

January 4, 2005
Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Chairman Ken Johnson, Pasco Gibson, Robert Turpin, and Dan Wakley. Also present were the County Administrator (Hunter Walker), Marine Extension Agent (Christina Verlinde), and Public Works Director (Avis Whitfield). Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Wakley moved approval of the July 6, 2004 and November 2, 2004 minutes; Gibson seconded, and the vote carried unanimously (4-0).

Election of Chair/Vice-Chair for 2005

Wakley moved approval of Ken Johnson as Chairman; Gibson seconded, and the vote carried unanimously (4-0).

Turpin moved approval of Gibson as Vice-Chairman; Wakley seconded, and the vote carried unanimously (4-0).

Boat Ramp – Post Hurricane Ivan Update, Public Works Director

Walker distributed information on hurricane related damage to Santa Rosa County boat ramps (Attachment in file). He said county staff will be making a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to enter into a contract with Tedder Construction for repair of the Navarre Beach boat ramp. Walker said Tedder Construction will be doing the specifications for repair of the restrooms and parking facilities. He said the repairs will be reimbursable by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). Walker said the Navarre Beach boat ramp is being used even though the county has a closed sign posted.

Whitfield said piers sustained most of the hurricane damage at County boat ramp facilities. He said bids were opened this morning for reconstruction/repair of county piers and seawalls (Attachment in file). Whitfield said he hopes to get the bids awarded next week when the Board of County Commissioners meet. He said there is damage to the concrete at a few of the ramps. Whitfield said concrete is currently being poured at Oriole Beach boat ramp, and the boat ramp should be open by the end of this week. He said Floridatown's concrete boat ramp will be the next ramp repaired.

Walker asked about the debris removal at the boat ramps. Whitfield said he felt all debris has been removed from county boat ramps. He said the pier repairs will soon be underway.

Turpin asked if project worksheets were submitted to FEMA on pier repairs. He asked if the bids were submitted with one contractor doing all repairs or can a different contractor be used for different pier repairs. Whitfield said there can be different contractors at different piers.

Wakley said Russell Harbor boat ramp looks good. He said the floating dock is in place. He said this boat ramp is fully operational. Wakley said the boat ramps and floating docks are in at Carpenter's Park. He said the parking lot work still needs to be completed. Wakley said the dock at East River boat ramp is intact, but there is a problem with parking.

Wakley said the road at Navarre Beach boat ramp is washed out. He asked Walker to inquire about the possibility of installing a pump out station while construction is underway at the restroom facilities. Wakley said this will be the perfect time and location. Walker said FEMA will replace what was previously there, but he said he will check into the possibility of adding a pump out station.

Turpin said the Gulf Breeze boat ramp sustained a lot of damage during the hurricane. Walker said Gulf Breeze will qualify for hazard mitigation grants to upgrade the facility and protect the seagrass. Wakley suggested contacting Gulf Breeze to see if they need assistance with funding. Walker said repairs will be FEMA eligible. He said Gulf Breeze also participates in the Local Mitigation Strategy Committee, and they will be competing for hazard mitigation grant program funds as they become available.

Waterway Debris Update, Public Works Director

Whitfield said the county is working with NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service) on a number of sites throughout the county to clean up waterway debris. He said the bid package for waterways clean up should be ready by the end of January. Whitfield discussed four categories of debris removal in waterways.

Whitfield said the county will be the applicant with FEMA on debris removal of some county waterways to include Grand Canal, Villa Venyce, Boone Bayou, Santa Rosa Shores, and Navarre Beach canals. Whitfield said Hatch Mott McDonald is the county's consulting engineer and they are getting the bid packages ready.

Turpin discussed the debris clean up in seagrass areas and the importance of using the appropriate equipment to prevent damage to the seagrass beds. He said there can be irreparable damage to resources if the bids are just based on economics. Turpin suggested Verlinde monitor the seagrass beds. Walker said he has not seen any indication of who will clean up the bay or the sound. He said DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) did a collection process after Hurricane Opal in the sound, north of Navarre Beach. Walker said all clean up will be for debris removal only, no dredging. Whitfield said the county will be working with DEP and the Corp of Engineers on permitting. He said with the majority of county waterway debris removal projects, seagrass beds are not an issue.

Artificial Reef Request for Proposals

Walker said this is the request for proposals the Marine Advisory Committee does every year for artificial reef design and placement. He said last year's specifications are in the backup material (Attachment in file).

Turpin said he would like to submit, for consideration, fewer but larger artificial reefs. He said traditionally the reefs have been small patch reefs and from experience it made good sense. Turpin said there is good justification in fishery data at the University of West Florida that there is a higher return of fish per unit if you keep the number of units small. He said with public reefs that sustain quite a bit of pressure over a year long period, the small patch reefs get fished out from heavy usage. Turpin said fewer but larger reefs that hold a much larger biomass seem to be less susceptible to over fishing. He said over the last year he had two of the larger reefs deployed, and if more of the larger reefs can be deployed, it will help with his statistical analysis. Turpin discussed the two types of larger reefs built and the preliminary statistical analysis.

Turpin discussed a pilot program including Milton, Gulf Breeze, and Pensacola. He said if replication of this project can be shown, there may be additional grant funds available. Turpin requested the committee consider the larger reefs. He said he will provide information on the larger reefs at the next meeting.

Walker requested an update on the Oriskany. Turpin said the Oriskany will remain at the Port of Pensacola until permission is received from the Region 4 EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) to sink the ship. He discussed the possible environmentally unsafe materials on the Oriskany. Turpin said preliminary results indicate everything will be safe from an ecological and human health risk perspective. He said the ship should be ready for sinking in June, and the location will be 22.5 miles southeast of Pensacola pass in 212' of water.

Turpin discussed oil rig legs that will be placed on the sea floor temporarily to determine if they are damaged beyond the ability to reuse. He said if they are damaged beyond the ability to be reused, they will be used as artificial reefs.

Walker said the grant has already been awarded, and the county is ready to advertise the request for proposals for the deployment and monitoring of the reef design based on previous years' artificial reefs. He said Turpin is recommending modifying the design, and this will change the request for proposals.

Wakley moved approval to accept the artificial reef design modification to be determined as per Escambia Marine Resources advisor and Santa Rosa County staff; Gibson seconded, and the vote carried unanimously (4-0).

Gibson asked the status of previously deployed artificial reefs. Turpin said he was unable to account for all the reefs before Hurricane Ivan. He said the goliath balls deployed last year in Escambia County survived the hurricane. Turpin said he is confident the goliath balls deployed in Santa Rosa County remain intact and on site. There was discussion on replacement of artificial reefs destroyed by the hurricane. Walker said he will check with FEMA on artificial reef replacement.

Other Business/Adjournment

Wakley commended county employee Patsy Ladner on her assistance with regard to permitting and private dock replacement.

He asked the committee to start thinking about the next Boating Improvement Program project. Whitfield said a large project that comes to mind is the paving of the road going into Archie Glover Boat Ramp. He said DOT has indicated the possibility of DOT needing a turn around area for trucks unable to go over the Interstate Bridge. Whitfield said DOT may pave the road if the county agrees to let it be used as a turn around area until the Interstate Bridge is repaired. He said if DOT does not pave the road, it may be a project this committee will want to consider.

There being no further business to come before the committee at this time, the meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.