February 7, 2006
Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Chairman Ken Johnson and members Jeff Marker and Robert Turpin. Also present were the County Administrator (Hunter Walker), County Engineer (Roger Blaylock), and Marine Extension Agent (Christina Verlinde). Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Turpin moved approval of the minutes from the January 3, 2006 meeting; Marker seconded, and the vote carried unanimously (3-0).

FY2006-07 Artificial Reef Deployment Grant Application

Walker said the grant application for the 2007 Artificial Reef grant cycle is due by March 17, 2006. Turpin asked if the grant application will be for construction or monitoring of artificial reefs. He also asked if this committee will meet one more time prior to submission of the application. Turpin said he does not feel comfortable approving the application not knowing what is being applied for. He said a resolution supporting the grant application will help with the approval process.

There was discussion regarding the design of last year's artificial reef and the damage sustained to the reefs by recent hurricanes. Turpin said currently Santa Rosa County utilizes Escambia County's permit to deploy artificial reef structures, and this permit will expire during the middle of the grant cycle. He said the state requires a permit during the entire grant cycle. Turpin said Santa Rosa County has deployed a substantial amount of reef material and suggested applying for a monitoring grant. Walker asked when the permit will expire. Turpin said on September 21, 2006, and the grant period will extend through June 2007. Walker asked if the site will be re-permitted. Turpin said he is working with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission on how to proceed with renewal of the permit.

Turpin introduced John Dodrill, Administrator of the Artificial Reef Program with the Division of Marine Fisheries Management at Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in Tallahassee. He said Escambia County sent a letter and resolution requesting renewal of the permit. Walker said Santa Rosa County can send a resolution as well.

Turpin discussed private and public artificial reef deployments and the risk Escambia County would incur if they took on the roll as the permit applicant. Dodrill said Santa Rosa County can apply for an artificial reef monitoring grant. Turpin said there is no monitoring of the last four or five reef deployments. Verlinde said some monitoring has been done but she has not received the information yet. Turpin discussed contracting out the monitoring services.

There was discussion regarding the artificial reef grant cycles and the request for bids. Marker said last year the Marine Advisory Committee approved Walter Marine's bid, and the contract was given to Artificial Reef Inc. He said Walter Marine has decided to withdraw any future bids with Santa Rosa County. Marker said he has concerns regarding the monitoring of the artificial reefs. He said he has not seen any monitoring data thus far and he has doubts as to whether any monitoring has taken place. Walker said the Marine Advisory Committee makes recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. He said the bids were the same amount, so the Board of County Commissioners chose to award the contract to Artificial Reef Inc. because they are domiciled in Santa Rosa County. There was further discussion regarding the bid process of grant projects and updating the Marine Advisory Committee on Board actions with regard to its recommendations.

Marker said there was discussion at a previous meeting regarding a Marine Resource Officer and he wants to pursue discussion. He said he will wait until a future meeting when all committee members are present to discuss several ideas. Walker said discussion regarding a Marine Resource Officer should take place in the next few months because the county budgeting process will start soon.

Turpin suggested Walker, Blaylock, and Verlinde look at reasonable opportunities for Santa Rosa County to follow through with a grant application in the 2007 cycle. Walker said Verlinde and Marsh can work on the grant application, and he will provide the information to the Marine Advisory Committee at the next meeting. There was further discussion with regard to contracting out an artificial reef monitoring project.

FY2005-06 Artificial Reef Deployment Specifications

Walker said the FY 2005-06 Artificial Reef Deployment proposals are due March 14, 2006. He said the committee members will receive the proposals for review prior the committee meeting. Johnson said under-graduate students from the University of West Florida may wish to monitor the deployed artificial reef structures for useful data.

Coastal Counties Restoration Grant Application

Walker said this is a partnership agreement between NACO and the National Fisheries. He said the county proposes to submit a $25,000.00 grant application for wetlands restoration around the Bagdad Mill Site. Verlinde said the application deadline is February 24, 2006.

Tuprin moved to pass a resolution in support of the Coastal Counties Restoration Grant application; Marker seconded, and the vote carried unanimously (3-0).

Archie Glover Boat Ramp Silting-in

Walker said Gibson requested this item be on the agenda. He said this concerns the area leaving Archie Glover Boat Ramp before you get into the channel. Walker said he felt the State of Florida did some dredging in this area after Hurricane Opal. Blaylock said he does not recommend pursuing any dredging until completion of the Interstate 10 bridge. Turpin suggested discussing this issue next month with Gibson present.

Marker requested an update on the road paving project to the Archie Glover Boat Ramp. Walker said he will get this information from Whitfield and email the committee members.

Discussion of 20 Year Waterway Public Access Strategic Plan

Turpin said he has developed an outline to be used as a tool to get the committee thinking about future goals (Attachment in File). He discussed in detail several waterway short term, medium term, and long term visions. Turpin said he can provide a Power Point Presentation at the next meeting. Marker said he felt another public input meeting should be scheduled to keep the committee moving in a positive direction.

Marker moved to add discussion regarding a Water Resource Manager on next month's agenda and Turpin seconded.

Marker moved to establish a public input meeting in April that will be publicly advertised and include invitations to Gulf Breeze and Milton officials.

Verlinde said the county received the most public input with the survey on waterway management. She said there were more than 200 responses. Verlinde said if the committee wants to have a town hall meeting she suggests having the meeting in May. Marker withdrew his motion regarding the April meeting. Verlinde said she can send the survey document to the committee members before the next meeting for review and recommendations. Marker said he wants to get specific public input during development of the 20 Year Waterway Public Access Strategic Plan. Walker said the previous survey targeted existing facilities and conditions. Johnson said he felt the committee should develop some general ideas of a strategic plan before the public input meeting is scheduled. Turpin agreed with Johnson. He requested each committee member provide ideas for the 20 year strategic plan at the next meeting.

Verlinde said she has information from the Florida Sea Grant on how to develop Boating and Waterways Management Plans. She said specialists are willing to come to Santa Rosa County and provide a workshop on how to develop a plan. Johnson asked Verlinde if a workshop can be scheduled in April or May. Verlinde said she will contact the specialists for additional information regarding a workshop.

Other Business/Adjournment

Johnson discussed a parcel of property located on Ward Basin Road that may be for sale. He said this parcel may be sufficient in size and good access for a public boat ramp. Blaylock said county staff can look at the property, but he felt the water is too shallow. Johnson said the site can possibly be used to launch canoes or kayaks.

Johnson discussed the University of West Florida's undergraduate grants program. He said these undergraduate students can be utilized to investigate reef materials, reef construction, and reef monitoring. Johnson said the University of West Florida has a wonderful Marine Department with access to resources. He said if the county should decide to create a Marine Officer position there will be applicants well associated with Santa Rosa County through these undergraduate studies.

Johnson discussed the county purchasing property to reestablish the waterway connection between Marquis Bayou and Marquis Basin. He said this property will be an ideal base of operations for a County Marine Resource Division. Johnson said the county can pool with the School Board for grants. He discussed advantages for Emergency Medical Services, the Sheriff's Department, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Johnson requested an update on the East River Boat Ramp and the Navarre Beach Boat Ramp. Blaylock said the Navarre Beach Boat Ramp is under repair with a projected completion date of March 1, 2006.

There was discussion regarding the hurricane damaged fishing pier. There was also discussion concerning the potential of utilizing the damaged west bound lane of the Interstate 10 bridge as a fishing pier.

The next scheduled meeting of the Marine Advisory Committee is Tuesday, March 7, 2006 at 5:00 p.m.

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