



AGENCY ON BAY MANAGEMENT

4000 Gateway Centre Boulevard #100 · Pinellas Park, FL 33782

727.570.5151 Ext. 40

<http://www.tbrpc.org/abm>

MEETING MINUTES

Full Agency

Thursday, March 9, 2023

9:00 AM

Ms. Barbara Sheen Todd, Chair

Mayor Woody Brown, Co-Chair

In-person location:

Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council Office

4000 Gateway Centre Blvd., STE 100

Pinellas Park, Florida 33782

Virtual option via Zoom

1. Call To Order/Welcome

Chair Todd called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

2. Attendance

Audubon Florida – Mark Rachal

Friends of the Hillsborough River – John Ovink

Sierra Club – Nancy Stevens

Tampa Bay Conservancy – Sally Thompson

Tampa Bay Waterkeeper – Justin Tramble

Tampa Bay Watch – Sarah Brehm

Joe Island Clams – DJ Strott

WSP (environmental consulting) – Kevin Shelton

Tampa Bay Pilots Association – Terry Fluke

Mosaic – Keith Nadaskay

Tampa Electric Company – Nick Fletcher

USF College of Marine Science/PORTS – Mark Luther

Eckerd College – Jeff Felardo

Hillsborough County Elected – Commissioner Pat Kemp

Hillsborough County Staff – David Glicksberg

Manatee County Staff – Kris Ramon

Pasco County Elected – Coleen Weaver for Commissioner Jack Mariano

Pasco County Staff – Melissa Charbonneau

Pinellas County Staff – Stacey Day

If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this meeting, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council at (727) 570-5151 Ext. 10 within three working days of the meeting.

Seaport Manatee – Dan Fitz-Patrick
City of St. Petersburg – Kira Barrera
City of Tampa – Heather Maggio
ABM Chair – Barbara Sheen Todd
ABM Vice-Chair – Woody Brown
US Geological Survey – Kevin Grimsley
NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service – Mark Sramek
Florida Department of Environmental Protection – Melissa Madden
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission – Amelia Missavage
Florida Department of Transportation – Allison Conner
Southwest FL Water Management District – Chris Anastasiou
Hillsborough County at Large – Ann Paul
Pinellas County at Large – George Henderson
Environmental Protection Commission – Chris Pratt
Hillsborough County Planning Commission – Shawn College
Tampa Bay Estuary Program – Ed Sherwood
US Fish and Wildlife Service – Tiffany Lane
MacDill Air Force Base – Sinead Borchert
Tampa Bay Water – James Jacobs

Others in attendance:

Alana Todd, TBRPC; Courtney Wright, TBRPC; Sarah Vitale, TBRPC; Max Pyles, Stetson University; Scott Deitche, Geosyntec; Steven Meyers, USF; Amber Smith, SWFWMD; Wren Krahl, TBRPC; Vicki Parsons, Bay Soundings; Sam Jenkins; Dave Karlen, EPC; Karla Llanos, Hillsborough Planning Commission; Chris Claus; Jared Jones, VHB; Angela Xu, Stetson University; Rich Brown, Friends of the Hillsborough River; Tara Schiro, SWFWMD; Troy Green, Hillsborough County; Nathaniel Martin, Pasco County; Craig Taraszki – Johnson Pope Bokor Ruppel & Burns, LLP; Alex Manos, Pinellas County; Anna Laws, FWC; Zorana Kojic, StormSensor, Inc.; Brendan Myers, USFWS; Jaclyn Lopez, Stetson University; Bill Fehring, Friends of Weedon Island; David Harbeitner, Sierra Club Florida; Mary Keith, Tampa Audubon; Cynthia Grizzle, PSG; Peter Clark, Tampa Bay Watch; Serra Herndon, Tampa Bay Watch; Max Chesnes, Tampa Bay Times; Beth Le, EPC; Whitney Costner; Juliet Christian, EPC; Byron Burrows, TECO; Andy Zodrow, EPC; Andrea Crumpacker, Stantec; McLane Evans, City of Tampa; Barbara Goetting, EPC

Members not in attendance:

Gulfstream Natural Gas; UF IFAS/FL Sea Grant; Pinellas County Elected; Port Tampa Bay; Port of St. Petersburg; City of Clearwater; City of Temple Terrace; US Army Corps of Engineers

3. Public Comment

4. Approval of [December 8, 2022 Full Agency Meeting Minutes](#)

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the December 8, 2022 Full Agency meeting were unanimously approved.

5. ABM Committee meeting updates

a. Feb. 16 Agency on Bay Management's Legislative Review Committee Meeting

The LRC met on February 16, 2023 to discuss the [2023 Environmental Legislative Watchlist for Tampa Bay](#), comprised of current bills proposed by the Florida Legislature that, if passed, could positively or negatively affect the Tampa Bay estuary and watershed. Angela Xu and Max Pyles, of Stetson's Jacobs Law Clinic for Democracy and the Environment, provided a short overview of the list's bills. [Link to presentation](#)

Discussion

HB 111/SB 1170 will enable vulnerability studies to review compound events rather than single events only, which will provide a more comprehensive view of the impacts, recognizing they have a cumulative effect. E.g. sea level rise and more intense hurricanes.

HB 661 Sanitary Sewer Lateral Inspection program would facilitate inspections of private lateral lines by local governments, which has been a problem in Pasco County.

Concern were expressed regarding SB 1240/HB 1197, Land and Water Management, which will have an impact on the efforts to implement solutions that improve water quality and current conditions we face in Tampa Bay. Historically, improvements have been made by a collective body working together for the benefit of improving the estuary's condition.

SB602/HB 557, Land Acquisition Trust Fund, does not include protections for the Little Manatee river. The TBEP made a request to the US Congress to name the Little Manatee River as a National Wild and Scenic River.

Mr. Sherwood urged the State to consider the benefits of blue carbon habitats, such as seagrass meadows, for carbon mitigation and water quality and climate health. He encouraged the legislature to look at examples from other states, like Virginia, where sequestration, like a seagrass project, is authorized as a protective measure for resources.

Ms. Weaver moved that the [2023 Environmental Legislative Watchlist for Tampa Bay](#) be approved for dissemination, and that the Legislative Review Committee continue to track the potential financial burdens of each bill to the local governments. Commissioner Kemp seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Brown stated that messaging from scientists to the Florida Legislature is more impactful than those coming from the TBRPC and elected officials, Scientists

can explain the effects that bills would have on our waterways, and the ways in which the bills could be changed to support local efforts for restoration and protection of natural resources.

6. **2022 Tampa Bay Seagrass Mapping Results** – *Chris Anastasiou, Southwest Florida Water Management District*

The Southwest Florida Water Management District presented the results from the 2020 seagrass mapping efforts in the Suncoast region. Maps are created every two years using aerial imagery collected specifically for the purpose of mapping seagrass acreage. These maps have been a useful resource management tool for gaging overall estuarine health. [Link to presentation.](#)

- There are three phases to mapping seagrass – acquisition, field verification, and photointerpretation.
- The imagery collection period was between the first of December 2021 through the end of February 2022; best time to fly and collect images since the sky and water tend to be most clear.
- Field verification entails collecting data in the field during or shortly after imagery acquisition to ensure the accuracy of the maps. The amount of field verification has increased since 2018 when they started seeing seagrass losses. If the accuracy assessment results are 90% or better, then the maps are accepted. Kevin Shelton, WSP, led the verification efforts, and over 2000 verification points were collected for 2022.
- Photointerpretation entails developing the maps based on photographic signatures and field verification of continuous and patchy seagrasses and non-seagrasses using a modified land use land cover classification system.
- Clearwater harbor and St. Joseph Sound was the only estuary that experienced an increase in seagrass acreage (+8%), whereas Tampa Bay, Sarasota Bay, Lemon Bay, and Charlotte Harbor experienced a 12%, 6%, 4%, and 2% loss, respectively.
- Tampa Bay lost 4,161 acres, or 12%, of seagrasses between 2020 and 2022. The 2022 seagrass total in Tampa Bay was 30,137 acres.
- Old Tampa Bay lost 2,518 acres, or 38%, which was the greatest number of acres lost compared to other segments. Old Tampa Bay has 4,183 acres as of 2022. Hillsborough Bay lost a larger percentage of its seagrasses, 51% or 428 acres, and now has the lowest amount of seagrass acreage in Tampa Bay at only 409 acres.
- Boca Ciega Bay lost 59 acres, or 1% of seagrasses; Lower Tampa Bay lost 263 acres, or 3%; Manatee River lost 109 acres, or 19%; Middle Tampa Bay lost 698 acres, or 8%; Terra Ceia Bay lost 87 acres, or 8%.
- Tampa Bay reached a record high in 2016 with 41,655 acres of seagrasses, but numbers have been declining ever since. 2022 results represent a 12-year low.
- Since 2016, Tampa Bay has lost 11,518 acres, or nearly 28% of its seagrass beds.
- Old Tampa Bay has the lowest seagrass extent since mapping began in 1988.
- Continuous seagrass beds have been replaced by *Caulerpa prolifera* (attached macroalgae).
- The 2022 maps can be found on the [SWFWMD Geospatial Open Data Portal.](#)

Discussion:

The cause of these losses is the subject of much discussion currently. It is likely a combination of multiple factors, such as nutrient loading, sea level rise, rising temperatures, more persistent harmful algal blooms, and physical damages from propellers. Tampa Bay is about six inches deeper than it was 50 years ago. A portfolio of tools and collaborations will be needed to reverse these trends.

- Reverse surges and tidal extremes could also be another contributing factor, but this is uncertain.

Pasco county has been awarded funding to install new baffle boxes which will help with stormwater pollution.

The margin of error when looking at total acreage number is about 4%. The minimum mapping unit is about a quarter of an acre. The maps are designed to be a regional, aerial snapshot in time of what the acreage and coverage looks like and where in a given year.

Seagrasses are important indicator species that signal estuary health, and they also contribute to estuary health (feedback loop). They provide other important services, such as carbon sequestration, habitat provision, and they are a source of food.

The historical improvements in seagrass coverage was likely from a combination of factors, but largely due to reducing nutrient loading to Tampa bay. Now we see about 1/33 of the amount of nutrients going into Tampa Bay than back in the 70s and 80s. But the baseline has changed since then; there are additional stressors to consider now, and the watershed is much different than it was 30 years ago. It's being built out rapidly and there are different nutrient loading stressors now being placed on it primarily from stormwater sources. Additional macroalgae blooms, that are having an impact on seagrass resources, in combination with warmer waters are going to create a new normal, especially for those upper bay segments. The work to manage stormwater loadings under these new conditions is the primary thing that we need to focus on as region.

7. Tampa West Project Supports Excellence in Sustainability & Resilience – Byron Burrows, PE, BCEE; Director-Environmental Tampa Electric Company

The proposed Tampa West Project will enable the gas transmission company to redirect existing natural gas flow to enable Tampa Electric to improve the grid resilience and power supply reliability to MacDill Air Force Base and the South Tampa community. It will add approximately 1.26 miles of 8" pipe & appurtenances from Pinellas to Hillsborough Counties along the Gandy right-of-way adjacent to existing pipelines.

This presentation was postponed to a future meeting date.

8. Hillsborough Future Land Use Designation of Pine Key – Shawn College, Hillsborough Planning Commission

A privately owned Island within Unincorporated Hillsborough County in Tampa Bay does not yet have a Future Land Use Designation or Zoning. The Hillsborough County Planning Commission is in the process of determining what Future Land Use Classification is appropriate, including the possibility of creating a new land use classification for this property. [Link to Presentation](#).

- Pine Key is a privately-owned, spoil island. The owners were operating a commercial business on the island that ran afoul of some of the ordinances in Hillsborough County since they do not have a land use designation or zoning. Previous owners did not use the island and there was little oversight.
- The current owners contend that commercial activity and their ownership and maintenance would provide improved oversight of the island. In 2021, the private owners requested a Public/Quasi-Public Future Land Use designation, and the BOCC directed that an island-specific land use category be made. In 2022 the BOCC voted against a proposed “Island Recreation” land use category.
- New stakeholder input from the police and fire departments and the Tampa Bay Pilots Association raised concerns about response time to the island and impacts to maritime commerce.
- On March 7, 2023 the BOCC unanimously voted for the Planning Commission to develop a land use category for the island similar to a Natural Preservation land use category used for public lands.

Discussion

Commissioner Kemp noted that this has been an issue for two years, and Commissioner Mariella Smith was a strong opponent to the development of the island. Boat wakes from the main shipping channel has been causing significant erosion to this island, making it smaller and smaller. There was additional public safety concerns following a large boat wake tipping a boat anchored at the island, and someone needing to be airlifted due to serious injuries.

The new land use designation will be specific to Pine Key, and will not be applied to all spoil islands in the Hillsborough County portion of Tampa Bay.

Audubon expressed concerns about the development of islands and rookeries in the bay.

There was a question raised about what activity would be allowed on the island. This is unclear as the new category hasn't been developed and officially voted upon by the BOCC. The category would likely be similar to the existing natural preservation category that allows for passive recreation and use.

The new designation would be put into place over three phases. The text amendment will be initiated by county staff. They will be reaching out to the reviewing agencies and setting up meetings to ensure concerns are addressed. Then, the applicant is required to file a future land use map amendment.

There are currently 11 islands in unincorporated Tampa Bay with no future land use designations. This new designation will only apply to Pine Key.

The island has been a sediment disposal site for the community of Apollo Beach. Dr. Sramek recalled that one of the conditions in the private purchase of this island would be that it would remain a sediment disposal island for Apollo Beach. He asked whether there is any consideration about that with regard to future dredging required within the canal communities and sediment placement regardless of the land designation. Mr. College similarly recalls that when the island was sold to the private entity that wants to operate commercially on it, that the community retains the rights to continue to place dredged material there.

9. Roundtable Discussion on Current Issues and Initiatives – Entire ABM

This will be a discussion among ABM members about their respective organization's current issues of concern and initiatives to identify needs and opportunities for collaboration.

Discussion:

The Roundtable featured announcements and topic ideas for the next meeting.

Ms. Weaver requested an update on red tide and impacts to the bay on behalf of Commissioner Mariano. She also asked for a presentation on carbon sequestration at a future meeting. She questioned whether sequestration mitigation credits could be established locally or if that is a state process.

The Tampa Bay Environmental Restoration Fund is open for proposals, closing on March 15.

Tampa Bay Waterkeeper was awarded a mini grant through the Estuary Program to develop the Patrol Program, which is a citizen science initiative to report pollution.

SWFWMD is finishing up their 2023 update to the Tampa Bay SWIM Plan. The public meeting will occur in May and then the plan will be approved by the SWFWMD Governing Board before going to the FDEP for their final approval in late summer or early fall.

Audubon is approaching 30 years of their annual fishing line cleanup events. There is a rule proposal with FWC to limit the severe entanglement of pelicans at the Skyway. In February the rule proposal was sent back to staff by the FWC Commissioners, likely intending to weaken regulations. Jeff Liechty can give a presentation on the rule proposal at the June meeting.

FDEP Southwest District is having their annual open house on April 6th, 10-2, at their Jungle Terrace office. Registration is required. There will be several training sessions, some rule making presentations, and opportunities to meet staff. [Register here](#)

NOAA has continued to work with the Army Corps of Engineers on the Beneficial Use of Dredged Material opportunities from the Tampa Harbor dredge project. Dr. Sramek mentioned a potential beneficial use project could be the construction of offshore areas with suitable sediments on the east side of Tampa Bay that would support seagrass habitat considering the loss of seagrass that might be attributable to the six-inch sea level rise.

The Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County is accepting applications for the 2023 Pollution Recovery Fund now through April 7th. [Link to learn more](#)

The Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council is hosting the [2023 Tampa Bay Regional Resiliency Leadership Summit](#) on May 4-5th at the Clearwater Beach Hilton.

The TBRPC is also accepting entries for the Future of the Region Awards. [Link to submit an application.](#)

10. Other Items

- a. Bay Soundings article ideas
 - b. 2023 meeting dates
 - March 29, 2023, 1-3pm (virtual) – Natural Resources/Environmental Impact Review Committee
 - April 13, 2023, 2-4pm (virtual) – Legislative Review Committee
 - June 8, 2023
 - September 14, 2023
 - December 14, 2023
- *Committees will meet as necessary**

11. Adjourn

Chair Todd adjourned the meeting at 11:48 AM.