



CHNEP Policy Committee Meeting

Thursday May 28, 2020

9:30 am – 1:30 pm

Virtual Meeting due to COVID-19

Draft Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

Brian Smith	Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4 (Co-chair)
Jon Inglehart	Florida Department of Environmental Protection (Co-chair)
Kali Spurgin	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Don McCormick	Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council
Jack Bispham	Southwest Florida Water Management District
Chauncey Goss	South Florida Water Management District
Bill Truex	Charlotte County
Colon Lambert	Hardee County
James Brooks	Highlands County
Frank Mann	Lee County
Priscilla Whisenant Trace	Manatee County
Bill Braswell	Polk County
Fred Forbes	City of Bonita Springs
Bill Veach	Town of Fort Myers Beach
Jessica Cosdon	City of Cape Coral
Bill Read	City of Lakeland
Debbie McDowell	City of North Port
Mick Denham	City of Sanibel
Katy Errington	Village of Estero

Others Present:

Jennifer Hecker	Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership
Nicole Iadevaia	Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership
Andrew Webb	Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership
Chelsea Bojewski	Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership
Elizabeth Noll	Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership
Rachel Hart	Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4
Shelby Butz	Environmental Protection Agency, Headquarters
Noemi Mercado	Environmental Protection Agency, Headquarters
Joyce Novak	Peconic Estuary Program – New York
Corey Anderson	Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (Management Committee Co-chair)
Cortney Cortez	The Balmoral Group

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS – BRIAN SMITH, CO-CHAIR

Co-Chair Brian Smith called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM. The Co-Chair Chair led participants through the virtual meeting instructions before conducting a roll call; there were no members of the public present.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS — BRIAN SMITH, CO-CHAIR

No additions or deletions to the agenda.

DON McCORMICK MOVED TO ADOPT THE AGENDA AND PRISCILLA WHISENANT TRACE SECONDED. THE AGENDA WAS ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS — BRIAN SMITH, CO-CHAIR

No public comment was made on the agenda at this time.

4. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT — COREY ANDERSON, MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR

Corey Anderson, Management Committee Co-chair, gave a report on the Management Committee May 15, 2020 meeting highlights. At their meeting, Justin Saarinen, TAC Co-chair, provided the Management Committee with an overview of the Technical Advisory Committee meeting held on Friday, April 17th, 2020. The TAC report covered highlights from the many technical presentations they heard and notable comments from their resulting discussion. TAC members and CHNEP staff welcomed the new Co-Chair Devon Moore, and thanked outgoing Co-chair Lizanne Garcia for her service and dedication. Will Van Gelder from the SWFWMD mentioned that the Charlotte Harbor SWIM plan pdf would be available on the SWFWMD website before the end of May, and a virtual workshop will be held May 26th, 4-6pm. Debi Osborne, CAC Co-chair, shared an overview of the Citizen’s Advisory Committee meeting held on Wednesday, April 29th, 2020. The CAC spent the majority of their meeting going over the CHNEP Conservation Grant process, current Conservation grant applications, and heard a presentation from JoEllen Wilson of Bonefish & Tarpon Trust on ongoing fisheries research funded by a previous CHNEP grant. The CAC members discussed finding community partners and projects for the upcoming Conservation Grant application deadline in August.

The Management Committee heard presentations on, and discussed most of the same items that are on this Policy Agenda. They recommended that the Policy Committee consider approval of both the FY2020 Amended Work Plan & Budget, as well as the FY2021 Work Plan & Budget. They commented that they would like to see the new technical project proposals that have been submitted for evaluation for potential funding as CHNEP FY2021 TBD Restoration projects, and CHNEP staff said they would put them on the CHNEP Management Committee webpage after the meeting. The Management Committee had a lengthy discussion on the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual and the WRDA Savings Clause issue, coming to consensus to recommend that the Policy Committee consider CHNEP taking a position on the issue due to its potential impact on achieving multiple CHNEP Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan objectives and activities. There were no specifics on what position was recommended or how it could be conveyed – though some suggested that a resolution might be an appropriate vehicle to communicate such. With regards to the Harmful Algae Blooms Economic Impact presentation, Management Committee members remarked that they were impressed with the information collected and the “dashboard” tool created for use by policymakers and the public.

5. CONSENT AGENDA — JENNIFER HECKER, CHNEP & BRIAN SMITH, CO-CHAIR

CHNEP Executive Director Jennifer Hecker gave a brief overview of Consent Agenda items and Policy Committee Co-Chair Brian Smith facilitated discussion and voting.

a. Policy Committee January 17, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Policy Committee members were asked to review minutes ahead of the meeting, mentioning any edits they would like to the minutes during discussion and vote on Consent Agenda (unless they would like to pull the item from the Consent Agenda altogether).

b. New Member Appointments to the CHNEP CAC

CAC members are appointed by the Policy Committee as individuals who represent their communities (as opposed to CHNEP TAC and Management Committees, where members are appointed by their organization), being assigned to represent one of the CHNEP's 10 counties on the CHNEP Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). This cycle, CHNEP received 3 applications for vacant seats on the CAC. Nicole Johnson, Director of Environmental Policy for the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, applied to represent Lee County. Brian Kelly, active citizen and environmental volunteer, applied to represent Sarasota County. Lynn Shelfer, owner of Joshua Citrus, applied to represent Desoto County. Policy Committee members are asked to review these new member applications in advance, mentioning any comments during discussion and vote on Consent Agenda (unless they would like to pull the item from the Consent Agenda altogether).

c. FY2020 Amended Work Plan & Budget

Policy Committee members are asked to review amended FY2020 Work Plan and Budget ahead of the meeting, mentioning any comments during discussion and vote on Consent Agenda (unless they would like to pull the item from the Consent Agenda altogether).

The initial FY20 Work Plan and Budget was presented and approved by the Management Conference in the spring 2019 meeting cycle. As is customary, the CHNEP annual Work Plans and Budgets need to be amended as updated information is available and as needed due to funding or project changes. As a result, the FY20 Amended Work Plan is being presented for review with the following amendments since last cycle:

Table 9:

- CHNEP Habitat Restoration Needs Phase II increased from \$49,923 to \$73,423 (NCE Project)
- CHNEP Economic Valuation Study funding budget decreased from \$100,000 to \$94,299 as the Contractor bid and Agreement came in under budget
- Gateway to Myakka Marsh Restoration budget decreased from \$28,000 to \$25,764 as the Contractor bid and Agreement came in under budget
- South Lee County Watershed Initiative Hydrological Modeling Project 'Potential Funded Projects' with budget of \$145,296 and recent added commitment of \$50,000 of SWFWMD funding
- Cyanobacteria Rapid Response Pilot Study Project was moved from 'Potential Funded Projects' with budget of \$65,500 with \$41,500 (NCE Project) and \$24,000 from FY20 TBD funding
- LCHFI Hydrologic Restoration project with SWFWMD funding decreased from \$40,000 to \$39,509 as the Contractor bid for SWFWMD funded portion of the project Agreement came in under budget
- Lower Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Hydrologic Restoration Initiative funded by FDEP-NRDA increased from \$475,000 to \$532,283 due to additional contingency funds being

allocated from FDEP to CHNEP to cover bid overage and additional funds needed for drilling equipment needed to complete installation of groundwater monitoring wells.

- The Warm Mineral Springs Run Restoration proposal has been received and local funds for project were increased from \$8,490 to \$8,990 to fully fund proposal.

Table 10:

- Task 2 LCHFI Hydrologic Restoration was combined with Task 4 TBD Restoration Project with SWFWMD approval for a budgeted amount of \$40,000
- The portion of LCHFI project that is funded by SWFWMD was bid at under budget and caused the amount to decrease to \$39,509
- The unused funds of \$491 were moved to Staff Support (Task 3) resulting in an increase from \$25,000 to \$25,491
- The increase in SWFWMD staff support also resulted in an equal \$491 increase in project total staff support due to match requirements in the funding agreement with SWFWMD

The Work Plan narrative for Lower Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Restoration, South Lee County Hydrologic Modeling Project, Warm Mineral Springs Run Restoration, Native Upland Plantings at Wildflower Preserve, and Habitat Restoration Needs Phase II were updated to reflect Agreements and Deliverables now in place. Additionally, the Alligator Creek Stream Restoration project was removed from budget tables and narrative as the project could not be completed in time to close out NCE funds on September 2021

CHAUNCEY GOSS MOVED TO APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA AS STATED AND DEBBIE MCDOWELL SECONDED. THE CONSENT AGENDA WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

6. CHNEP UPDATE — JENNIFER HECKER, CHNEP

CHNEP's Executive Director, Ms. Hecker, presented on programmatic activity that has occurred since the last Management Conference cycle. The following represents program activity highlights.

Partner contributions received:

CHNEP staff prepared customized 2020 Invoice letters to all 10 counties and 25 cities in the CHNEP area. These packets included the FY20 invoice, CHNEP 2019 CCMP, 2020 Nature Calendar and Project Fact Sheets. Since last cycle, FY20 annual contributions received from: Sarasota County, Charlotte County, Lee County, Polk County, Manatee County, Hardee County, DeSoto County, City of Cape Coral, City of Fort Myers, City of Punta Gorda, City of Sanibel, City of Bonita Springs, Town of Fort Myers Beach, City of Venice, City of North Port, City of Winter Haven, Village of Estero, City of Arcadia, City of Bartow. Charlotte County has indicated that this year, they intend to increase their annual contribution to \$25,000 per year. DeSoto County resumed contributions as well.

Donations received:

- CHNEP has received \$2,481.91 in private donations

Grants submitted and/or awarded:

- Fish Florida for kids' fishing poles for our kids' Sustainable Fishing Clinic Events – CHNEP also submitted a grant for supplies to fund future Sustainable Fishing Clinic Events

- SWFWMD FY20 Agreement executed
- CHNEP awarded 5 recipients Conservation Grants for a total amount of \$8,710.00
- CHNEP has received 8 applications for Conservation Grants to be reviewed by CHNEP staff.
- CHNEP was awarded a Grant Donation from The Ocean Foundation in the amount of \$2,200.00 for an event that the CHNEP Executive Director attended.
- Working on establishing a multi-year funding agreement with Charlotte County (\$25,000 each year)

Grant progress reports submitted:

- Q1 Report submitted to Charlotte County WCIND grant for Sustainable Fishing Clinics January 2020
- Q1 Progress Report submitted to FDEP for salary agreement with CHNEP. The report discusses tasks done for outreach & restoration, the report was submitted January 2020.
- Q1 Progress Report submitted to FDEP for NRDA grant for the LCHFI project January 2020.
- The final report to Fish Florida for the fishing pole grant was submitted January 2020.
- EPA end of year report for FY19 was submitted December 2019.
- EPA MBEWBE for FY19 was submitted December 2019.
- SWFWMD report for FY19 agreement staff time and Upper CCHMN was completed and invoiced February 2020.
- SWFWMD report for FY20 Q1 was submitted February 2020.
- The US EPA End of Year summary report for FY2019 was submitted December 2019.
- Completed and submitted CHNEP FY15-FY19 Program Evaluation Report March 2020.
- FY21 budget input to City of Punta Gorda's financial system and finalizing draft FY21 work plan & budget March 2020.

Letters of support for partner grant applications:

- Support for the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Florida Forever Project
- Support for Alligator Creek Restoration Project
- Support for Orange Hammock Ranch Florida Forever Acquisition
- Support for Orange Pallardy State Conservation Easement Florida Forever Acquisition
- Support for Reduce Nutrient Loadings for Harmful Algal Blooms Management Research
- Support for Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast's proposal to the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Regional and multi-jurisdictional organizational meetings CHNEP staff participated in:

- SWFWMD EAC Meeting, Tampa
- One Water – One Charlotte water working group
- CHNEP Management and Policy Committee Meetings
- Estero Bay Agency on Bay Management- Cela Tega Estero Bay Conference
- Everglades Coalition Conference
- American Water Resources Association Conference
- Chambers of Commerce Southwest Florida Legislative Delegation
- Management Conference Field Trip to Blackbeard Ranch
- Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Meeting, SFWMD's Fort Myers Service Center
- Monthly ANEP Board of Directors Meetings (3)
- SWERT (Southwest Florida Estuarine Restoration Team) Englewood

- SWERT Steering Committee Meeting
- South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force-Science Coordination Group Meeting
- NOAA training on “Planning and Facilitating Collaborative Meetings” Training
- C-43 Reservoir Water Quality Feasibility Study meeting in Hendry County
- M-Cores LaBelle Meeting
- Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative Meeting
- Habitat Restoration Needs Sub-Committee Meeting in LaBelle
- Science Coordination Group of South Florida Meeting, West Palm Beach
- Deepwater Horizon Restoration Summit
- SFWMD Governing Board Mtg., Ft. Myers
- SFWMD Caloosahatchee BMAP Update Meeting
- Regional Ambient Monitoring Program (RAMP) Meeting, Sarasota
- Warm Mineral Springs site visit
- FDEP South District Strategic Monitoring Meeting
- Southwest Florida Climate Compact Meeting with FL Chief Resiliency Officer

CHNEP Staff Presentations:

- December 2019 Charlotte County Water Quality Task Force
- December 2019 Deepwater Horizon Restoration Summit
- January 2020 Cela Tega-Estero Bay Conference - Harmful Algae Blooms
- January 2020 Cela Tega-Estero Bay Conference - Habitat Restoration Needs
- January 2020 Everglades Coalition Conference – Seagrass Restoration
- January 2020 Boca Grande - Red Tide Forum
- January 2020 Audubon of Southwest Florida – CHNEP uniting Partners & Resources
- February 2020 Ancient Islands Sierra Club (in Winter Haven) – CHNEP Overview
- February 2020 Pelican Sound Annual Meeting in Estero - Harmful Algae Blooms
- February 2020 Polk County Board of County Commission Meeting – CHNEP Overview
- March 2020 Presentation at Everglades Wonder Gardens in Bonita Springs – Water Quality

CHNEP Publications and Outreach Events:

- CHNEP Winter 2020 Harbor Happenings was designed, printed and mailed out.
- CHNEP worked with EPA staff and contractor to have CHNEP Brochure doc translated to Spanish for spring printing (printing and delivery postponed due to Coronavirus). This is part of fulfilling the Public Outreach Strategy to reach underserved communities, including using translated materials.
- CHNEP held kick-off meeting on a new Public Outreach project to create short CHNEP videos highlighting overall organization and CCMP Actions and then four more detailed focusing on each of the four CCMP actions. This is part of fulfilling the Public Outreach Strategy on employing multi-media approaches.
- Reviewed applications for 2nd cycle of CHNEP Conservation grants
- CHNEP worked on creating an interactive GIS story map of Adventures in the Watershed which is available at www.chnep.org/online-learning-portal.
- CHNEP staff attended external events including at 2020 Water, Wings and Wild Things Kids Festival in Polk County in January, booth at the SW FL American Water Resource Association Conference in January, the Swamp Cabbage festival in LaBelle in February, and the Chalo Nitka (meaning Big Bass in Seminole native language) Festival in Moore Haven in March.

- CHNEP went with Chambers of Commerce from Southwest Florida to FL State Capitol to meet with numerous legislators/legislative staff on water and environmental land protection funding needs.
- CHNEP organized and hosted a special field trip for CHNEP Management Committee members to Blackbeard's Ranch in Myakka City, where members heard presentation from a rancher who has won awards for sustainable agricultural practices and The Florida Conservation Group president as to how to support sustainable agricultural practices.
- CHNEP participated in the social media national campaign #iheartestuaries and #EmbraceTheGulf2020 in February to raise awareness about the nation's estuaries and the many economic and environmental benefits they provide.

CHNEP Monthly Volunteer Events:

- January Horseshoe Crab Training & Monitoring Workshop: CHNEP organized and hosted volunteer event with presentation from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission – Fish and Wildlife Research Institute giving a presentation on horseshoe crabs and how to monitoring and report information about them in the citizen science monitoring effort.
- February Trash Tackle Coastal Cleanup Event: CHNEP organized a community waterway cleanup as part of a year-long awareness campaign facilitated by the Gulf of Mexico Alliance and the #embracethegulf2020 campaign.
- March Water Quality Monitoring- this event was planned and promoted, but had to be postponed due to Coronavirus.

Community Events CHNEP participated in:

- CHNEP educated 2nd grade students from Polk County about Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) at the 2020 Water, Wings, and Wild Things Kids Festival
- Pelican Landing Eco Fair
- Swamp Cabbage Festival (Hendry County)
- Chalo Nitka Festival (Glades County)

Note: COVID resulted in some of the external community events CHNEP had planned to participate in, being cancelled or indefinitely postponed.

Outreach Analytics:

- 579 new subscribers for CHNEP educational mailings (6221 total individual subscribers)
- 1,802 unique visitors and 2,563 page visits to CHNEP website
- 54 new volunteers have joined (434 total active volunteers now), contributing 310 volunteer hours last cycle
- 80 new Facebook followers (1,379 followers)
- 76 new Facebook Likes (1235 total likes)

Media / Press:

- 11/2019 [Pond Restoration Cape Coral - Fox 4 Now](#)
- 11/2019 [Cape Coral High Sustainability - WINK News](#)
- 01/2020 [Cela Tega Event Highlights - NewsPress](#)
- 01/2020 [Estero Bay Cela Tega Event - WGPU Radio](#)
- 01/2020 [Boca Grande Red Tide Forum - Boca Beacon](#)
- 02/2020 [Orange Hammock Ranch Florida Forever – WINK News](#)

Finally, with regards to status of Congressional reauthorization of the National Estuary Program nation-wide, an update will be given on NEP language added to WRDA 2020 bill language (at end of document attached) that would reauthorize NEP for two years (versus previous five year timeframe) at an increased level of \$50M nationally (versus (\$26.5 prior). CHNEP Executive Director Jennifer Hecker presented the CHNEP Update. This item was for discussion only with no action taken.

7. FY2021 WORK PLAN & BUDGET — ANDREW WEBB, CHNEP

Andrew Webb, CHNEP's Finance & Grants Specialist, presented the FY2021 Work Plan and Budget to the Policy Committee. Annually, the CHNEP puts together a Work Plan and Budget to detail the projects and activities it will be undertaking to implement its 5-year strategic plan (the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan, CCMP) in that given fiscal year (which starts Oct 1st through September 30th). CHNEP must submit this document once approved by the Committee, with its annual 320 EPA grant funding application on June 1st each year. Therefore, CHNEP has prepared the FY2021 Work Plan & Budget (for October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021) to be reviewed and approved this cycle for submission to EPA on June 1, 2020. Mr. Webb stated that no-cost extension EPA projects need to be completed by September 30th.

Please note that due to this being so far in advance, it is customary that some projects and funding sources be identified as To Be Determined (TBD) and that scopes are in draft or preliminary stages of development for projects to be procured for that Work Plan. The CHNEP is providing those associated draft scopes that are available at this time for reference. Mr. Webb stated those identified as TBD will be solidified in the fall.

BILL TRUEX MOVED TO APPROVE THE CHNEP FY2021 WORK PLAN & BUDGET AND BILL VEACH SECONDED. APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

**8. LAKE OKEECHOBEE SYSTEM OPERATING MANUAL & WRDA SAVINGS CLAUSE
— JENNIFER HECKER, CHNEP**

An overview, summarized below, was given by CHNEP Executive Director, Jennifer Hecker followed by discussion led with CHNEP Policy Committee Co-Chair Brian Smith. The goal was to determine if there is potential consensus as to a position CHNEP could take on the proposed LOSOM savings clause WRDA language that would promote improved water quality, hydrological restoration and Everglades Restoration implementation in the Caloosahatchee basin of the CHNEP area while balancing with other LOSOM objectives.

The CHNEP is an important forum to bring up regional issues that affect natural resource protection efforts in the CHNEP area, in an effort to build understanding and consensus amongst the members of the Partnership on how to advance the natural resource protection action plans in the CCMP. A Management Committee member raised such an issue and the Management Committee as a whole reached consensus that this issue should be brought to the CHNEP Policy Committee for evaluation as to whether CHNEP should take a position, since it affects implementation of multiple CCMP activities and achievement of various CCMP objectives. The Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM, formerly known as the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule or LORS) governs how Lake Okeechobee is managed with regards to its water level and the discharges that exit it to both the eastern St. Lucie and western

Caloosahatchee as well as to the southern Everglades Agricultural Area, Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. Because the Lake is used both to supply water to natural systems as well as for consumptive uses for agricultural and residential water supply needs, it has to be managed for multiple objectives. Additionally, there are flood risks associated with the Lake when its levels reach high water levels due to it being enclosed by a man-made dike. Everglades restoration, which is working to restore as many natural systems as feasible including the Caloosahatchee River within the CHNEP boundary, relies on projects to increase storage and flow while improving water quality of water conveyed.

As part of the original Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), there was a “savings clause” included to ensure any Everglades projects could not allocate water used at that time (2000) away from consumptive use needs without providing an equivalent offset of water to meet such needs. This clause did not historically apply to the Lake Okeechobee management regulations. However, recently with the US Army Corps of Engineers looking to update the LOSOM, there was a suggestion that this clause should be applied to prevent changing Lake operations in a way that could restrict consumptive use further without providing supply offsets. The ACOE did a legal analysis and determined that the savings clause does not apply to LOSOM as it is outside of CERP and is not a CERP project. Nonetheless, some water supply and agricultural users continue to assert it does, and have recently received Congressional support to insert language into the upcoming Water Resources Development Act (the bill that authorizes upcoming Everglades projects) to apply the savings clause to LOSOM.

This issue directly relates to the CHNEP CCMP objectives of improving water quality, restoring more natural flows, and supporting Everglades Restoration – particularly in the Western Everglades Caloosahatchee River portion of the greater Everglades region. CHNEP member municipalities including the City of Sanibel and Lee County, as well as non-profit partners such as the Conservancy of Southwest Florida and the Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation are weighing in to oppose this LOSOM savings clause language being added into WRDA. The concerns expressed by these entities being that this would change the legal application of the savings clause to apply to broader operational frameworks that are to be adaptively managed based on updated science and conditions (including new projects coming on-line) to maintain equitable balance between all five stated purposes: flood control, water supply, navigation, recreation and the preservation of fish and wildlife resources. Other CHNEP member entities including the City of Clewiston and Glades have signed onto a letter with the City of Palm Beach to express support for the application of the savings clause to Lake Okeechobee Management in order to ensure public water supply is not diminished for communities who depend on Lake water to meet their supply needs (including agricultural irrigation and drinking water supplies). It seems all stakeholders agree that the savings clause should apply to CERP projects; the differing opinions appears to be over whether the savings clause was intended and/or should apply to Lake Okeechobee management. Letters expressing the differing viewpoints in more detail were provided to the Policy Committee members with the agenda packet.

An example position was presented to members by Ms. Hecker and Mr. Smith. There was much discussion on this topic to understand local jurisdiction opinions and to find common ground and represent interest of CCMP. Chauncey Goss inquired if there have been formal comments made to the Army Corps of Engineers yet and the answer was no. Bill Veach mentioned the savings clause

was brought to his attention by the Town of Fort Myers Chamber of Commerce to show the potential economic impact to the tourism industry they rely on. He mentioned a letter was penned by a grassroots group to address the concern of changing management practices back 20 years to force more flow down with poor quality. Mick Denham was in agreeance with Bill Veach and the Fort Myers Beach stance stating that impact of the LOSOM savings clause would have enormous harmful effects on the environment, communities, and tourism. He brought up the issue of the higher water levels during rainy season release damaging flows which can cause an increase in algal blooms. Also less water during dry season would negatively impact world class sport fishing in the estuary. Mr. Denham voiced his support for USACE and CHNEP to make a recommendation in regard to the savings clause. Fred Forbes stated that the priority should be the environment, since it supports the economy. Mr. Denham replied that the resolution needs to recognize and balance the needs of the estuary and agricultural and urban communities. However he also stated that Sanibel is like catcher's mitt of the estuary, so anything that happens has profound effect.

Co-Chair Brian Smith stated the example position supports what was shared and asked if anyone would like to put forward a motion to support this as a starting point, or offer an alternative position. Further discussion on the position language concerned making sure to address the balance and needs of everyone while remaining science based. Ms. Hecker informed the committee that representatives from Glades and Hendry County were not present today, but support the savings clause applied to LOSOM and Lake Okeechobee so example position was drafted to take this into account by not specifically indicating support or opposition to the savings clause specifically.

The committee offered a modified version of example position, with Mr. Denham typing it in the comment box for everyone to review. Jack Bispham of SWFMED asked Ms. Hecker for clarification about whom we are presenting this position and if we will be sharing it with Hendry and Glades counties. Ms. Hecker replied that she intends to share the final position with them if it is passed by the Policy Committee before it is mailed CHNEP to Congressional and USACE recipients. Co-Chair Brian Smith read out loud Mr. Denham's revisions to the example position and after a couple more edits based on committee discussion, it was agreed to be presented as a resolution and brought to a vote. Ms. Hecker typed it out for all members to see the final agreed upon language, stating she would send a copy to all policy members once it goes out, after she has contacted Glades and Hendry counties.

BILL TRUEX MOVED TO APPROVE THE POSITION THAT "CHNEP SUPPORTS A SCIENCE-BASED PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE LAKE OKEECHOBEE SYSTEM OPERATING MANUAL, ONE THAT ADDRESSED ALL THE DEFINED THE PROJECT PURPOSES AND PROVIDES THE DESIRED FLOWS TO THE CALOOSAHATCHEE TO MEET THE DEFINED SALINITY TARGETS FOR THE RIVER AND ESTUARY, WHILE BALANCING WITH THE NEEDS OF AGRICULTURE AND MUNICIPAL WATER SUPPLY", AND BILL VEACH SECONDED. JACK BISPHAM ABSTAINED. APPROVED WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION.

9. HARMFUL ALGAE BLOOMS ECONOMIC IMPACT — CORTNEY CORTEZ, BALMORAL GROUP

Cortney Cortez of The Balmoral Group provided an update to the Policy Committee on how public and CHNEP input from previous committee meetings was addressed in finalizing the Harmful Algae Blooms Economic Impact dashboard. In April 2019, the CHNEP partnered with The

Balmoral Group (Balmoral) to respond to a Request for Proposals from the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA) to evaluate the economic impacts of water quality impacts in the Gulf, specifically Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs). The proposal was approved by GOMA's Water Resources Team in May 2019 and the approximately one-year study was initiated in July. CHNEP has been working with The Balmoral Group to develop and test a "dashboard" that will enable coastal resource managers to quantify the economic implications for HABs and their avoidance, and thereby assess the value of restoration investments or management actions. Balmoral has relied on its recent experience with NASA to link remotely-sensed (satellite) data, social media data and documented economic losses along Florida's Gulf coast. CHNEP has been assisting with convening stakeholders, utilizing its prior Management Committee meeting as a public workshop and webinar to disseminate information about this project, as well as assisting and providing Management Committee input to Balmoral. Ms. Cortez gave a thorough demonstration on how to use the dashboard at today's meeting. No questions or discussion following presentation.

Member Bill Truex asked where Charlotte County data is, and if it is accurate blending areas together. Ms. Cortez explained that each data point was collected on county level, but wanted to keep conservative estimates (e.g., property values were only taken from coastal high surge areas up to 6 miles inland to prevent over inflation). Ms. Cortez also clarified the dashboard is already live, and a report to GOMA will be given in the next month. She provided the link to members in the chat box. This item was for discussion only with no action taken.

10. CHNEP PROGRAM EVALUATION — JENNIFER HECKER, CHNEP & NOEMI

MERCADO, U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Noemi Mercado, CHNEP EPA Headquarters liaison and PE Team Lead presented and overview of the CHNEP 2014-2019 Program Evaluation information. She began by stating she was sad to have missed the on-site visit due to Covid-19. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which is responsible for oversight and administration of the National Estuary Program for all 28 organizations in it nation-wide, conducts a program evaluation (PE) of each NEP entity every five years. The CHNEP is currently undergoing a PE for activities it undertook in the 2014-2019 timeframe. To meet EPA PE guidance requirements, CHNEP staff prepared an extensive PE package document, which was submitted to the U.S. EPA. In response, EPA sent additional follow-up comments and questions and CHNEP responded both with written responses but also with a discussion held by teleconference. Typically, the PE also encompasses a site visit with EPA personnel; however due to COVID-19, all PE site visits were cancelled this year nation-wide. Therefore, CHNEP and EPA are working together to virtually conclude PE process, which will culminate with a formal EPA PE letter forthcoming. As indicated from EPA communications thus far, Ms. Mercado concluded that the CHNEP has not only met, but exceeded EPA requirements for successfully passing its PE evaluation. She congratulated the team and confirmed CHNEP will continue to receive CWA 320 funds.

Joyce Novak, Director of the Peconic Estuary Program in New York stated she was also disappointed not to be able to visit, but it's clear Ms. Hecker and the CHNEP are doing great things, especially with oyster and seagrass restoration. Rachel Hart and Shelby Butz echoed Joyce's comments and commended CHNEP staff for doing a great job putting together the PE packet and is impressed with how engaged management conference is.

Policy members also voiced their congratulations and Ms. Hecker wrapped up by stating none of this would have been possible without the policy committee's team effort that helped guide us in a positive direction. She also thanked the PE team for taking the time and effort to deep dive and investigate, ask hard questions, and challenge the CHNEP staff. She further stated that the feedback is appreciated and we are happy we are on the right course to have even more success to share in 5 years. This item was for discussion only with no action taken.

11. ECONOMIC VALUATION & OTHER TECHNICAL PROJECTS UPDATE— NICOLE

IADEVAIA, CHNEP

Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP Research & Outreach Manager gave the committee updates on the progress of select research and restoration projects. CHNEP is directly project managing numerous research and/or restoration projects (or phases of projects) that are funded with CHNEP FY19 and FY20 funds. A number were kicked-off at the end of FY19 or are launching at the beginning of FY20, with all but the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative Hydrological Modeling Project to be completed by September 2021. An overview of each of these projects is in project fact sheets that are now available on the CHNEP.org website.

2019 Projects:

- Quantifying the WQ Benefits of SAV
- Gateway to Myakka River State Park – Marsh Restoration
- Warm Mineral Springs Creek Restoration
- Habitat Restoration Needs Phase II

2020 Projects:

- Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative Hydrological Modeling Project
- CHNEP Economic Valuation Study

No questions or discussion following presentation. This item was for discussion only with no action taken.

12. POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES — BRIAN SMITH, CO-CHAIR

Each Policy Committee member had an opportunity to update the rest of the Committee on their respective research, restoration, public education and engagement projects currently being completed to protect and restore the CHNEP program area. Policy Committee Co-Chair Brian Smith led and facilitated this discussion.

- Charlotte County, Bill Truex – Charlotte County increased membership rate to \$25,000 level; Continue to work on regional resiliency and water quality monitoring improvements
- City of Sanibel, Mick Denham – Sanibel not as active as he'd like in Policy and will commit to more in the future!
- Town of Ft. Myers Beach, Bill Veach – This is his first meeting as he was recently elected; mentioned grassroots initiative to think locally and act globally; individuals and businesses installed floating reefs to help with water quality; tightened fertilizer ordinance, plastic straw ban, initiative to displace single use plastic (reuse bags), except now single use is safer during Covid-19; FMB in catcher's mitt and get WQ results - last year has been great for water,

comes with drought, but also lake management; need to be careful with Covid-19 economic blow up and HABs

- SFWMD, Chauncey Goss – District operations are hindered by Covid-19 but proud of staff to forge on; Lee County irrigation restrictions due to drought, some flooding down in Miami and south, rain season has started, lake level good ~11.36 ft higher than this time last year, going up not down; Rule-making regarding impact of water quality north of lake that will come into estuary in 2nd phase and have a meeting next week (swfmwd.gov for schedule); chugging along with the Governor’s priorities for stormwater treatment areas, canals into STA, glitch with funding on reservoir due to district in Washington on whether it’s a new start, dealing with congress, governor is working with white house to move along and keep finish date 2028; C-43 proceeding nicely with dry weather good for construction; and C-44 on other side, filled STA there; and SFWMD is looking at helping fund some CHNEP things.
- SWFWMD, Jack Bispham – from Sarasota estuary and CAC previously, but first time with us; good discussion on Covid-19 and budgets - voted majority to continue cooperative funding for such things as this, but no one has crystal ball; legislators will have to go back to Tallahassee for budgets issues so stay tuned.
- SWFRPC, Don McCormick – ready for another year and actively pursuing infrastructure funding - have projects that will qualify (6000 mil but proportioning being worked out)
- USFWS, Kali Spurgin – thank you for putting this on going well all things considered; 2nd meeting; looking for feedback on flounder fishery issues for July meeting input, and stone crab draft rule hearing and gathering feedback for proposed final hearing; agency has scaled back and ground to halt, but continuing to work and accomplish restoration projects, phased in approach to new normal and outreach, dealing with different funding sources (CARES act) 3.6 mil to FL. Reach out if invested.
- FDEP, Jon Inglehart – continuing to adopt 404 program for state end of summer; artificial reef policy to eliminate breakaway (referred FMB reef project mentioned by Bill Veach), start of rain season (June 1st) so fertilizer ordinances begins.

13. Public Comment — Brian Smith, Co-Chair

No public comment was made at this time.

14. Future Meeting's Topics, Location and Date — Brian Smith, Co-Chair

Date: September 24, 2020

Location: Charlotte Community Foundation, Punta Gorda

15. Adjourn — Brian Smith, Co-Chair

Co-Chair Brian Smith adjourned the meeting at 12:57 pm.