



## **Oyster Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024

10:00 – 12:00 CST

[Meeting Recording](#)

### **Attendees**

Matt Posner	PPBEP
Whitney Scheffel	PPBEP
Logan McDonald	PPBEP
Zachary Schang	PPBEP
Paige Lansky	PPBEP
Logan McDonald	PPBEP
Chloe Ray	PPBEP
Shelley Alexander	Santa Rosa County
Shana Alford	Avalon Aquaculture
Gina Alvarez	FWC
Levi Blackmon	Santa Rosa County
Darryl Boudreau	NWFWMD
Jane Caffrey	UWF
Matthew Davis	FWC
Matt Deavenport	Jacobs
Thomas Derbes	UF/IFAS Sea Grant
Naisy Dolar	Santa Rosa County
Tanya Gallagher	Jacobs
Laura Geselbracht	TNC
Charley Golden	Jacobs
Kahreem Golden	TNC
Chips Kirschenfeld	Escambia County
Katie Konchar	TNC
Tanya Linzy	Santa Rosa County
Paul Looney	WRA
Caitlin Lustic	TNC
Cassidy Manzonelli	FWC
Mike Norberg	Okaloosa County
Erin Rasnake	FDEP
Erin Reschke	EPA
Raymond Roach	FDACS
Emmitt Slaughter	Community Member
Lee Smee	DISL
Michelle Smith	FDACS
Nigel Temple	University of South Alabama
Chris Verlinde	Santa Rosa County



1. **Call to Order**

- a. Chris Verlinde (*Santa Rosa County*) called the meeting to order at 10:05 on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Happy Halloween!

2. **Approval of October 26, 2023, Meeting Minutes**

- a. Mike Norberg (*Okaloosa County*) made a motion to approve the October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Meeting Minutes. Thomas Derbes (*UF/IFAS Sea Grant*) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. **Welcome and Introductions**

- a. C. Verlinde (*Santa Rosa County*) introduced the new PPBEP staff members that have joined since the last Oyster Sub-Committee meeting, Zach Schang (Project Coordinator), Paige Lansky (Assistant Project Coordinator), and Chloe Ray (Environmental Technician). They introduced themselves and provided a brief overview of their background, experience, and their current role.

4. **Partner Presentation (For more information, click [here](#) for the presentation)**

- a. T. Derbes (*UF/IFAS Sea Grant*) presented an update on the Oyster FARMS (Farms for Aquaculture Research and Monitoring Shellfish) pilot study. To address widespread unexplainable mortalities, oyster growth, mortality, and health, along with key water quality parameters were monitored in 2020-21 at four farms in Cedar Key, Florida. In 2023, a network of growers was formed across the state to increase the number of participating oyster farms. In Pensacola Bay, crop mortalities began in June at Grayson Bay Oyster Farm, with an overall total >70% mortality over the course of the study (May-August 2023). Water temperatures reached 90°F in June and salinities dipped down into the single digits in late June through early August. The water quality data from loggers deployed at the sites can be found [here](#). The next step is to expand the network to additional growers, researchers, and extension agents from Virginia to Texas. The program has received funding to continue through 2027.

5. **Co-Chair Elections**

- a. C. Verlinde and T. Derbes self-nominated for the co-chair positions prior to the meeting. W. Scheffel asked if there were any other nominations. There were none. Jane Caffrey (*UWF*) made a motion to re-elect T. Derbes and C. Verlinde as co-chairs of the Oyster Sub-Committee for 2025. Michelle Smith (*FDACS*) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6. **Pensacola Bay System Oyster Restoration Initiative (ORI) Project Update**

- a. Restoration design process
  - i. Matt Deavenport (*Jacobs*) introduced the project team including Jacobs staff and sub-awardees and provided an overview of relevant projects they have lead in the Pensacola area. Matt presented on the goals and objectives of the ORI, which is to implement estuary scale oyster habitat restoration, designing 1,500 acres of oyster reef restoration. The main purpose is to design a large scale project utilizing different restoration techniques to scale up while reducing



overall cost. He provided an overview of the project timeline, community and stakeholder engagements, and a general workflow for project implementation. The next project touchpoint will be the Oyster Restoration Design Stakeholder Workshop scheduled for February 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>, 2025 at the Bayview Community Center in Pensacola, FL. Please register for the workshop [here](#).

b. Stipend Program

- i. W. Scheffel (*PPBEP*) presented an overview of *PPBEP*'s Stipend Program. To achieve the ORI objective, *PPBEP* needs the assistance of oyster harvesters, aquaculture operators, industry experts, practitioners, and other user groups. The Stipend Program will compensate participants for their time, expertise, and advice provided throughout the design development process.
- ii. The Program will run from January 2025 to December 2026 and will require participation in certain events and meetings pertaining to the ORI during that time period.
- iii. Each program participant will receive a stipend in the amount of \$2,500 per year.

c. Sandy Hollow Gully Restoration Project

- i. Levi Blackmon (*Santa Rosa County*) provided an update on the Sandy Hollow Gully restoration project. Sandy Hollow Gully is the largest actively eroding gully in the state of Florida located in the Escambia River watershed. This restoration is expected to reduce sediment loading in the order of 100,000 tons of sediment annually. Initial data collection has begun and is expected to be completed by the end of 2024. There have been 24 sites identified that are actively contributing to the erosion across a span of 3 miles. Next steps are to analyze data, complete preliminary design drawings, and procurement of engineering firms.
- ii. Discussion was held regarding other ongoing projects led by Santa Rosa County including nutrient reduction and Best Management Practice projects and Conservation Programs. L. Blackmon shared more information on their No-Till Seed Drill Rental Program led by the Blackwater Soil and Water Conservation District that provides a low-cost option for farmers to implement no-till crop production systems, cover crop, and overseeded pastures. If you are interested or know any Santa Rosa County farmers that may be interested in renting the drill, please contact Shirley Pu (*Santa Rosa County*; [ShirleyPu@santarosa.fl.gov](mailto:ShirleyPu@santarosa.fl.gov)) or by phone at (850) 675 – 6696 Ext. 3.

7. **Wrap Up and Future Planning (Whitney Scheffel, *PPBEP*)**

- i. Stakeholder Workshop
  - Save the Date: February 20-21, 2025 @ Bayview Community Center
  - Registration is open now! Click [here](#) to register.
- ii. Upcoming Meetings
  - Technical Committee Meeting (Virtual)
    - a. November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024 (10:00 AM- 12:00PM CT)
- iii. Diving into 2025!



- University of South Alabama researchers will be deploying Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers (ADCPs) and wave gauges at six sites across the Pensacola Bay System in January to support the Pensacola Bay Oyster Restoration Initiative design process.
- PPBEP and partner led larval and spat monitoring plans will be developed in the new year and implemented in spring.
- The Living Shoreline Assistance Program application process and targeted outreach will roll out in early 2025 to coastal property interested in participating. Stay tuned for more details.

#### 8. Around the Room/Announcements

- i. T. Derbes (*UF/IFAS Sea Grant*) announced that they have been conducting plankton surveys near local oyster farms to better understand the type and abundance of microplankton available to oysters as well as studying the prevalence of harmful algal blooms.
- ii. Jane Caffery (*UWF*) announced that they received funding from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for water quality sampling in the four panhandle estuaries. There will also be updates available in early 2025 a microbial source tracking project that Dr. Amanda Croteau and Dr. Caffrey will be completing this year.
- iii. Naisy Dolar (*Santa Rosa County*) announced that the County formally signed an agreement to install a stream gauge at Deaton Bridge. It will be installed sometime between now and the end of 2025.
- iv. Erin Rasnake (DEP) announced that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Northwest District is hosting an open house on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024, from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM to meet the district team and learn about DEP's different programs. For more details regarding this event, visit their [website](#).

#### 9. Adjourned