this meeting is the most critical meeting of the Policy Board in some time. Some members that were not able to attend have provided their votes by proxy. Tony asked for those persons voting in place of a Board member to identify themselves and who they are voting for. Linda Pearsall will be voting in proxy for Richard Rogers, and Gloria Putnam will be voting in proxy for Jack Thigpen. Tony will be voting on behalf of himself, Brian Long, Reide Wilson, and Sara Benghouser.

Approval of October Meeting Notes

Tony referenced the meeting notes from the Policy Board's last meeting on October 26, 2011. There were no changes or corrections, and the notes were approved unanimously.

By-law Amendments

Tom Stroud requested a clarification about Article 3, Section 6 of the by-laws, which is in regard to the proxy vote. Because of the pertinence of this by-law with several votes taking place in today's meeting, this item was moved up in the agenda. After some discussion, Tony summarized the group's comments: as long as board members are notified in advance, they should be able to send a vote. The proxy resolves the issue of voting in absentia.

Once approved, the by-laws are effective immediately. Tony instructed staff to make sure 66% of the Board membership is included to ensure a proper vote. The Board voted unanimously to approve the by-laws. Revisions will stand as sent to members.

Director's Report: Bill Crowell

The staff has been busy since the last Policy Board meeting. APNEP moved into offices at the new DENR building (also known as Green Square) in November. Jim was the staff lead for the move. The State of the Sounds Conference was held November 17, 2011 in New Bern. The conference was well attended and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. A number of public meetings were held in conjunction with the public review process for the draft CCMP. In January, a meeting between APNEP staff, Virginia DCR staff, and The Nature Conservancy was held to kick off a Healthy Waters Initiative for the Chowan Basin. The STAC met on January 31 in Greenville, and their next meeting will be held in Raleigh on April 25.

The CCMP and Assessment drafts have been finalized. We hope to have both of these documents approved at today's meeting. The 2012 CCMP is a dynamic document that follows the principles of ecosystem-based management (EBM). It holds stronger accountability than the preceding document as APNEP aims to follow an adaptive management process. Staff look forward to beginning implementation of the plan. Bill thanked the staff for their efforts on the CCMP over the last two years, and he acknowledged Dean for taking a major role in the development of the assessment.

Work continues on developing a new communications strategy, and we will begin writing a Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy in 2012. The next Policy Board meeting will be focused on the work plan and budget. Bill is waiting on final notice from EPA regarding funding for the upcoming year. APNEP's program evaluation will take place next year.

Bill attended the annual National Estuary Program meeting in Washington, DC in February. Early speculation is that each NEP will receive the same amount of funding that was allocated in the previous year's budget. While he was in DC, Bill met with the director of the Puget Sound Partnership. APNEP's new CCMP has a similar structure to Puget Sound's Action Agenda. They discussed how setting thresholds and targets can be the hardest part of the planning process. To assist with this step, APNEP is considering using Miradi software.

On behalf of the board, Tony thanked the staff, committees, and volunteers for their work on these documents.

Climate Ready Estuary /Utilities Updates: Jim Hawhee

APNEP will be receiving assistance (financial and technical) through the Climate Ready Water Utilities program at EPA to work with local utilities in the APNEP region. The training will be focused on an EPA tool called CREAT, which is short for Climate Resilience Evaluation and Awareness Tool. CREAT is designed to help water utilities adapt to impacts associated with climate change. Two communities have been targeted for the initial training, Columbia and Manteo.

2012 Ecosystem Assessment Document: Kirk Havens, Dean Carpenter

The 2012 Ecosystem Assessment is a critical companion document to the CCMP. The initial draft, being submitted here today for the Board's approval, is a status and trends analysis of 24 indicators of the Albemarle-Pamlico ecosystem. It is important to note this Assessment is just the first step in an adaptive process to document, analyze, and manage the resources of the Albemarle-Pamlico system.

Kirk commented on the importance of the Assessment and how it ties back to the CCMP through ecosystem-based management. The status of indicators and associated thresholds will help guide management decisions, and the adaptive process dictates indicators may need to be revisited.

Tony commented this is an impressive amount of work that was largely made possible by volunteer authors. The efforts of these volunteers are appreciated. Bill added that Lindsey Dubbs' work as a post-doc was key in putting together the Assessment. Tony stated the document is appropriate for an academic audience, but it can be spelled down for public audience. Dean will be working to distill down the measures into a document that is targeted at the general public.

Bill said the Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy should be very useful to partners to see what various groups are monitoring. Tony added that Bill and Dean will be discussing the monitoring strategy as part of the CCMP later in the meeting.

Bill stated that the Assessment is a peer reviewed document. The STAC Executive Committee approved the Assessment in advance of the Policy Board meeting. The action requested of the Policy Board would be to *endorse* this document.

There were several questions and comments from the board. Marjorie asked if APNEP will be looking at gaps in reporting and where there is potential for adding more reporting stations. Dean responded that we will be using the logic model to help determine where to allocate resources.

Tony asked if there was a motion to endorse the Assessment. Kirk so moved, and the motion was seconded by Tom Allen. All voted in favor of endorsement. Tony encouraged APNEP staff, Committees, and partners to take this document and do great things with it.

Linda Pearsall, commenting on behalf of DENR, said the staff has done a good job trying to meet an ambitious timeline and reaching out to partner agencies for input. She applauded Tony and Kirk's leadership in making this happen. APNEP is making great steps forward through its partnerships.

Nominations & Elections of Chair and Vice Chair: Tony Reeve

The Board discussed moving nominations and elections up on the agenda. There are no new members to elect. Tony's seat as Chair ends on March 31. Accordingly, a new chair and vice chair need to be elected, with terms lasting from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2014. Tony is pleased with the progress of the program during his tenure as Chair. He thanked the Board for its service during this time.

The Policy Board's Executive Committee has made nominations for the Chair and vice-Chair positions. Todd Miller and Tom Allen were nominated as Chair as Vice Chair, respectively. A call was made for other nominations. There were none. Kirk Havens moved to close the nominations, and Tim Baynes seconded. Kirk made a motion to vote Todd as Chair and Tom as Vice-chair. This was seconded by Marjorie Rayburn. Kirk thanked Tony for his leadership in moving this group forward, particularly with the advent of the new CCMP and Assessment. A standing ovation followed.

2012 Comprehensive Plan: Bill Crowell

Bill ran through slides and explained the development and review process of the CCMP. There were seven public meetings held, with at least one in each river basin of the APNEP region. Meetings were lightly attended, but there was some good discussion. The CCMP was posted for comment in the NC Register, a form on the website to collect comments, and partners were contacted directly for feedback. Advertising and promoting the draft CCMP provided many opportunities for feedback.

The CCMP has gone through extensive but minor revisions following the comment period. The major change of note was removing the “Key Partner” designation from each Action. This should help eliminate some confusion about shared roles between partners or who might take the lead on an action. Bill pointed out that the graphic showing the adaptive planning cycle has been updated. Online comments were addressed online with responses.

There was a discussion about the next steps if the Policy Board approves the CCMP. This CCMP would replace the old CCMP. Tony said the document will need to go to the Governors of North Carolina and Virginia, and it will also go to the EPA. Bill added the Governors do not have to ratify the CCMP, but EPA Region 4 will need to accept and forward it to EPA headquarters. The floor was opened for questions and comments.

Kirk commented that staff has implemented ecosystem-based management and adaptive management principles into the plan. A similar process is being followed by the EPA Science Advisory Board as a methodology for managing the Great Lakes. Bill said that EBM methodology is also part of the President’s Ocean Policy document. Bill Cox stated that the CCMP and the Assessment are co-dependent documents. It is critical that the two documents are aligned and work together. Bill Crowell stated that as the plan is implemented, we will look to indicator thresholds in the assessment to determine progress. If progress is not noted, actions may need to be changed, and likewise, thresholds may need to be adjusted if they are not providing a proper measurement for the system. Tony stated that future additions to the Assessment should include candidate indicators from the CCMP.

Tom Stroud asked if there are one or two areas where the CCMP may need some work. Bill Crowell said he is happy with the Plan. The document structure allows changes to be incorporated, as necessary, and it allows us to measure progress along the way. Being adaptive, we can adjust the plan as time moves forward.

Tony asked for clarification from Rhonda on the approval process at EPA. Rhonda stated that EPA will review the CCMP during the Programmatic Review period. They will look at work done since the last review and comments on the CCMP. EPA will assess if program goals have been met and if progress can be documented. The Programmatic Review takes place every five years and will take place again for APNEP in 2013. Bill suggested it would be good for the Board to conduct an annual review of the CCMP. Rhonda said annual work plan action items should be correlated with the CCMP. It would be good timing to conduct the annual review of the CCMP when the work plans are being created each year.

Todd Miller asked Bill to outline the annual work plan and budget process. Bill explained the work plan is a progress report with proposed actions, budget items, and management actions. The new CCMP will allow for closer correlation of actions in the work plan and budget items. Tom asked whether the state match is staff time or in kind. Bill clarified that the state match is primarily administrative. It largely comes through the Clean Water Management Trust Fund with items such as the salary for Jimmy Johnson and time of board members, for example, also factoring in.

Bill Cox commented that with a lot of actions and a large program area, has APNEP considered targeting any particular watershed to get synergy? Bill Crowell replied that we have thought about this, but focusing on one geographic area would likely cause APNEP to lose momentum in other areas. The important thing is to make sure we are working towards common outcomes. For example, The Nature Conservancy collaboration goes beyond work on the ground and includes global climate change work. Dean Carpenter added that sometimes actions do start in a particular basin but are often scaled up to include other areas.

Tony asked if there is a motion to approve the 2012 CCMP and replace the existing plan. Kirk so moved, and Tom Stroud seconded. The Board voted unanimously to approve the CCMP. Tony directed staff to follow through by sending copies to the Governors of North Carolina and Virginia and follow EPA procedures. David Knight thanked APNEP staff for their work on the CCMP and the Policy Board for their support to see this product through to approval.

Overview of CCMP Next Steps & Monitoring Strategy Development: Bill Crowell

With approval of the CCMP today, APNEP will be shifting focus from the planning stage to implementation. The cycle of adaptive management will remain an ongoing process, and a critical next step will be to set targets and indicators. APNEP will look at established state standards and actions from other agencies. Once we set a baseline, staff may look back to the Board and advisory committees for feedback.

Kirk stated that this is where the rubber really meets the road by setting measures and targets. APNEP must decide how much variability are we comfortable with, how effective is the intervention, and do we deal with a measure that may not be working. Setting thresholds and determining uncertainty is where many groups fail in the process.

Bill stated there are certain aspects that will need attention based on public perception, in addition to the scientific value. He used the example of the orca at Puget Sound. The orca itself is not critical to the health of the Puget Sound estuary, but it is an important for public perception.

A Board member asked, how will we pay for this? APNEP will provide direct financial support for some actions. We will also work with partners to obtain grants and/or leverage resources to address CCMP components, by pointing to certain actions in the plan.

APNEP will request a new Governor's executive order for implementation of the new CCMP.

Tony had some questions about the monitoring strategy. What is the expected outcome? What form will the document take? Will it involve volunteer help? Bill said the document will be in the form of a technical report and link to the CCMP. APNEP may bring on a post-doc to work on the strategy, similar to the assistance provided by Lindsay Dubbs on the Assessment. Funding for this potential position would be discussed at the next Policy Board meeting. Tony encouraged the program to continue to take advantage of the intellectual assets available in this region. Bill said that some NEPs have used contractors to complete documents like this, but we hope to continue the success of utilizing partnerships in the region. Tony likes this approach.

Tony asked if there is an estimate of when the monitoring document will be ready. Bill is reluctant to set a date, but we hope to have a draft completed by the end of 2012. Based on logistics and the demand

on staff, it was necessary to wait until the CCMP was complete before proceeding. APNEP hopes to have a fully finished project within two years. We have to keep in mind that decisions by the state legislature can impact our partners.

Old and New Business

State of the Sounds Conference: Jim Hawhee

Jim Hawhee provided a recap of the State of the Sounds Symposium. He thanked Sarah Yelton for her role in organizing the event. Feedback from those who attended was overwhelmingly positive. Tony said there were some comments requesting this event be held every other year. Staff will give some consideration to making this a regular event. Kirk suggested that as we think through the CCMP and monitoring strategy, APNEP could consider timing future symposia to report on progress. There were a handful of comments noting that there were so many sessions going on simultaneously that some attendees felt they had to miss one session to attend another. Bill suggested the possibility of having something smaller focused on each component from the CCMP.

Citizen Monitoring Network: Scott Gentry

Scott Gentry talked about the future direction of the Citizens' Monitoring Network (CMN). The CMN is one of the longest running outreach initiatives in the APNEP program, dating back to 1991. The data collected by volunteers is currently not utilized as a source for evaluating or making decisions about the APNEP ecosystem. We are hoping to transition the CMN to become a more holistic approach to data collection in the region and include it as part of the new monitoring strategy. A steering group will be formed to make decisions about the future of the CMN and help create a Request for Proposals (RFP). The RFP will be released this summer and solicit groups to run the CMN starting in October 2012.

Currently, the data is managed by the CMN coordinator and stored in Excel. Rhonda suggested it should be moved over to EPA's STORET repository.

Bill said the CMN has been used primarily as an engagement tool, but APNEP is hoping to expand the network and link into citizen science initiatives in the region. Once APNEP staff moves into offices at the Nature Resources Center, there will be increased opportunities to network in citizen science. Marjorie asked if other NEPs are doing something similar. Kirk said the Chesapeake Bay Program has examples of citizen monitoring, and he will follow-up by sending information to staff. Bill Cox said APNEP needs to look at who else is doing monitoring in the region, including wastewater facilities, etc. Bill Crowell said there is a good example from the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program in Punta Gorda, FL. Dean added there is a dialogue that needs to happen about citizens wanting data to be used. The STAC had a recent meeting focused on citizen science initiatives. Todd said we need to be clear about the goal of the citizen science and outreach programs. Tony suggested we need to focus on schools. Given the involvement of Board and Committee members related to citizen science efforts, please avoid conflicts of interest if your organization submits a proposal to the RFP.

Communication Strategy Development: Jim Hawhee

Jim has been working on the Communication Strategy, and we hope to have it complete in the near future. We may be discussing this at the next Board meeting. The document will be posted on the APNEP website. Bill reminded the Board that the current communication strategy is posted on the web if anybody wants to look at it.

Tom Stroud asked if APNEP will become part of the museum following the move to the NRC. Linda responded the building will be a combination of public area and offices. The target audience of the NRC

will be older children and adults. The museum has hired scientists with joint appointments at research universities. This should open up opportunities to build collaborations that haven't been as practical in the past.

2012-2013 work plan development: Bill Crowell

The next Policy Board meeting will be focused on aligning the work plan with new CCMP. Bill will be talking with various members and a conference call may be held to prepare for that meeting. Gloria Putnam asked who drafts the work plan, and Bill responded that it is written by the director with input from staff and the policy board. Staff will develop a draft and get it to the board a minimum of two weeks before the next meeting. Linda added that the Office of Conservation, Planning, and Community Affairs Strategic Plan will be aligned with the new CCMP.

Other New Business

Bill and Todd thanked Tony for his service and presented him with a plaque.

David Knight said the Nature Resources Center is set for a grand opening for 24 hours on April 20. Hopefully, the next meeting of the Policy Board will take place there. Also, Deputy Secretary Manly Wilder is retiring in May, and he will be replaced by Mary Penny Thompson. As part of an internal shift in DENR management with Manly leaving, the Zoo and Natural Sciences Museum will move under David and Natural Resources.

Notice of Next Meeting

A date has yet to be determined for the next meeting. The meeting will be held at the Nature Resource Center (part of the new Green Square complex) in Raleigh. The annual work plan will be adopted at this meeting.

Adjourn

Kirk moved to adjourn, and Charlie Bass seconded. The meeting adjourned at 1:40.