

## MAY 7, 2013 – WORKSHOP

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a Workshop May 7, 2013 at 5:00 p.m. at the Walton County Courthouse Annex in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida to discuss Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) projects and processes.

The following Board members were present: Commissioner Kenneth Pridgen, Chairman; Commissioner Sara Comander, Vice Chairman; Commissioner Bill Chapman; and Commissioner Bill Imfeld. Mr. Gerry Demers, Interim County Administrator, was also present.

Mr. Billy McKee, Environmental Manager, distributed a spreadsheet of the Walton County projects which were submitted for NRDA Early Restoration Funding and reported that the offshore and inshore artificial reef construction was awarded funding through a package of projects with other counties in the panhandle. He stated that \$69 million of the \$100 million set aside for Early Restoration Projects has been awarded to various projects throughout the affected eight counties. He indicated that the county projects on the spreadsheet were prioritized in 2011 and said that the top five projects were on NRDA's List 1, which are projects that meet the Early Restoration criteria; and the remainder of the county projects were on NRDA's List 2, which are projects that have been vetted down from List 1. Mr. McKee felt that if the Board wanted to make changes, now would be the time to do so. He discussed which of the projects could be removed and which could be combined. He also discussed how much county funds have been spent on these projects.

Mr. Demers asked whether the funding for the fish hatchery was awarded to Escambia County or if it was a regional award. Mr. McKee stated that the funding went to Escambia County and is not affiliated with the Walton County project at this time. Commissioner Comander discussed how the Escambia and Walton fish hatchery projects could work together.

She felt that the fish hatchery would be beneficial to Walton County even though it was not a NRDA project. Mr. McKee stated that there were other funds in the NRDA process, but that it was in Federal hands for determination. Commissioner Comander felt that the Habitat Conservation Plan should be moved up on the list. She briefly discussed what the county has undergone during the Habitat Conservation Plan process and the financial strain it has placed on the county. Mr. McKee said that he would be available to address any question specific to the Habitat Conservation Plan.

Commissioner Imfeld asked if NRDA considered the county's ranking of the projects. Mr. McKee said that he was not sure, but that the project that was awarded funding was one of the county's top five projects. Commissioner Imfeld asked what amount of funding would be needed upfront to get the Habitat Conservation Plan started. Mr. McKee stated that he did not have a specific amount and discussed which areas would require immediate funding. Commissioner Imfeld questioned whether a lower amount would have a better chance of being awarded by NRDA. Mr. McKee stated that he would like more time to determine what amounts would be needed.

Ms. Anita Page, South Walton Community Council, discussed the NRDA process and felt that there were other possible projects and areas of concern that should be considered. (A species inventory of the Coastal Dune Lakes; a partnership with other entities to address and promote the Coastal Dune Lake projects; replacement of the culverts on 30A with bridges to address erosion control on the Coastal Dune Lakes; address invasive species, such as phragmites that are overtaking the Coastal Dune Lakes and outfalls; and develop organizational and agency support for priority projects.) She stated that the parcel is unique in that it is one of the last remaining intact dune systems outside of a State Park system. She reported that US Fish and

Wildlife has determined that this area would be beneficial to the endangered beach mouse and that this designation could help to provide funding for the area.

Ms. Page asked that more information on the Kellogg property and the pier at Grayton Beach State Park be provided. She felt that the high funding amounts placed on the projects may have prevented the projects from being chosen and questioned who would be responsible for the maintenance, operation and repair of the pier. Mr. McKee discussed the costs for the improvements to the Kellogg property. Mr. Cliff Knauer, Preble-Rish, discussed the Walton County Fishing Pier project. He reported that the placement of the pier would have no impact to the dunes and discussed the benefits with having a fishing pier. He said that the pier would be built with BP funds, and maintained by Walton County with the use of gate fees. He reported that 75% of the replacement cost would be paid by FEMA funding in the event the pier is destroyed by a storm. He said that with a partnership between Walton County, DEP and TDC, the pier would be a success.

Ms. Bonnie McQuiston discussed the uniqueness of the Coastal Dune Lakes and the presence of invasive species. Mr. McKee reviewed the methods that have been taken to combat the phragmites. He also addressed Ms. Page's concerns regarding the Angelos property and said that a partnership with other agencies would be considered. He reported that the State was already considering funding allocation for a project assessing the Coastal Dune Lake system. The funding would allow for the opportunity to develop a scope of work to include an assessment on water shed, invasive species, and wildlife inventories. He said that the 30A culverts to bridges project could be added to the Early Restoration list.

Commissioner Chapman asked if the activities on the Angelos property would be limited if it were designated as a preservation project and where parking would be located. Mr. McKee

stated that the designation would limit the use of the property. He discussed the plans for the property after purchase. Discussion ensued on the construction of a beach/dune walk-over on the Angelos property and providing proper parking.

Many residents came forward to discuss their views on the fishing pier, preservation of Coastal Dune Lakes, reef projects, and partnering with other agencies and groups to accomplish the list of projects.

Mr. Demers asked Mr. McKee to present information on the artificial reef program. Mr. McKee stated that there are other sites being considered and discussed the permitting process that has been followed.

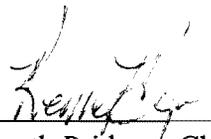
Chairman Pridgen stated that a lot of good ideas and input had been received, but there was still a lot of work that had to be done. He felt that staff needed to schedule more workshops and that more work needed to be done on the viable projects. He suggested that the unallocated insurance reimbursement be considered as funding to get these projects started.

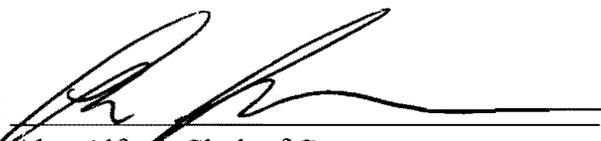
Commissioner Comander stated that she had been communicating with Okaloosa County and Okaloosa County Public Works regarding RESTORE projects that they could jointly pursue for funding from the second pot of RESTORE funds. She also said that there are a number of storm water problems in the northern area of the county which eventually flows down and affects the Choctawhatchee Bay. She felt that the projects needed to be shovel ready when the RESTORE funding is received.

The Board concurred to direct staff to schedule more workshops and report the workshop findings to the Board. Discussion ensued regarding the workshops.

Mr. McKee stated that he would remove the artificial reef construction from the list since it has been funded and will schedule workshops to look at the remaining projects and possible new projects for submission. He stated that the information will be brought back to Board.

Motion by Commissioner Chapman, second by Commissioner Imfeld, to adjourn the workshop. Ayes 4, Nays 0. Pridgen Aye, Comander Aye, Chapman Aye, Imfeld Aye.

Approved:   
Kenneth Pridgen, Chairman

Attest:   
Alex Alford, Clerk of Court