

**RESTORE ACT  
Public Meeting  
October 21, 2014**

**Attendees:** Chris Cowart, Vice-Chairman, School Board Representative  
John Meeks, Board of County Commissioners  
Jolie Davis, Citizen Representative  
Jack Schofield, Citizen Representative  
Richard Streeter, Citizen Representative

Fred Moody, County Coordinator  
Anne Bast Brown, County Attorney  
Amber Davis Williams, Consultant

**Absent:** Marilyn Ladner, Higher Education Institution (college/university)  
Leslie Sturmer, Aquaculture  
David Pieklik, Economic Development Representative  
Bruce Wilson, Tourism Industry Representative

Vice-Chairman Cowart opened the Committee meeting of the Levy County RESTORE Act Advisory Committee at 3:05 p.m. at the Levy County Court House, Vice-Chairman Cowart led the Pledge to the Flag followed by an invocation. Vice-Chairman Cowart called for public comments and there were none. The roll of members was called.

**RESTORE UPDATE**

Ms. Brown reported that the Board of County Commissioners ("Board") has approved a job description for a grants coordinator which will include the administration duties for the RESTORE Act funds.

Ms. Brown said the information being received from other counties reflect that the administrative representatives are starting to communicate and have created an email chain to determine where they are in the process. Ms. Brown said it varies with some counties just beginning the process and others ready to apply for grants.

Mr. Cowart inquired as to when the staff person would be hired and Mr. Moody said it would be at least 6 weeks to allow for advertising and interviews by the Board.

**PROJECT PRESENTATION**

Mr. Mark Berrigan made the presentation of the Oyster Reef Restoration in the Gulf of Mexico submitted by the Cedar Key Oystermen's Association, Inc. Mr. Berrigan explained the project with a power point presentation relating to restoring oyster beds in the Cedar Key area.

Mr. Berrigan said the project will involve replacing the substrate to restore functioning oyster communities, re-seed oyster populations and re-establish reef infrastructure. Mr

Berrigan discussed the areas that are proposed for restoration and re-seeding. Mr. Berrigan explained that the project will also protect the environment and it will provide employment during the project and will re-establish the income for the commercial fishermen and also restore the habitat for recreational pursuits which include but are not limited to fishing, tourism, bird watching, and kayaking. Mr. Berrigan said the oyster reefs are a vital part of the ecological system and the impact of the previous years in drought conditions and the influx of commercial fishermen from the Apalachicola Bay area is seriously endangering the infrastructure of oyster reefs in the Cedar Key area.

Mr. Berrigan explained the various methods for restoring the reefs using the spat and seeds to create and stabilize reef structure. Mr. Berrigan further explained the options of planting culch materials, shell or limerock (calcium carbonate base) for oysters to attach to or using natural seed on reefs and also the replacing of substrate materials. Mr. Berrigan said there had been some funding received from NOAA for replacement of seeds during the drought though the success was limited.

Mr. Berrigan explained the various factors, commencing from 1993-1994 when reef structure was lost from storms and then going into a serious drought that have had a severe impact on the existing oyster population.

Mr. Berrigan said the long term results of the proposed project will increase and restore the oyster reefs, increase revenue, sustain the fishery industry, economic value to coastal communities (i.e. community businesses) and the ecological advantages by sustaining oyster, fishing and wildlife habitats.

Mr. Fred Moody advised that there will be a workshop in Dixie County on Thursday, October 23, 2014 concerning the oyster harvesting.

Mr. Jerry Beckham of the Cedar Key Oystermen's Association said the main objective is to get the oysters back and make them a viable commodity again. Mr. Beckham said oystering will also increase the crabbing. Mr. Beckham explained the locations to grow oysters must be carefully selected.

In response to a question by Dr. Richard Streeter, Mr. Berrigan said other funding sources will be explored and that NOAA and the Nature Conservancy are involved in Gulf restoration and have various funding projects along with the US Fish and Wildlife and the National Institute of Wildlife Fisheries. Mr. Berrigan said research links are being developed and the named organizations are potential sources for funding.

Comm. John Meeks explained he had attended a water symposium and not only is the argument of the withdrawal of water by the City of Atlanta, Georgia an issue, there are 2100 irrigation wells which are withdrawing water from the recharge areas even before the water flows into Florida. Comm. Meeks said it will take a state-wide support with state and federal funds to address this problem.

Vice-Chairman Chris Cowart recommended contacting Representative Charlie Stone for support. Ms. Jeanne Beckham advised they have met with Representative Stone.

## **PROJECT SUMMARY REVIEW**

Ms. Amber Williams recommended evaluating the date line and possibly setting up a final deadline for projects and sending a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. Ms. Williams said establishing the evaluations is a decision of the Committee.

In response to Dr. Streeter 's statement on the difficulty in evaluating the projects, Vice-Chairman Cowart said the Committee is tasked with gathering the information on proposed projects and then will make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners on what the Committee thinks are viable projects. Vice-Chairman Cowart explained the Board of County Commissioners will decide on what portion of a project to fund or if to fund an entire project as the Committee is advisory only.

Ms. Brown said the criminal case has proceeded quicker than expected with the final phase commencing in January, 2015. Ms. Brown said the money which is currently available is from the Transocean settlement for fines and penalties, with BP and Haliburton still to have a determination of what they will owe.

Ms. Williams suggested setting a date for final ranking of all projects. Vice-Chairman Cowart suggested December 31. Comm. John Meeks moved to set a tentative deadline of December 31, seconded by Ms. Jolie Davis and the motion carried.

The Committee discussed how to consider the ranking of the projects, the removal of some projects which are in the process of being done and the uncertainty of how much funding will be received eventually.

Ms. Brown explained that when there is a staff person in place they will be able to work with Treasury to formulate what will be needed to apply for funds and assist in what will be needed in the plan.

Comm. Meeks said the Committee should be involved in the ranking and the recommendation to the Board which will allow the plan to be formulated.

## **MEETING SCHEDULE**

The next meeting of the RESTORE Act Committee was scheduled for Tuesday, January 20, 2015 at 3:00 p.m. and will be held at the Levy County Court House, County Commission meeting room.

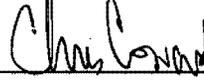
## **MINUTES**

Ms. Jolie Davis moved to approve the minutes of September 23, 2014, second by Mr. Jack Schofield and the motion carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mr. Fred Moody advised that a press release would be sent to area newspapers advising the extended deadline to December 31, 2014 for project applications and the meeting adjourned at 4:32 p.m.

**RESTORE ACT COMMITTEE**



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Chris Cowart, Vice-Chairman