



**ST. ANDREW &  
ST. JOSEPH BAYS**  
ESTUARY PROGRAM  
*at FSU PANAMA CITY*

Chair: Commissioner Pat Perno

Vice Chair: Councilmember Mary Coburn

Executive Director: Dr. Jessica Graham

# St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program



## Policy Board

### December 17, 2025





ST. ANDREW & ST. JOSEPH BAYS  
ESTUARY PROGRAM  
of FSU PANAMA CITY

# Policy Board Members

Updated: December 2025

<b>Elected Officials and Host (Voting)</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Title, Municipality Representing</b>
Daniel Raffield	Commissioner, Bay County
Clair Pease	Commissioner, Bay County
Vacant	Gulf County
Allan Branch	Mayor Panama City
Steve Kerigan	Commissioner, Port St. Joe
Vacant	Mexico Beach
Ralph Hammond	Mayor, Springfield
Kenneth Ayers	Commissioner., Callaway
Vacant	Councilmember, Parker
Pat Perno-Chair	Comissioner, Lynn Haven
Mary Coburn	Councilmember, Panama City Beach
Irvin Clark	Associate Dean, FSU Panama City as host entity
<b>Participating Agencies (Non-Voting)</b>	
Dr. Caitlin Young	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - RESTORE Science Program
Eric Christianson	Emerald Coast Regional Council
Meg Christopher	Division of Water Resource Management, Division of Water Resource Management Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Vacant	Bureau of Community Planning and Growth Florida Department of Economic Opportunity
Jeremy LaDart	Planning and Environmental Division, U.S. Army Corps of Enginners
Channing St. Aubin	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Wade Lehmann	U. S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 4



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## **POLICY BOARD**

### **MEETING 26**

**December 17, 2025: 1-3 pm CT**

**Florida State University Panama City  
4750 Collegiate Drive  
Holley Building  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Dean's Conference Room**

Zoom meeting

[Click here](#)

Meeting ID: 937 4967 0091

Call in: 305-224-1968

Passcode: 896112

## **AGENDA**

### **Objectives**

- Review Annual Impact Report
- Review and approve 2026 Workplan – including new financial additions

1. Welcome and Roll Call
2. Approval of October 2025 notes
3. Approval of the December 2025 agenda
4. Annual Impact Report
5. 2026 Workplan and Priorities
6. Board member spotlight series drawing (live)
7. Expanding Community Outreach ideas
8. Flood reporting database
9. 2026 Policy Board Agenda
10. Policy Board member/Agency Updates

Public Comment

Adjourn



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## **Agenda Item #2**

### **October 2025 Meeting Summary Notes**

**Background:** Meeting notes from the October 2025 meeting.

**Discussion:** As needed

**Action:** Approval of notes

**Additional Materials:**

- Meeting notes



**ST. ANDREW &  
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ESTUARY PROGRAM  
*at* FSU PANAMA CITY

***ST. ANDREW AND ST. JOSEPH BAYS  
ESTUARY PROGRAM***

***POLICY BOARD  
MEETING 25***

***October 22, 2025***

*Report prepared by  
St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program Staff  
Florida State University*

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## BACKGROUND

On October 22, 2025, the Policy Board of the St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program (SASJBEP) met in person and videoconference. The meeting was the twenty-fifth in a series of meetings to support the guidance of the Estuary Program and implementation of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). Below are the objectives for the meeting and agenda.

- Review new grants and changes to grants
- 2026 Workplan and strategic direction
- Discussion based on outcome of Bay County Commission meeting regarding National Estuary Program Designation

Approximately 14 Policy Board members, staff and public attended. (A list of participants can be found in Appendix A). The agenda was as below and reference the Board book found at this link:

1. Welcome and Roll Call
2. Approval of August 2025 notes
3. Board member spotlight series + website/newsletters
4. Program progress – Accomplishments
5. 2026 Workplan and Priorities
6. Estuary Program budget updates
7. National Estuary Program designation
8. Other program updates
9. Policy Board member/Agency Updates

Public Comment

Adjourn

This document provides meeting notes and discussions points raised by members.

## WELCOME AND MEETING OBJECTIVES

Commissioner Perno reviewed the objectives and agenda for today's meeting as well as the discussions from the past meeting. He thanked members for participating and taking the time out of their day to be here today. He led a round of introductions/attendance around the table and confirmed that we had a quorum.

See Appendix A for a list of members and participants.

## APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Perno referred the Policy Board to the agenda and asked if there were any additions or changes. Upon hearing none, he entertained a motion for approval.

**Mayor Hammond motioned to approve the agenda.**

**Councilmember Coburn seconded the motion.**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Perno referred to the meeting notes in the Boardbook and asked if there were any corrections necessary. There were none raised, and he announced that he would entertain a motion to approve.

**Commissioner Ayers motioned to approve the meeting minutes.**

**Councilmember Coburn seconded the motion.**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

## BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT SERIES + WEBSITE/NEWSLETTERS

Commissioner Perno moved to the next agenda item and asked Jessica to provide an overview. Jessica described the idea of highlighting who is behind the Estuary Program. Currently, the Board is just a list of names on the website and this could be a unique way to "meet the Board." The process would be where Jessica would interview you briefly and have you answer some questions about why you are on the board and what you are hoping to achieve. Jessica did run the idea by Councilmember Coburn who suggested that if it was supported by the rest of the Board to have a drawing of names to keep things fair and even. Jessica described that this would be done every other month where the spotlight would be showcased at the meeting and then be rolled out in the following month's newsletter. We have about 600-700 people subscribed to our newsletter.

Discussion:

- Councilmember Coburn thought it was a good idea and a fun way to raise awareness of the group as well as highlight the people involved in the program.
- Commissioner Ayers also thought it was important to do it as well and it was a great idea.
- Mr. Boudreau agreed and loved that it would highlight the passion of the member and is a great way to get information out to the community.
- Commissioner Perno suggested he was all for it and should also highlight the Management Council members as well because we are just the ones that make decisions based on information provided to us but others are digging in and doing it and we should bring attention to the warriors behind that work.
  - Jessica said we could extend it to the Management Council following the Policy Board. Commissioner Perno agreed as did Mr. Boudreau and added that hearing from these representatives across the sectors would help target messaging for the outreach. Councilmember Coburn agreed.

- Commissioner Ayers asked what we needed from the Board. Jessica asked what process the Board wanted to see for selecting the Board member.
  - Multiple members suggested drawing a name at each meeting and Councilmember Coburn suggested drawing names all at once and assigning a month all at once so then Jessica will know. Members agreed with no objections online.

## PROGRAM PROGRESS - ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Commissioner Perno introduced the next topic of Accomplishments where Jessica has previously provided an accomplishment report at the end of December and today there is a rough draft available. He then handed it to Jessica for additional background. Jessica recapped that accomplishments have been provided previously but have kept them to a one-page limit in the past. Now that we have been moving toward the implementation of the CCMP we have more accomplishments to highlight, and I'd like to create more of an annual impact report that we would roll out each year. It would provide a brief background, highlight projects, and progress and give a snapshot on things we are trying to do. It shows that we aren't just sitting in our offices, but we are out there trying to do good things that matter to this community. What specifically we highlight is up for feedback from this Board. I've created a draft to give you an idea, but we are all ears if there is something else that would be more impactful. Jessica reviewed the draft and then reviewed the CCMP progress and described how the progress was calculated and emphasized that the progress is more about implementing the actions but not necessarily progress of addressing the issues.

### Discussion:

- Mr. Boudreau provided an example of when Springfield is completed then this could turn into X acres of floodplain restoration and X linear miles of streambank restored.
  - Jessica confirmed that is exactly what we are trying to accomplish but we haven't been around long enough to have those accomplishments quite yet.
- Councilman Cox asked if this would help establish real goals?
  - There are things we can do to understand the sources of those issues, and it's a continuum but we are just at the beginning stages, but we hope to get to the progress on real goals.
- Commission Perno asked what prompts the project priorities. Is it research or the needs or focus of the community?
  - Jessica stated that it is more about the funding opportunity that we have available. Commissioner Perno asked for more information and Jessica explained the process further. When there is a Request for Proposals (RFP) out it generally outlines what they want to fund and then she looks into the CCMP and tries to align the goals plus compiles additional information that is obtained from meeting with different cities and counties that identify additional projects. The information that matches the RFP is then created into a proposal and submitted but it must match what the RFP wants to fund.
  - Mr. Boudreau added in short that Jessica must match up what projects are in the CCMP and then what needs to be done and match that to what the grant wants to fund.
  - Commissioner Perno asked then that the projects are based on the grant available. Jessica confirmed that at this time yes and Jessica added that sometimes we will do the project that is awarded or sometimes we contract it out.
  - Councilmember Cox stated that he has read a lot regarding National Estuary Program designation and would that designation help with the leg work of some of the money.
    - Jessica referred to the agenda and that we would get to that a bit more later, but yes if we were designated then it would give us around \$800k as a steady stream of revenue of funding to spend on what this Board prioritizes.
- Jessica then redirected the conversation back to the current agenda item and asked the Board if they had feedback on the longer accomplishment document.
  - Mayor Hammond stated that he agreed that 1 page wouldn't be enough to provide important information.
  - Mr. Boudreau stated that multiple pages are good if there are a lot of images.

- Commissioner Perno agreed and stated pictures and big bold letters.
- Jessica confirmed that this was just a draft but gives an idea and then there will be a budget on the final page.
- Commissioner Perno stated that he was all for it and Councilmember Coburn agreed.
- Jessica asked again if the Board had recommendations or requests for information they would like to see, and Mr. Boudreau suggested adding a section that explains how the percent complete was calculated to be up front with how progress was determined.
- Commissioner Perno asked if Jessica had the information necessary for agenda item 4 and Jessica confirmed.

## 2026 WORKPLAN AND PRIORITIES

Commissioner Perno then moved the meeting to the Workplan and Priorities agenda item and stated that this would be voted on in December 2025. The draft is provided for our review, and we are looking for possible discussion on the priorities and any listed changes that the Board would like to see and then handed it over to Jessica for any additional information.

Jessica explained that she shifted to something a bit more robust last year when previously it was just a spreadsheet of what each staff member was in charge of per grant. This version is a bit more similar to what other programs are creating and it helps us know what the priorities are from the Board on a more programmatic level. Jessica reviewed some of the priorities from last year and updated the Board on their current status. Jessica reminded the Board that many of these programmatic needs are unfunded as our grants fund 100% of Jessica's time and all Estuary Program staff but we try to be strategic in how we craft proposals and try to cover as many as possible. This workplan is built for the calendar year event though our budget is for the federal fiscal year and we may want to alter that eventually but we didn't do that this year.

### Discussion:

- Mr. Boudreau pointed out that SPARK is one grant that is important for the Estuary Program and local governments to ID nature-based solutions.
  - Jessica added that SPARK extends beyond nature-based solutions (NBS) because many of our local governments have projects that just cannot be addressed by NBS and she hopes it will help local governments find a way toward working with us more closely. Jessica also described that this grant will support a grant writer for local governments and limited engineering towards moving these projects towards implementation. It's \$1.5 million and supports a lot of the Estuary Program staff.
- Jessica asked the Board what their priorities are that we can have an impact on over the next year.
  - Mayor Hammond believes that one of the priorities should be more education for the community. Mr. Boudreau agreed.
  - Jessica asked if that was more outreach or education.
  - Mayor Hammond clarified that he meant outreach with news, social media and getting more awareness among the community.
- Dr. Clark wanted to add to the point provided by Mayor Hammond and that ensure that you simplify the message to make it more understandable to the public and to stay away from acronyms.
  - Jessica confirmed that following from the conversation at the last meeting that the average reading level is the 7<sup>th</sup> grade the Estuary Program has been working to simplify the message.
- Councilman Cox agreed that awareness of what the program is about is key but instead of how a new report would simplify to we have lost X acres of seagrass they don't put in a why that is occurring. Need to make messages short and concise and communicate or you'll lose them.
- Mayor Hammond stated that going to morning shows really helps to get the word out.
  - Jessica agreed and informed the board that she recently did a Panhandle Outdoors segment.
- Commissioner Ayers asked if Jessica wanted to add the 501c3 to the priorities and Jessica asked for clarification of what regarding the 501c3. Commissioner Ayers just stated that you are trying to get one.

Jessica confirmed that the 501c3 request should be filed before the end of the year but can add it just in case there are follow-ups etc.

- Commissioner Perno asked if we have grant writing capability. Jessica confirmed. Commissioner Perno asked if there was an idea of who has grant writing capability and who doesn't, and Jessica provided a recap of the Development and Finance Committee (DFC). This Committee had grant writers from multiple cities that would get together and discuss projects and grant plans. Jessica also let the Board know that in one of the new grants a grant workshop for local governments to learn more.
- Councilman Cox stated that Mexico Beach is currently interviewing for a grant writer and it would be good to reach out to the cities that have the grant writer and community that this grant is here and let them do some of the work.
  - Jessica agreed that it was a great idea and she will restart the DFC
- Commissioner Ayers commented on the professionalism of the document but asked for the insertion of page numbers. Jessica confirmed that in the final document there would be page numbers.
- Jessica asked for feedback online and there was none.

## ESTUARY PROGRAM BUDGET UPDATES

Commissioner Perno moved the meeting to the Estuary Program Budget updates and handed the meeting to Jessica for more details. Jessica described multiple changes to a number of our grants and new grants that have become active. Jessica provided a list of changes in the Boardbook and reviewed them. One change that Jessica anticipated with the RESTORE microbial source tracking project is there was money in for a boat, but it will likely be reallocated to allow for more sampling and then we would be using one of the FSU PC vessels they have recently allowed our program to use.

### Discussion:

- Commissioner Perno asked if the date for the Microbial project was May 26 or 28? Jessica confirmed that it would be May 2028 as it is a three year project.
- Dr. Clark asked if the Resilient FL expansion portion of the grant would allow us to expand into Franklin County and Jessica said no because it is outside of our geographic boundaries.
- Jessica described some hiccups with St. Andrew Bay Watch recently and that the funding was to support their monitoring program and with these recent hiccups, it's unclear if we will subaward with them. Jessica also stated that nothing could happen at this time anyway because the Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) has to be approved and the government is currently shutdown.
  - Commissioner Perno asked if there was another group in mind? Jessica stated that the Estuary Program would just do the monitoring. She reiterated that Bay Watch has done a great job over the years but they use Lakewatch to analyze the samples and there is a significant delay in getting results so it makes it difficult for messaging and to act on warning signs.
  - Commissioner Perno asked if Lakewatch would be used with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant.
    - Jessica described that if the funding went to Bay Watch then yes but the additional samples we would be taking will go to a different lab for more immediate results. Jessica also informed the Board that she has been discussing equipment needs with FSU in order to get a water quality lab started and analyze total nitrogen and total phosphorus but there are still a lot of unknowns.
    - Mr. Boudreau added that labs also need certifications that are difficult to get and need that for Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to use the data.
    - Councilman Cox also stated that it seems prudent to have data that DEP can use otherwise just throwing money away.
      - Jessica added that Lakewatch has it written into their formation that their data can't be used for regulation.

- There was additional review of other grants and then Mr. Boudreau asked if Jessica was going to review the pie chart that was in the previous agenda item. She stated no unless that is desired by the board. Mr. Boudreau just wanted to call attention that the Estuary Program is getting just shy of \$10M secured over the past three years which is fantastic and the Estuary Program has done a great job.

## NATIONAL PROGRAM DESIGNATION

Commissioner Perno then moved the meeting to next agenda item. He introduced the item by stating that the Bay County Board of Commissioners voted yesterday to deny the national designation at this time. It doesn't mean that they are not supporting the program but they feel like that they had their ambiguities as to why they didn't want the program to be nationally designated. I believe that a clear definition and maybe the ongoing productivity of the program may be able to help change minds in the future that national designation is a good thing. Commissioner Perno also stated that he attended the Bay County meeting yesterday and heard concerns regarding if we take money from the federal government then we are losing control but he felt that there were reassurances provided that the designation would not allow SASJBEP to be a regulatory body so he wasn't sure where the Commissioners are coming from and asked Commissioners Raffield and Pease to provide some explanation for the rest of the Board.

### Discussion:

- Both Commissioners Raffield and Pease stated that they explained themselves yesterday at the meeting but happy to answer questions. Multiple members asked for reasons behind the decision. Commissioner Raffield said his thoughts where anytime I hear federal government and here to help, I take that with a grain of salt. If we take that \$800,000 we run the risk of them coming in and saying what we can do with our waterways. If we want that \$800,000 then we need to find a way to get that. The government scares me. I know what they can do and that concerns me and that's why I voted against the national designation. As a commercial fisherman, I was concerned and that was my thinking in voting against it.
- Dr. Clark asked the question to the entire Board and stated that thinking forward there are two main questions: 1) What should we be doing as a body to identify other avenues of funding and 2) Based on what happened yesterday, what can we learn from it and what things can we mitigate for a future discussion to get additional data. Dr. Clark also requested information on how the voting at the Commission works and if once a vote is done it's over or is there a chance to revisit it.
  - Dr. Clark added that that the University is currently still committed to the program and he hasn't heard that the county isn't committed but also haven't heard that they are. He also added that the program has only been around for 4 years and that really isn't a long time and so we have some lessons learned but how can we move forward?
- Councilmember Coburn stated that she thought it would be interesting to have information from other programs that are designated and how that designation has affected their programs. Do they have interference from the federal government?
  - Dr. Clark agreed and stated that maybe we could talk to the folks in Pensacola and ask if there were apprehensions and are there lessons that we can learn from?
- Commissioner Pease stated that the Bay County waterways are critical to tourism, commerce, environmental health, public safety and she feels like federalizing the waterways would be a complication. She sees it and watches how slow the federal government works. Nothing is free. She believes they have dressed it up with a bow but its not free and there will be strings attached. She thinks that our local control that we have now for our maintenance and access when we have dredging to do and a lot of things that go on locally it would be out of our control and they would permit us to death and timeline us to death. Our current situation allows us to have rapid response and she provided examples of boats sinking and repairs needed. The response works well for us now. She answered one of the questions that were asked of what we can do to get additional money and I think we need to have a strategic plan for it. She stated that we could go to local business, have fishing tournaments to bring in money and we do need grant writers to go after every single grant we can. The local cities have been great partners and she recognizes the importance of federal collaboration on projects but the local authority over waterways she feels strongly it is important. She also stated that the Commission

voted previously not to federalize and that this is her opinion and she knows that it is a blow not to get this money and Jessica and her staff have worked hard but she cannot just change my beliefs because of that. She thinks we all need to work hard together to find other avenues of money and she is ready to work and find those funds.

- Commissioner Raffield added that this can't be discussed any further but we've had these conversations this morning with respect to finding more funding.
- Commissioner Pease stated that we know this money is important and we need it but we need to find a way to get it. This is a big county and there are a lot of people who would like to help but we just need to find them.
- Commissioner Perno thanked both Commissioner Raffield and Pease for their comments and explanation for the Board and asked that if they could try to publicly rally the troops because I think the fundraising is on the backs of the municipalities and our city is expecting an invoice and has budgeted for an annual donation to the program but it would be nice to know how else the program will be funded because the cities can't support it on their own.
  - Commissioner Perno also stated that there were 2 other commissioners that voted in favor and that I think we as a Board need to keep our heads held high and support the program until they can be fully designated.
- Mayor Hammond added a statement and that as a team we just need to get together and move forward either way it goes. I am not trying to be contradicting but the federal government is already in control of the waters and Bay County doesn't control it. They already permit us to death so I don't personally see where the problem of national designation would change controls.
- Commissioner Perno asked if there were other comments from anyone?
- Commissioner Ayers stated that he thought that the program should press forward and asked why the County gets to make this decision. He stated that the vote was close and we should press forward for designation.
  - Jessica stated that of course the cities could decide to move forward but Bay County makes up 60% of the watershed so for us to move forward it would be a very different approach than what others have done in the past. Jessica reiterated that the concerns voiced are extremely important concerns and that there is a lot of information out there to support that these concerns haven't been what others have experienced. Jessica also reminded the Board that even if Bay County has supported the effort, there was no guarantee that we would have been granted the designation.
- Councilman Cox asked as the new person around the table, where does the program go without it? He stated that this has been the direction over the past 4 years and you've extrapolated out from there but where does the program go?
  - Jessica stated that the Estuary Program was created and modeled after the National Estuary Program but it was designed to be something that this program and this Board wanted and wasn't ever intended to push it toward that direction. Jessica stated that she was told to pursue national designation by this Board and the previous Bay County members supported that decision. Jessica also revisited the comment made that this isn't the first time of this vote from the Bay County Board and stated that she hasn't seen this vote or any of the recordings that show this discussion that was mentioned.
  - Commissioner Pease stated that Sherry may have the notes and can send those.
  - Jessica provided some background that Sherry had provided her some notes previously but it wasn't a vote for national designation and there were no discussion in the meeting before or during that vote that were geared toward national designation. Instead the vote was to apply for a RESTORE council pot 2 opportunity which is the one that Pensacola and Perdido ended up getting and there was the RFP in the package that stated that if awarded the funding it would not automatically make the program a Nationally designated program. Jessica added that she understands the points made by everyone and that we need time to show what we can do with the additional funding. Jessica also voiced concerns that it will be more difficult to find funding for projects. Jessica finished with stating that although this is a redirection from where we have been over the past four years, we can look forward and there are a lot of other funding opportunities that we haven't been able to take

advantage of because we didn't have a bank account to put the funding into previously but now we have that.

- Commissioner Perno asked if the County does an annual donation?
  - Jessica stated that they have not to date but she has not sent the updated proposed request as she has done previously with the other cities.
- Dr. Clark wanted to restate that the University is committed to the program pending funding is secure. He also stated that he did a quick search online and these concerns of the federal government are not uncommon and these tend to be similar among other counties. He reiterated his earlier comment which is what do we need to do overtime. Perhaps some of these same locations had to go out in order to provide evidence and get folks there to support the designation.
- Commission Ayers asked if we are designated and we find that we are having issues with the federal government then can you get out.
  - Commissioner Pease stated that you have to go through an act of congress to get out. She stated that she thought very hard and researched about this. She has watched Midnight Pass and watched the federal government fight against the things that she is for no reason. They've denied permits for opening the pass and she encouraged everyone else to dig deeper and maybe you'll change your minds. Dr. Clark, stated that perhaps as we dig deeper and find additional resources, maybe the Bay County Commissioners would change their minds.
- Jessica asked if Commissioner Pease could clarify that regarding Midnight Pass, the refusal of the permits was not because Sarasota Bay was a National Estuary Program correct, and that refusal had nothing to do with their designation but rather the Army Corps process. Commissioner Pease stated that it was government control and she is for less government always.
  - Commissioner Ayers commented on the benefits of Midnight Pass being opened.
  - Commissioner Pease stated that there were not many members on the Board that wanted to open the pass but appreciated them allowing Jessica to write the letter and send it and she hopes it will make a difference.
  - Commissioner Ayers then asked who signed the letter.
    - Jessica stated that she had sent it to Commissioner Ayers and it has her signature on it.
- Commissioner Pease outlined general discussion regarding her lack of desire for federal government and experiences following hurricanes.
- Jessica asked to clarify that the Board was supportive of the Pass but just not that the Estuary Program be in the game of writing letters for various projects but that the Board does support the pass and they have made that clear to me since I started. Commissioner Pease clarified that she was speaking about the letter.
- Commissioner Pease said that she would like to look to the future and if this comes up for a vote in another year than it can be brought up there and that is all she has to say about this item.
  - Dr. Clark stated that in the interim then let us do our due diligence and take positive steps forward.
- Jessica reiterated that nothing is guaranteed anyway and we are always going to move toward doing good things for the Bays and we will keep doing our jobs. She said her first concern when the vote occurred was that FSU would not support us and that would be a huge hit to the program. However, having talked to Dr. Clark and Dean Hanna that is not the case and that as long as Bay County continues to support the program and funding continues to come then FSU will support the program. We will continue to try and raise money and get the word out. We are really only a year into doing actual work.
- Commissioner Ayers stated that he really doesn't understand what the federal government can do that they already can do.
  - Jessica stated that it's time to move forward.
- Councilman Cox stated that if we take the federal government out of it and look to our local municipalities and the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Northwest Florida Water Management District, Northwest Florida and our area is not getting our fair share of resources from DEP compared to others. We are the smallest populace so we get breadcrumbs. If we can get the state to give a few more breadcrumbs then it would be best to get the commission to petition to the state to get funding to this program.

- Jessica agreed 100% and stated that DEP contributes to the National Estuary Programs in the state but not estuary programs. It would take changes that are a bit lift in order to get annual appropriations from DEP to an estuary program.
  - Commissioner Pease stated that if Jessica would put some information together she would talk to the governor about it and see what can be done.
- Mr. Boudreau announced that NWFL WMD is requesting \$22.5 M to distribution across Northwest Florida. The idea is to focus on particular subbasins so that we can show the next year we've moved the needle. He also stated that the District supports this Estuary Program and will continue to support this program. There are stormwater projects that have moved forward because of it and restoration efforts that have moved forward. There is a lot to be proud of from the Estuary Program and the District supports the program.
- Commissioner Ayers asked Jessica if it would be beneficial to identify what you think the impact of the federal government will be on the program?
  - Jessica stated that she has created that and it was provided to the Commissioner and am happy to share it with Commissioner Ayers. Jessica said that she believes the next step would be to get a commissioner from another county who has a National Estuary Program to answer questions and hear about their struggles and how they have surpassed their struggles.
  - Dr. Clark stated that Pensacola and Perdido Bay would be a good one because they've received designation but not a penny yet. They don't seem like they are planning to stop whether they get that money or not.

## OTHER PROGRAM UPDATES

Jessica recapped the Race for the Bays event that was a hit and we almost doubled our profits and these will increase as we build our materials.

She also asked the Board looking to next year to schedule Policy Board meetings and asked if there were changes desired by the Board.

Discussion:

- Most members stated that they liked it as it is and to keep it the same.

## POLICY BOARD UPDATES

None

## PUBLIC COMMENT

None

**Motion to adjourn made by Mayor Hammond**

**Seconded by Councilmember Cox**

**Motion passed unanimously and Commissioner Perno adjourned the meeting at 2:56 pm CT.**

## APPENDIX A – PARTICIPANTS OCTOBER 2025 MEETING

√ Indicates participation at this meeting

MEMBER	AFFILIATION
<b>Local Government Elected Officials, Voting Members</b>	
Allan Branch	Mayor Panama City
Steven Kerigan √	Commissioner Port St. Joe
Mary Coburn √	Councilmember, Panama City Beach
Irvin R. Clark. EdD √	Associate Dean, Student & Strategic Initiatives, FSU Panama City
Clair Pease √	Commissioner, Bay County
Ralph Hammond √	Mayor, Springfield
Steve Cox √	Councilmember, Mexico Beach
Kenneth Ayers √	Commissioner, Callaway
Vacant	Councilmember, Parker
Daniel Raffield √	Commissioner, Bay County
Pat Perno √	Commissioner, Lynn Haven
Vacant	Commissioner, Gulf County
<b>Regional, State and Federal Agency Non-Voting Members Present</b>	
Meg Christopher	Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Water Resources Management
Roshita Taylor √	Emerald Coast Regional Council (ECRC)
Eric Christianson √	Emerald Coast Regional Council (ECRC)
Vacant	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Wade Lehmann	U.S. EPA Region 4, Water Division, Chief, Ocean, Wetlands & Streams Protection Branch
Vacant	Bureau of Community Planning & Growth, Florida Dept. of Economic Opportunity
<b>COORDINATION TEAM AND FACILITATORS</b>	
Jessica Graham √	SASJBEP Executive Director
Ryann Rossi	SASJBEP Scientist
Aleighsa Wright	SASJBEP Outreach Specialist
Elizabeth Farmer	SASJBEP Research Assistant
Rose Horn √	SASJBEP Staff Scientist
Ashley White √	SASJBEP Technical Assistant
<b>OTHERS PRESENT</b>	
Darryl Boudreau √	Northwest Florida Water Management District
Kathleen Coates √	Northwest Florida Water Management District
Donnie Hicks √	Northwest Florida Water Management District
Teresa Cox √	City of Springfield Clerk



**ST. ANDREW &  
ST. JOSEPH BAYS**  
ESTUARY PROGRAM  
*at* FSU PANAMA CITY

Chair: Commissioner Pat Perno

Vice Chair: Councilmember Mary Coburn

Executive Director: Dr. Jessica Graham

#### **Agenda Item #4**

##### **Annual Impact Report**

**Background:** Last meeting we discussed the intent to create a more robust Annual Accomplishments or Impact Report to highlight the year 2025. I presented a draft and the floor was opened to take recommendations for areas and/or items to highlight and received none. Therefore, we have moved the draft forward to completion. See separately attached file in the Boardbook email or link [here](#).

**Discussion:** As needed

**Action:** None planned

**Additional Materials:** Annual Impact Report (separate file and linked above).



**ST. ANDREW &  
ST. JOSEPH BAYS**  
ESTUARY PROGRAM  
*at FSU PANAMA CITY*

Chair: Commissioner Pat Perno

Vice Chair: Councilmember Mary Coburn

Executive Director: Dr. Jessica Graham

## **Agenda Item #5**

### **Work plan and priorities**

**Background:** The Policy Board is charged with reviewing and approving the SASJBEP's annual workplan. Last meeting, the Board was presented a draft and we discussed priorities for 2026. The input received has been incorporated into the attached draft. Additionally, during the last meeting there were comments made regarding the need for a fundraising plan. I've created some goals and metrics to aim to meet in 2026 and have added them into the work plan. I have also added them to the Financial Strategy that I can share if desired but for brevity sake, have not included it in this Boardbook.

**Discussion:** As needed

**Action:** Vote needed to approve

**Supporting documents:** 2026 Workplan



**ST. ANDREW &  
ST. JOSEPH BAYS**  
ESTUARY PROGRAM  
*at* FSU PANAMA CITY

# **2026 Annual Work Plan**

Approved by

SASJBEP Policy Board

DATE

St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program

4750 Collegiate Ave.

Panama City, FL 32405

[Sasjbep.org](http://Sasjbep.org)

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# Introduction

## Program Overview

The St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program (SASJBEP) encompasses the St. Andrew Bay (SAB) Watershed, covering approximately 740,000 acres and spanning portions of six counties. This includes all four sections of the St. Andrew Bay system -- St. Andrew, West, north, and East Bays -- as well as St. Joseph Bay (SJB) (NWFWMD, 2017). The SASJBEP was established to address the unique needs of the St. Andrew Bay Watershed and modeled after the successful National Estuary Programs.

The program is driven by local stakeholders who recognize the interconnectedness of our natural resources and prioritize their restoration and protection. As a non-regulatory, non-advocacy, voluntary partnership, SASJBEP collaborates with industries, environmental groups, citizens, governments and resources managers to improve the health of the watershed. The program encourages public participation to achieve its vision of healthy, resilient bays and estuarine habitats that support native species, natural systems, recreation, fisheries and the economy, together with vibrant, resilient, and sustainable communities in the watershed that live in harmony with the needs of the estuary. This will be accomplished through our mission, which is to collaborate -- as representatives of private, public, and non-governmental stakeholders -- to improve our science-based understanding of the needs of the estuary, and to develop, promote and implement projects that protect and restore the health of the bays.

## Program History

The SASJBEP was established in 2020 by the Bay County Board of Commissioners to ensure the restoration and protection of our bays through watershed scale management actions that benefit both our natural resources and communities. Although the program is still in the early stages, it has built upon existing efforts that have been ongoing since the 1950s. The SAB Watershed has faced numerous challenges over the years, with significant impacts in more recent years. In 2018, Hurricane Michael, a Category 5 storm with sustained winds exceeding 160 mph, made landfall on Tyndall Airforce Base. The hurricane caused lasting damage, including the loss of over 90% of the tree canopy in some places, which has raised the water table and resulted in increased flooding.

In addition to the hurricane's impact, COVID-19 pandemic affected the SAB Watershed in unique ways. The region saw an influx of new residents as many people relocated to the area, taking advantage of remote work opportunities. This growth led to increased development and heightened pressure on local natural resources, further exacerbated by a rise in outdoor recreation users. These challenges underscored the need for a neutral, science-based forum to bring stakeholders together, where they could address watershed-scale issues while balancing community needs with environmental sustainability.

The SASJBEP operates under a three-tiered governance structure, which includes a Policy Board, Management Council, and five committees, all functioning in accordance with Florida's Sunshine Law. The advisory committees and Management Council provide guidance to the Policy Board that sets priorities and develops strategies to ensure the program's sustainability and long-term success.

## Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP)

Upon its establishment, the first task of the SASJBEP was to create a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) to identify priority actions necessary to improve the health of our watershed and benefit communities. A multi-year, community-based planning process led to the publication of the CCMP: *A Guide to Protecting and Restoring Our Bays Together* in April 2024. The science-driven, community-based plan serves as a roadmap for future actions, both locally and regionally.

The CCMP identified key priorities issues identified, including: 1) stormwater management, 2) wastewater management, 3) nutrients, pathogens, and toxins, 4) recreational opportunities, 5) community engagement, 6) changing environmental conditions, 7) habitat loss, and 8) sediment. The plan outlines 28 actions under 14 goals, organized into four focus areas. These focus areas, determined by the community, reflect the broad areas essential for making measurable improvements to the watershed. Each focus includes a desired outcome, or “moon goal”, that will be achieved through the actions outlined within each focus area.

## Early Accomplishments

The wealth of existing information provided by multiple community-based organizations (CBOs) has laid a strong foundation, enabling the SASJBEP to initiate and advance projects aligned with the goals and objectives outlined in the CCMP, even before its official publication. Below is a list of projects implemented through competitively secured grant proposals. These not only demonstrate SASJBEP’s ability to secure external funding but also the commitment to implementing the priorities outlined in the CCMP and building off existing information.

1. A combined \$1.7 M from Bay County RESTORE pot 1 and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to establish the SASJBEP, hire staff and create a strategic plan called the CCMP. Closed July 2024.
2. State of the Watershed Report: A \$100,000 grant from FDEP via NFWFMD under NOAA’s CZM opportunity to create a baseline of condition across the watershed that will be used to measure progress of management actions on the condition of the targeted habitats. Closed December 2024.
3. Strategically reforesting Bay County: A \$54,000 grant secured from FDACS to inventory existing outfalls to the Bay, generate stormwater potential and prioritize public areas for reforestation. Closed September 2025.
4. Determining Sediment Contamination in St. Joe Bay: A \$100,000 grant secured through legislative request and University of West Florida that sampled sediment at 10 stations across St. Joe Bay to determine sediment condition. Deadline December 2025
5. Preliminary design and engineering for floodplain restoration of the upper tributaries of Martin Lake: A \$510,00 grant secured from NFWF’s NCRF to support up to 60% design of restoration efforts to reduce flooding in the areas adjacent to the upper tributaries of Martin Lake in the City of Springfield. Extended until February 2026.
6. Collaborative science to assess restoration success (CSTARS): A \$1.6 M grant from Florida’s Institute of Oceanography’s RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Program to evaluate the

effectiveness of living shoreline restoration projects from Escambia to Bay counties. Extended until April 2027.

7. Safeguarding Bays: A Joint Effort to Reduce Brise with Municipalities: A \$677,554 grant secured from NOAA's Marine Debris Interception Technologies under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law competition. This project will work with local governments to install littatrap basins into stormwater inlets to reduce the amount of debris entering our waterways and stormwater infrastructure as well as an outreach and education effort including murals, and outreach materials.

## Newly funded projects (secured/activated in 2025)

The SASJBEP staff and program are 100% grant funded and work to secure grants through competitive processes. Additionally, the Bay County Board of Commissioners has pledged 10% of the RESTORE pot 1 funds to support the SASJBEP and implement the CCMP priorities. SASJBEP Executive Director works with Bay County staff to identify projects that align with the CCMP and County priorities to submit to the U.S. Treasury for approval and release of funding.

1. RESTORE Microbial and Nutrient Source Tracking: A \$500,000 agreement from Bay County via Direct component pot 1 funds to support a DNA analysis of water samples to determine the source of bacteria in impaired waterbodies as well as a stable isotope analysis to determine the source of nitrogen.
2. SPARK: Strategic Partnerships Advancing Restoration Knowledge: A \$1,484,919.29 award from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to identify a minimum of 25 projects ready for feasibility assessments, 12 projects ready for preliminary design, and 7 projects ready for engineering/permitting support. The project will provide capacity support for developing resilience projects with diverse stakeholders including local municipalities in the form of outreach and education, coordination, prelim design, and grant writing support for subsequent phases of the project.
3. Regional Resilience Advancement through technical assistance, planning, and grant readiness: A \$209,230 grant from Florida's Department of Environmental Protection's Resilient Florida Program to support technical assistance for adaptation planning with broad regional benefit or multiple jurisdictions, enabling local governments to prioritize project development and implementation while providing grant program information to partners and increasing awareness of our program across the 4 additional counties.
4. Bay Guardians: Citizen Science for Clean Waters: A \$749,998 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency's Gulf Program to 1) coordinate and support two citizen-based water quality monitoring programs in SAB and SJB, 2) evaluate monitoring efficiencies in SAB, and 3) create an online dashboard with condition assessment and print materials to increase awareness and understanding of water quality.
5. Native Plant Network and Vertical Oyster Gardens: A \$26,788.68 grant from the St. Joe Foundation to support the creation of the Native Plant Network and expand our Oyster Recycling Program and Vertical Oyster Gardens.
6. National Coastal Condition Assessment (NCCA) Intensification: A \$75,000 grant from the Northwest Florida Water Management District to add 10 stations to the NCCA that occurs every five years to determine condition and changes in condition over time.

## Program specific progress

SASJBEP's activities are organized into five key programs, each addressing the priority actions outlined in the CCMP: restoration, planning, research and monitoring, stewardship, and training. These programs not only help communicate our current efforts but also establish priorities that span the entire project development continuum, from identifying impactful projects to implementation and ongoing monitoring that can result in recommendations on future actions and priority.

### *Restoration*

Restoration activities are geared toward addressing the sources of issues across the watershed with an overall goal of restoring ecosystem function that has been lost. These projects often go through a multi-phase process including first identification followed by feasibility assessment, design, engineering, permitting and eventually implementation. Previous efforts include preliminary feasibility assessments completed for Sweetbay Wetland Park that has been used to submit to numerous grant entities but is yet to be funded. Preliminary design and feasibility completed on Salinas Park that led to coordination between the County and locally active citizen group, a grant proposal submitted and funded and subsequent design and engineering for implementation. We continue to work with Baskerville and Donovan, Inc. to complete 60% design and engineering to reduce flooding in the upper tributaries of Martin Lake. Additional restoration projects that have been identified and coordination continues with project sponsors and SASJBEP include (but are not limited to) those listed below:

- Living shorelines at Lynn Haven Bayou Park and Preserve
- Living shoreline at Lynn Haven wastewater treatment plant
- Stormwater wetland at voluntary home buyout location
- Stormwater plan for Port St. Joe with multiple parcel level projects identified within the City
- Emmon's Bayou, Callaway living shoreline, dredging, and stormwater solutions
- Sweetbay Wetland Park restoration
- Living shorelines along Carl Gray park and Beach drive
- Native plants and maintenance best management practices for Panama City's sensitive habitats

And more...

### *Planning*

All great projects and initiatives take robust planning to ensure success. The SASJBEP through community involvement created the first ever CCMP to guide direction for the next 10 years that was published in April 2024. Additionally, in January 2025, we released the first ever State of the Watershed Report (SOWR) that compiled all the existing data for key metrics and indicators that were identified by the Science and Technical Committee. This SOWR established baseline conditions of our natural resources across the watershed that we will use to measure improvements over long periods of time. Additionally, a project evaluating stormwater potential based on degree of impervious surface combined with the number of outfalls available to move stormwater that was used to prioritize reforestation efforts on public parcels. Other planning

efforts include the facilitation of the Tyndall Stakeholder Working Group, the creation of a living shoreline suitability model, and subbasin prioritizations based on priority issues.

### *Research and Monitoring*

An essential step in determining meaningful and impactful actions is a comprehensive understanding of our systems and the interactions with external factors. Several data gaps have been identified through the completion of the CCMP and the State of the Watershed Report. Investing in filling these data gaps is crucial to ensuring that financial resources are strategically invested to address the source of the issue rather than the symptoms. Current projects include the Bay Guardians water quality monitoring, Microbial and Nutrient source tracking, CSTARS, and Marine Debris monitoring.

### *Stewardship*

Engaging citizens both locals and visitors in conservation actions is one of the priority issues identified by the community. SASJBEP engages partner organizations and the public to increase awareness and understanding of these priority issues and how all citizens can play a crucial role in preserving our natural resources. These efforts include vertical oyster gardens, oyster shell recycling, creation and management of the volunteer network, murals on storm drains, and teen outreach committee. An additional effort that will be started in 2025 and continued into 2026 is the creation of a native plant network that will focus on raising marsh grasses in a small scale nursery like effort.

### *Training*

Many partners have expressed interest in the SASJBEP hosting various training courses to help address some of the priority issues identified. Although we only have volunteer training opportunities currently we are hoping to launch a grant writing training/workshop in 2026.

## Work plan development

The 2026 Annual Work Plan will allow SASJBEP to continue toward implementation of the CCMP. As the SASJBEP is not a national designated estuary program, priorities are often dictated by available grant funds, but the program strives to prioritize beyond the focus on grant funded activities. This workplan describes overall programmatic priorities and administrative support that will be undertaken pending approval and receipt of funds by various entities.

## Time period

The starting date of the 2026 Work Plan will be January 1, 2026 and be for the 2026 calendar year until December 31, 2026.

## SASJBEP Priorities for 2026

The overall goal for 2026 is to continue to implement the CCMP by working to identify, initiate, and select projects. The St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program will also continue to strengthen its foundation by securing sustainable funding through annual contributions, while

amplifying community awareness and involvement to protect and restore our bays for future generations. The priorities identified for 2026 focus on needs to ensure the SASJBEP remains sustainable and strategically effective. Currently, the activities are restricted to those funded by grants as there are minimal general operating funds. These priorities also focus on ensuring that project implementation is a focus as well as programmatic strategy and growth.

Top priorities identified are as follows in no order:

- Build a sustainable funding model that includes:
  - multi-tiered sponsorship program,
  - launching a giving campaign,
  - strategy for securing state appropriations and
  - securing annual member contributions
  - continuing to secure federal grants
- Increase Awareness and Impact Messaging
  - Create storytelling campaigns to share success stories
  - Continue social media strategy
  - Create a strong local identity that positions the program as a trusted source of information
- Increase Community Participation
  - Continue to host monthly Tides and Talks events while increasing participation
  - Create volunteer opportunities for community members
  - Re-invigorate Community Action Committee
  - Host drop in events
  - Increase ownership and buy in for the SASJBEP and its mission
- Expand Educational Efforts
  - Create classroom based resources
  - Create and disseminate public education materials on key priority issues
  - Create online interactive resources showing progress on key activities
- Bolster Estuary Program operations
  - MOU finalized with FSU
  - Secure access to FSU Foundation donation portal
  - Create policies and procedures for orientation of new members
  - Secure 501c3 designation for the SASJBEP Foundation and maintain operations

## Implementation of Grant Funded Projects

Activities for 2026 are centered around funded grant projects and the activities required to meet project deliverables as well as programmatic development when possible. Overarching tasks per grant and per staff member are provided in in Table 1: 2026 Grant funded workplan. This table represents the necessary activities for each grant currently active and predicted to begin within 2026.

## Grant Funded Projects deliverables, funding, and schedule

SASJBEP currently has 10 grant projects funded that will extend into or through 2026 with one additional project expected to start in the first quarter of 2026. Three of these projects will close out during 2026. Additionally, SASJBEP is working with the county to secure funding and finalize agreements for two more projects. An overview of projects currently active and planned to be in the first quarter is provided below. Each description provides title, description, budget, remaining funding as of December 2025 and schedule.

		Exec Director	Lead Scientist	Outreach Specialist	Research Assistant	Post doc	Staff Scientist	Tech Assist
		Jessica Graham	Ryann Rossi	Aleighsa Wright	Liz Farmer	Tim Lee	Rose Horn	
Overall Roles 2026	C-STARS	Reporting	Protocol oversight	Information dissemination	Coordination of sampling	Acquisition of existing data	Shoreline change analysis	Expenditure tracking
		Subaward management	Sampling methods	Acquisition of photos	Processing soil samples	Analysis of field data	Other analysis support	Salary effort tracking
		Budget management	Analysis and Finalization of ES	Homeowner reports	Collection of field data	Projection of benefits	QA/QC (July-Dec)	Ordering
		Overall coordination	Field sampling		Data entry and QA/QC	Ecosystem services		
	Springfield (Ends Feb ish)	Reporting		Outreach support				
		Contracting						
		Fiscal oversight		Project highlights				
	Tyndall (Currently end Feb)	Outreach						
		Meeting coordination		Website creation				
	UWF (ends Dec)	Agenda, notes						
		Budget management	WQ report card	General outreach			Meiofauna analysis	
	Marine Debris	Project coord	Sediment synthesis	Water quality				
		Project coordination	Oversee littatrap installation	Create plan for communication	Monitoring support		Maintenance of survey and dashboard	Project management - scheduling support
		Management of subs/contracts/consultants	Support of outreach mtrl	Create mural plan and contact municipalities			Transfer data to Trap app	Expenditure tracking
		Budget management	Monthly monitoring	Social media & newsletter			Monitoring	Purchasing support
	TNC SUNS 2.0	Equip purchase	Adopt a storm drain + creation of materials					
		Project updates		Create press release				
		Technical support		Social media posts				
		ID new NBS projects		Coordination of outreach meetings				
		ID 10 projects						
	DEP Resilient FL	Advise gulf wide						
		ID new resilient FL projects	Assist with mapping	Create communication plan			Assist with mapping	Expenditure and salary tracking
		Conduct meetings	Grant sheet support				Support for watershed priorities	Reporting support
		ID state and fed programs	Vulnerability and SOWR to create watershed priorities	Social media				
	CZM-NCCA	Reporting		Newsletter				
		Recommendations	Analysis	Project info	Sampling support		Data entry	Expenditure and Salary tracking
		Coordination	Recommendations	Newsletter	Training		Update dashboard	Reporting support
		Review						
	EPA - H20	Contracting	Lab selection	Creation of materials	Sampling in SAB		Coordination of SJB volunteers	Expenditure and Salary tracking
		Project coord	Develop QAPP					
		QAPP support	ID and purchase equip	Website/dashboard support	Boat certified		Creation of Survey 123 and continued	Reporting support
		Lab selection	Monitoring support as needed	Public events	ID and purchase equipment		Data acquisition and cleaning	Timeline management
		Public outreach support	Acquire agency datasets	Report card and other materials			Support Analysis	
		Get boat certified	Data entry support/dashboard /analysis				Creation of dashboard	
	SPARK	Project coord	Project ID support	Creation of materials			Project mapper	Project management support
		contracting	Mapper	NBS and project specific			Database management	
		reporting	Reporting					
		Project ID	NBS info and coordinate training	Coordinate outreach meetings				
		Project meetings		Social media, newsletters, website				
		Overall management		Events				
Grant tasks								
Tracking	Project management	Data analysis	Social media	Sampling support		Data management support	Purchasing support	
	Reporting	Reporting	Newsletters	Lab selection support			Expenditure tracking	
	Contracting		Website					
	Oversight	Land use analysis	Materials	Purchasing materials				
	Recommendations of actions	Recommendation support						

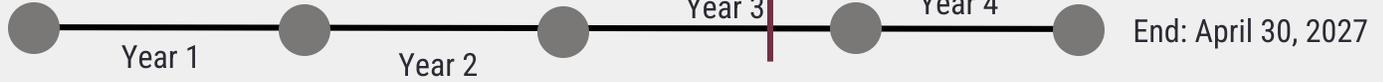
# Active Grant Summary

## C-STARS

### Assessing restoration success and ecosystem services across the Panhandle Region to assist in restoration target setting

This project will monitor 10 existing living shoreline sites in each bay (SAB, Choctawhatchee, and Pensacola) to evaluate if they are stopping erosion, providing habitat, and reducing nutrients. The economic impact of these living shorelines will also be evaluated and messaged across the area to increase adoption of living shorelines.

Start: May 2023



**\$1,640,996**

Category	Budget	Remaining
Salary	\$734,082.24	\$278,331.07
Travel	\$21,000	\$8,680.60
Materials	\$30,267	\$3,812.64
Other	\$30,238	\$22,879.85
Indirect	\$146,943	\$85,169.40
Subawards	\$653,844.76	\$505,020.36

FLRACEP

## TRACKING

### Identifying Impairments to Waterbodies through Microbial and Nutrient Source Tracking

Project will collect water samples that will be analyzed for DNA and stable isotopes to determine the sources of impairment. This information will be overlaid with land use maps, stormwater outfalls, soils, and other information to determine actions to remediate the sources.

Start: Oct 2025



**\$500,000**

Category	Budget	Remaining
Salary	\$262,546.40	\$260,853.32
Equipment	\$43,500	\$43,500
Travel	\$4,522	\$4,522
Materials	\$15,306	\$15,306
Other	\$114,582	\$114,582
Indirect	\$59,543.44	\$59,543.44

TNC

## Tyndall Stakeholder

### Coordinator of Tyndall Stakeholder Working Group

This supports the coordination of a bi-annual meeting of the Tyndall Stakeholder Working Group. The working group has representatives from local, state, and federal governments, NGOs, and businesses that discuss ongoing work on Tyndall AFB as well as off base activities.

Start: Jan 2024



**\$9,983**

Category	Budget	Remaining
Salary	\$6,885	\$1,126.03
Indirect	\$4,762	\$582.80

TNC

End: Feb 2026

UWF-SAS

### Benefiting water quality across the Panhandle Estuaries - assessing benthic indicators in St. Joe Bay

This is a large collaboration with our program, Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance, and Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program, University of West Florida and a private corporation - SAS to create an online dashboard for water and habitat quality. SASJBEP will work with FSU CML to sample sediment in St. Joe Bay and analyze benthic communities.

\$100,000

Category	Budget	Remaining
Salary	\$48,689	\$1.39
Travel	\$0	\$0
Materials	\$1,444	\$0.76
Other	\$10,265	\$0
Indirect	\$9,068	\$2,773.76
<b>Subawards</b>	<b>\$30,278</b>	<b>\$25,460.76</b>



Legislative

FDACS

### Strategically reforesting Bay County through assessing stormwater potential and existing infrastructure

This project will synthesize existing data for each of the identified watersheds and attempt to provide a baseline assessment of the St. Andrew Bay watershed. Indicators include water quality, long leaf forest condition,

\$56,662

Category	Budget	Remaining
Salary	\$56,569	\$23.27
Travel	\$0	\$0
Materials	\$0	\$0
Other	\$241	\$0
Indirect	\$0	\$0



FDACS

Springfield

### Increasing Coastal Resiliency of Springfield, FL through Stream Restoration and Wetland Enhancement

We will work with the City of Springfield and an engineering firm to create up to 60% design and engineering for a restoration and enhancement of the upper tributaries of Lake Martin to alleviate flooding and increase water and habitat quality.

\$510,032

Category	Budget	Remaining
Salary	\$25,388	-\$189.46
Travel	\$0	\$0
Materials	\$600	\$600
Subawards	\$470,787	\$49,190
Indirect	13,257	\$228.50

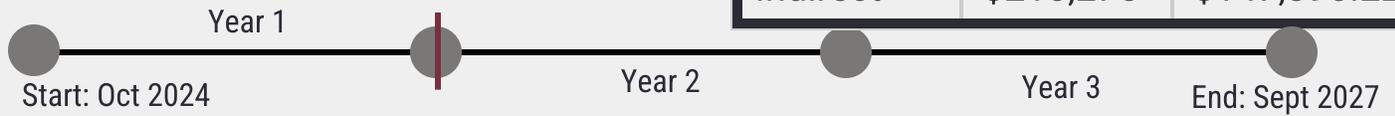


NFWF-NCRF

# Marine Debris

## Safeguarding Bays: A Joint Effort to Reduce Debris with Municipalities

Project will take a 2-pronged approach to address man-made debris by 1) using littatrap interception technologies and 2) developing an awareness and education campaign focused on reducing marine debris pollution. Murals will be painted at locations across walkable areas that highlight the importance of keeping stormwater clean. Up to 60 LittaTraps will be installed and maintained for three years.



NOAA

**\$677,554**

Category	Budget	Remaining
Salary	\$352,277	\$226,076.93
Travel	\$4,000	\$3,449.40
Materials	\$68,000	\$42,738.21
Contracts	\$35,000	\$35,000
Other	\$8,000	\$7,734.99
Indirect	\$210,275	\$147,890.22

# Resilient FL

## Increasing resiliency through capacity building and support

Project will support SASJBEP to provide technical assistance for adaptation planning with broad regional benefit or multiple jurisdictions, enabling local gov to prioritize project development and implementation. And, ID state and/or federal programs that provide grants related to resilience, mitigation, combating flooding, or addressing SLR. A plan to distribute this information to communities within their region will also be created.



DEP

**\$209,230**

Category	Budget	Remaining
Salary	\$175,764	\$165,257
Travel	\$1,621	\$1,621
Materials	\$3,719	\$3,719
Other	\$835	\$835
Indirect	\$27,291	\$27,291

# NCCA

## National Coastal Condition Assessment

Project will support SASJBEP to increase the number of stations sampled for the EPA's National Coastal Condition Assessment to a minimum of 10 additional locations across SAB and SJB combined. Samples will be acquired using approved EPA methodology for biological, chemical/toxicity, physical and recreational/human health.



DEP via NFWMD

**\$75,000**

Category	Budget	Remaining
Salary	\$34,898	\$4,041.89
Travel	\$1,445	\$592.69
Materials	\$5,614	\$530.46
Contracts	\$36,000	\$1470.04
Other	\$485	\$485
Indirect	\$3,571	\$1,828.38

# TNC-SUNS

## Scaling UP Nature Based Solutions 2.0

Project will take a 2-pronged approach to address man-made debris by 1) using littatrap interception technologies and 2) developing an awareness and education campaign focused on reducing marine debris pollution. Murals will be painted at locations across walkable areas that highlight the importance of keeping stormwater clean. Up to 60 LittaTraps will be installed and maintained for three years.



TNC

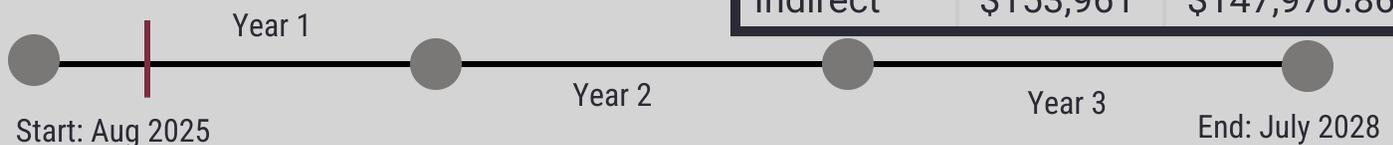
**\$42,499**

Category	Budget	Remaining
Salary	\$32,464	\$3,066.76
Travel	\$1,924	\$1,906.08
Materials	\$2,133	\$2,133
Other	\$435	\$435
Indirect	\$5,543	\$1,400.96

# EPA - H2O

## Bay Guardians: Citizen Science for Clean Waters

Project will support water quality monitoring in St. Andrew Bay by the St. Andrew Bay Watch program while adding additional stations in the upper bayous to determine if current stations are located in the best places to capture water quality. A citizen science monitoring program will be started in St. Joseph Bay working with charter fisherman. Additionally an assessment of existing stations will be conducted to determine which stations can accurately provide condition under different funding levels to ensure continuous monitoring.



EPA

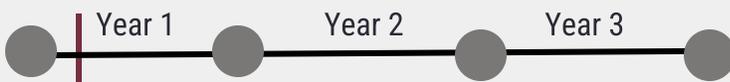
**\$749,998**

Category	Budget	Remaining
Salary	\$193,430	\$175,659.66
Travel	\$6,604	\$6,604
Materials	\$30,704	\$29,603.71
Other	\$20,298	\$16,398
Contracts	\$345,000	\$345,000
Indirect	\$153,961	\$147,970.86

# SPARK

## SPARK: Supportive Partnerships Advancing Resilience and Knowledge

Project will support the identification of projects that are high priority to increase resilience and move these projects closer to implementation. Projects will be identified through workshops and meetings with local governments and prioritized for feasibility, preliminary design and/or permitting based on the phase of development. This will support a grant writer to creating grant proposals in partnership with the local governments for submission.



NFWF

**\$1,484,921**

Category	Budget	Remaining
Salary	\$407,428	\$403,153
Travel	\$19,339	\$19,339
Materials	\$37,000	\$35,681.80
Other	\$8,800	\$8,800
Contracts	\$600,000	\$600,000
Indirect	\$410,654	\$410,654

## Program administration

The administration of the program requires dedicated time to multiple overarching activities including grant management, project identification, partner maintenance and expansion,

### Overarching tasks

SASJBEP administrative staff will provide organizational and logistical support for the entire Management Conference, grant project management and execution, community engagement and project identification relevant to the CCMP. Specifically, staff will facilitate in partnership with partners to:

1. Acquire, manage, and disperse funds to implement the CCMP;
2. Monitor, track, and report on progress and performance on implementation by working to gather information from our implementing partners;
3. Develop a tracking database on projects that meet implementation goals;
4. Provide logistical support for all meetings, workshops, and special events related to Program mission;
5. Provide outreach and education to the public through local and regional media, social media, participation at outreach events;
6. Develop strategies for seeking and securing funding sources beyond competitive grants;
7. Participate in regional, state, and national conferences and meetings relevant to watershed management when funding is available;
8. Secure operational funding by proposing to local governments and other partners and providing information regarding return on investment.
9. Develop and implement partnership projects with local governments, state, and federal agencies, and private organizations;

### Budget

SASJBEP funding is primarily from competitively secured grants (restricted funding) with minimal funding provided by donations and the Race for the Bays event. Acquisition of additional unrestricted administrative funding continues to be a priority. Overarching administrative expenses without considering funding restrictions is provided by line items and table below. This information is presented for core estuary program staff and not considering additional staff outlined in the financial strategy.

1. Salary: Costs associated with core staff salaries and benefits;
2. Travel: Allows program staff to attend state, regional, and national meetings, workshops and conferences.
3. Supplies: As needed, for the day-to-day operations of the Program. Additional supplies are necessary to execute on grant activities.
4. Equipment: Purchase of items over \$5,000;
5. Other: Shipping, communities services, printing, marketing materials.
6. An overview of program costs is provided in the table above that outlines the amount of funding needed per category. There are many unfunded needs that are not represented such as a new vehicle and boat but are not included in this overview as the mission can

continue without such items. Travel costs include those associated with travel to a regional/national conference such as Restore America’s Estuaries that provide invaluable opportunities for networking but are not included in grant budgets. Supply costs are associated with day-to-day needs of the program that are not permissible to be written into grants.

Administrative Costs

Item	Salary	Fringe	Travel	Supplies	Equipment	Other	Total
Estimate	\$384,832.74	\$18,697.73	\$5,000	\$15,000	\$0	\$6000	\$429,530.47

A comprehensive budget is provided for the FY25-26 and FY26-27 is provided in the Appendix.

## Fundraising Goals

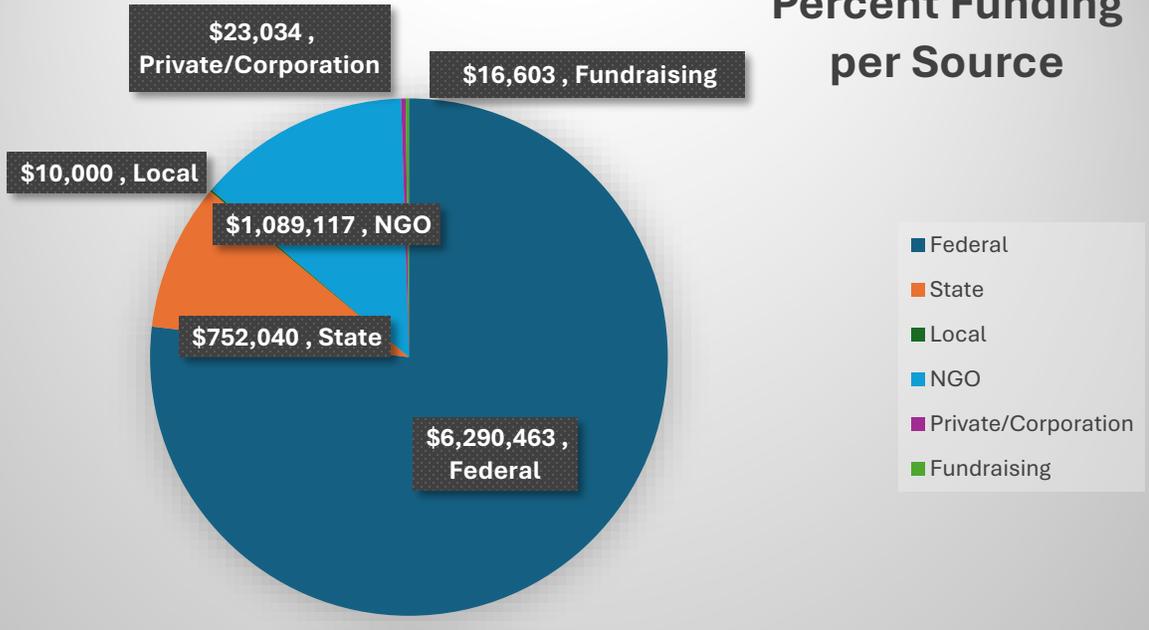
The year of 2026 will work to diversify the funding portfolio beyond state and federal grants. The Finance strategy will provide more detail but the strategic goals are outlined below.

- Increase Annual Unrestricted Revenue
  - Increase donations and sponsorships by 100%
    - Grow total donations and sponsorships from \$6,500 to \$13,000 in 2026
  - Increase the number of members contributing annually
    - Add two new members to annual allocation agreements
- Diversify Funding Sources
  - Add 2 new entities and secure at least 1 new grant from a new entity
- Identify 10 high-potential prospects donors
- Secure 5 donor meetings
- Close 1 major gift (\$10,000+) by the end of 2026
- Increase the number of grant applications submitted from 6 in 2025 to 8 in 2026
- Create 1 large funding campaign and launch online
- Increase email subscribers by 100 in 2026

## Summary

The year of 2026 will be the fifth full year of SASJBEP working to bring partners together to benefit our natural resources and second full year since the publication of the CCMP. This workplan describes the proposed work to be initiated during the 2026 calendar year. Of the total funds identified in the table, most of the funding has been secured through federal and state grants with a full breakdown provided in the pie chart below. This workplan is the second annual workplan presented to the Policy Board for approval and will continue to become more robust and complete over time.

# Percent Funding per Source



**St Andrew and St Joseph Bays Estuary Program at FSU Operating Budget**

	FY24-25	Projected FY25-26	Projected FY26-27	Totals to Date
<b>Revenue</b>				
<b>State Funding</b>				
UWF-Water Quality	\$ 99,744.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 99,744.00
<b>Total State Funding</b>	<b>\$ 99,744.00</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 99,744.00</b>
<b>Grants/Restricted Funding</b>				
(Restore Pot 1) Bay County	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 643,427.46
The Nature Conservancy	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 995,264.86
CSTARS	\$ 372,955.00	\$ 339,982.00	\$ 279,045.39	\$ 1,301,399.00
Marine Debris	\$ 283,202.00	\$ 203,120.00	\$ 191,232.00	\$ 283,202.00
FDACS	\$ 44,820.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 52,810.00
Springfield	\$ 500,000.00	\$ 3,696.60	\$ -	\$ 506,335.50
Tyndall	\$ 1,589.41	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 9,983.08
SOWR	\$ 34,878.17	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 100,000.00
TNC-SUNS	\$ 30,869.45	\$ 11,624.20	\$ -	\$ 30,869.45
NCCA	\$ 57,242.01	\$ 11,773.56	\$ -	\$ 57,242.01
Resilient FL via SASJBEP Foundation	\$ 9,888.99	\$ 209,230.00	\$ -	\$ 9,888.99
EPA-water quality	\$ -	\$ 273,987.00	\$ 248,248.03	\$ -
SPARK	\$ -	\$ 384,408.00	\$ 561,137.16	\$ -
RESTORE-Tracking	\$ -	\$ 268,142.00	\$ 117,288.00	\$ -
<b>Not Active</b>				
Living Shoreline Suitability - DEP via Bay County	\$ -	\$ 94,469.00	\$ 105,531.00	\$ -
<b>Total Grants/Restricted Funding</b>	<b>\$ 1,335,445.03</b>	<b>\$ 1,705,963.36</b>	<b>\$ 1,396,950.58</b>	<b>\$ 3,990,422.35</b>
<b>Total Restricted Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 1,435,189.03</b>	<b>\$ 1,705,963.36</b>	<b>\$ 1,396,950.58</b>	<b>\$ 4,090,166.35</b>
<b>Unrestricted Funding</b>				
<b>Government Agency</b>				
Bay County	\$ -	\$ 50,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
Gulf County	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
City of Springfield	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00
City of Lynn Haven	\$ -	\$ 20,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
City of Panama City	\$ -	\$ 30,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
City of Panama City Beach	\$ -	\$ 20,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
City of Callaway	\$ -	\$ 20,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
City of Parker	\$ -	\$ 2,500.00	\$ -	\$ -
City of Mexico Beach	\$ -	\$ 2,500.00	\$ -	\$ -
City of Port St. Joe	\$ -	\$ 2,500.00	\$ -	\$ -
Florida State University PC	In-kind	In-kind	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Total Government Agency Revenue</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 167,500.00</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
<b>Foundation Grants/Projects</b>				
Seagrass Greenhouse (St. Joe #1)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 13,034.00
FPL	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00
NRPA	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00
Native Nursery + VOG (St. Joe #2)	\$ -	\$ 26,778.68	\$ -	\$ 26,778.68
<b>Fondation Grants/Revenue</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 26,778.68</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 33,034.00</b>
<b>Donations and Sponsorships</b>				
General Donations/Fundraising	\$ 10,256.08	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 38,946.52
<b>Donations and Sponsorships</b>	<b>\$ 10,256.08</b>	<b>\$ 10,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 5,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 38,946.52</b>
<b>Carry Forward</b>				
Carry Forward	\$ 23,858.97	\$ 22,229.65	\$ 219,828.33	\$ -
<b>Total Unrestricted Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 34,115.05</b>	<b>\$ 226,508.33</b>	<b>\$ 224,828.33</b>	<b>\$ 71,980.52</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 1,469,304.08</b>	<b>\$ 1,932,471.69</b>	<b>\$ 1,621,778.91</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>				

**St Andrew and St Joseph Bays Estuary Program at FSU Operating Budget**

	FY24-25	Projected FY25-26	Projected FY26-27	Totals to Date
<b>Grant/Restricted Expenditures</b>				
Staff	\$ 271,022.43	\$ 346,432.75	\$ 229,384.27	\$ 1,646,148.88
Other personnel	\$ 175,512.51	\$ 224,759.39	\$ 132,944.00	\$ 739,602.15
Fringe Benefits	\$ <b>146,148.19</b>	\$ <b>191,267.73</b>	\$ <b>133,342.38</b>	\$ <b>781,850.38</b>
<b>Total Personnel</b>	\$ <b>592,683.13</b>	\$ <b>762,459.87</b>	\$ <b>495,670.65</b>	\$ <b>3,167,601.41</b>
Travel	\$ 7,308.57	\$ 15,537.00	\$ 15,537.00	\$ 62,846.09
Equipment	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 43,500.00	\$ -
Supplies	\$ 40,694.07	\$ 36,007.56	\$ 78,404.00	\$ 271,516.66
Contractual	\$ 37,000.00	\$ 24,200.00	\$ 240,880.00	\$ 271,516.66
Subaward	\$ 362,360.29	\$ 467,252.21	\$ 187,340.00	\$ 1,076,791.61
Other	\$ 6,941.43	\$ 4,186.48	\$ 17,355.00	\$ 37,398.05
Indirect	\$ 126,068.08	\$ 103,558.31	\$ 338,327.80	\$ 806,090.28
<b>Total Grant/Restricted Expenses</b>	\$ <b>1,173,055.57</b>	\$ <b>1,413,201.43</b>	\$ <b>1,417,014.45</b>	\$ <b>5,931,229.10</b>
<b>Total Restricted Revenue</b>	\$ <b>1,435,189.03</b>	\$ <b>1,705,963.36</b>	\$ <b>1,396,950.58</b>	
<b>Total Restricted Expenditures</b>	\$ <b>1,173,055.57</b>	\$ <b>1,413,201.43</b>	\$ <b>1,417,014.45</b>	
<b>Restricted Revenue Over/(Under) Restricted Expenses</b>	\$ <b>262,133.46</b>	\$ <b>292,761.93</b>	\$ <b>(20,063.87)</b>	
<b>Foundation/Unrestricted Expenditures</b>				
Personnel	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Travel	\$ 18.21	\$ 30.00	\$ 30.00	\$ <b>100.34</b>
Equipment	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Supplies	\$ 2,600.79	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ <b>13,206.02</b>
Contractual	\$ 3,200.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ <b>3,200.00</b>
Subaward	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other	\$ 88.47	\$ 150.00	\$ 150.00	\$ <b>631.16</b>
Indirect	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Fundraising	\$ 5,861.73	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 500.00	\$ <b>7,711.02</b>
Seagrass Greenhouse	\$ 116.20	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ <b>6,721.16</b>
Vertical Oyster Gardens	\$ -	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ <b>1,813.57</b>
Native Nursery	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Total Unrestricted Expenses</b>	\$ <b>11,885.40</b>	\$ <b>6,680.00</b>	\$ <b>5,680.00</b>	\$ <b>33,383.27</b>
<b>Total Unrestricted Revenue</b>	\$ <b>34,115.05</b>	\$ <b>226,508.33</b>	\$ <b>224,828.33</b>	
<b>Total Unrestricted Expenditures</b>	\$ <b>11,885.40</b>	\$ <b>6,680.00</b>	\$ <b>5,680.00</b>	
<b>Unrestricted Net Income</b>	\$ <b>22,229.65</b>	\$ <b>219,828.33</b>	\$ <b>219,148.33</b>	



**Agenda Item #6**

**Board member spotlight series**

**Background:** At the last meeting we discussed the Board member spotlight series and a method of drawing names. I would like to start this in the New Year and have drawn names using a random number generator in excel and the results are below. The spotlight would include information about the Board member highlighting your history with the area, our resources, and why you accepted the appointment and agreed to serve on the Board and what you are hoping to accomplish during your time on the Board. Previously we discussed doing a highlight at each Board meeting but it would take us almost two years to get through the entire Board and therefore, I'd like to do one each month in the Newsletter.

**Discussion:** As needed

**Action:** Informal direction provided and decision on how to select board members

**Additional Materials:** None

Order	Member	Month
6	Dr. Irvin Clark	June 2026
9	Kenneth Ayers	September 2026
3	Mary Coburn	March 2026
1	Pat Perno	January 2026
7	Ralph Hammond	July 2026
4	Steve Cox	April 2026
5	Steve Kerigan	May 2026
2	Clair Pease	February 2026
10	Daniel Raffield	October 2026
8	Allan Branch	August 2026



## **Agenda Item #7**

### **Community Outreach Events**

#### **Background:** Community Action Committee

**Background:** The Community Action Committee has gone through numerous changes over the past four years from a stand-alone committee that met monthly to quarterly to Tides and Talks. Participation started strong with 20 or so members to less than five, showing up toward the end of the CCMP planning process. We shifted to a Tides and Talks event when the St. Andrew Bay Watch decided to cancel their citizen science lectures. These were envisioned to be a way to bring community members together and learn about different topics across the watershed and our program while also providing us insight into key items. However, the discussions tend to be more focused on the monthly topic and although generates great conversation, there are more insights regarding priority issues, ongoing efforts across the watershed, and possible actions and projects from the community members' perspectives that we are not hearing. In November, we scheduled an annual meeting of the Community Action Committee with food available, and we had one RSVP.

We have been brainstorming different ways to increase engagement and are working on one idea with the Management Council regarding reinvigorating the Community Action Committee. We would also like to discuss the possibility of doing drop ins or setting up a table before or after Commission meetings as a way to get the word out.

**Discussion:** Feasibility of setting up a table before or after Commission meetings.

**Additional Materials:** None



**ST. ANDREW &  
ST. JOSEPH BAYS**  
ESTUARY PROGRAM  
*at* FSU PANAMA CITY

Chair: Commissioner Pat Perno

Vice Chair: Councilmember Mary Coburn

Executive Director: Dr. Jessica Graham

### **Agenda Item #8**

#### **Flood reporting database**

**Background:** As the Estuary Program staff have been working on different projects one issue that has remained a consistent message is flooding issues across the watershed that have been exacerbated by impacts of Hurricane Michael. We have also seen that some of the issues regarding localized flooding are not always captured in mapping projects.

This database allows users to report flooding with some details including a location and photos that we can use to support grant proposals and can provide results to local governments to support project planning.

Please help us spread the word!

**Discussion:** As needed

**Additional Materials:** Flyer



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ESTUARY PROGRAM  
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### **Agenda Item #9**

**Background:** Historically the Policy Board has met the fourth Wednesday of even months of the year from 1-3 CT with the exception of December that falls on the third Wednesday of the month to accommodate the holidays. Last meeting, there was support to continue with this schedule.

The Policy Board schedule for 2026

February 25, 2026

April 22, 2026

June 24, 2026

August 26, 2026

October 28, 2026

December 16, 2026

**Discussion:** As needed

**Additional Materials:** None