

## Memorandum for the Record

Subject: Alabama Coastal Comprehensive Plan (ACCP) Webinar Meeting – Academia - K-12 Level

1. Welcome. The subject meeting was virtually held on Monday, 5 October 2015 from 1 pm to 3 pm. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) welcomed everyone and facilitated the virtual meeting.
2. Introductions and Purpose. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), outlined the ACCP's intent and need to identify ways to reduce vulnerability in order to achieve a coastal vision. ADCNR explained how USACE's post-Hurricane Katrina efforts, which developed plans for Mississippi and Louisiana, were authorized by Congress. Governor Bentley recognized the importance of a plan and allocated \$1 million for its development. The State of Alabama chose to partner with USACE to leverage work from Mississippi's plan (i.e. Mississippi Coastal Improvements Program (MsCIP)). ADCNR explained the ACCP will not be project specific but rather a 30,000-foot view for planning purposes that can be used to make sound science informed decisions in the future.

USACE, highlighted ACCP's tiered approach from previous studies and existing comprehensive plans. The ACCP will leverage those plans along with other USACE work to guide the State of Alabama's future. Input presented from 16 focus entities, to date, will be used to guide the ACCP's direction in the development of a coastal plan. This focus group meeting today is the last of those scheduled meetings. USACE continued that the ACCP will provide a road map which considers sea level change, storm inundation, and future needs for a more resilient coastal Alabama. This plan is a constituent-informed plan that builds on prior planning efforts and modeling to identify vulnerabilities and solutions to those problems.

3. Academia Coastal Vision. USACE asked the team what their vision for coastal Alabama is for today, in 10 years, 25 years, and the next 50 years. Given the virtual format, presented ideas are detailed below.

A. General Participant Discussion.

- a. A participant noted changes over the years. Teachers and students field trips to coastal environmental setting are not funded by school system. Teachers have to find funds to cover those types of environmental education trips. She would like to see that changed to fund those field trips to ensure that environmental sciences curriculum is incorporated into students' education, especially at the high school level. In response to a question, it cost approximately \$350/bus load of students to go on a field trip.
- b. Several schools are built in low-lying areas, such as Gulf Shores, with little area to expand. These schools are subject to coastal flooding and these issues must be addressed.
- c. Baldwin County lacks funds to build additional classrooms. Portable buildings must be upgraded to latest storm codes. Discussions are needed within the school system about how to address and fund these growth issues.
- d. School staff supports implementation of living shorelines in coastal access areas. Currently, there is a limited number of sites accessible to students' environmental education programs. Furthermore, if you utilize the same site multiple times it will

eventually be adversely impacted. Additional public access to those living shoreline areas would further increase awareness and their positive benefits to the ecosystem and community.

- e. An environmental education site is needed in Northern Baldwin to learn about the significance of the Upper Delta. This site needs to be easily accessible.
- f. A participant inquired if the USACE would come to classrooms because they are limited in the number of field trips rather than limited by funds. The USACE participants noted their USACE STEM program and said they could discuss this more offline. It was noted ongoing programs, such as the Master Environmental Educators in Baldwin County through Auburn University extension service and the Environmental Science Center in Mobile County. Additional public access for learning areas need to be planned in the future, in addition, to professional teacher development.
- g. A participant of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab stated safety needs to be considered in addition to public access throughout the system, from Delta to Dauphin Island.

#### B. Immediate Needs

- a. Water Access along Western & Eastern Mobile Bay - Walking/bike path, Pull-off for kayak launch along with signage about habitats in the area, maps on county road level so people can actually find access locations, etc.
- b. Need to educate State Board of Education and our Leaders about the importance of coastal environmental education.

#### C. 10-Year Vision

- a. We must implement smart growth in our area that accounts for coastal flooding and indirect impacts, such as loss of seagrass beds from declined water quality, and save existing natural areas from the ongoing developmental pressures.
- b. Essentially, we are “loving the coast to death”. This is evident with the number of individuals moving to coastal areas across the United States; therefore, there is a fine line between growth and the environment. To sustain a healthy environment, we need stronger regulations that are enforceable, especially around sensitive coastal areas.
- c. Historically, shoreline hardening (i.e. bulkheads) has been implemented as a form of shore protection but has led to environmental degradation, such as limited fringing salt marshes that now exist unless owned by public entities. It is understandable why private owners want to bulkhead their property but there needs to be incentives (i.e. monetary and educational) to create living shorelines to protect those vital areas.
- d. Developers need to be educated on the diversity and sensitivity of the estuary so they understand why Mobile Bay is so important. Hopefully this will promote more environmental sustainable development.

#### D. 25-Year Vision

- a. Development must be implemented in a manner that prevents limited green space (i.e. all green space is an island oasis – Gulf State Park) because healthy ecosystems need more than 100, 200, 1,000 acres of land. Therefore, we must think long-term about those vital greenways that extent the entire length and width of the two coastal counties. Connectivity is essential to sustain the ecosystem.

- b. Implementable regulations are necessary in northern areas because eventually all runoff leads into the Gulf of Mexico. Preservation of land is essential, and if development were to occur within those areas, it would meet stringent criteria, so wildlife can flourish and move within the green space.

E. 50-Year Vision

- a. By this time in the future, participants would like to see integration of coastal processes into the sciences from college to kindergarten to ensure seamless environmental education while teaching environmental stewardship to ensure sustainability.
- b. Ideally there would not be any more coastal development.