May 4, 2010
Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Chairman Jeff Marker and members Rick Harris, Pasco Gibson and Dan Wakley. John Griffing was absent. Also present were the County Administrator (Hunter Walker), Public Works Director (Avis Whitfield), County Engineer (Roger Blaylock), Marine Extension Agent (Chris Verlinde) and Kathy Jordan. Chairman Marker called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

The minutes of the March 2, 2010 meeting were approved.

STATUS REPORT FOR DEEPWATER HORIZON INCIDENT

Brad Baker briefed the Marine Advisory Committee about EOC operations and proposed plans for booming local waterways. He presented a map with booming priorities. (See attached.)

Mr. Walker outlined the procedure for operations of this event. He noted that the EOC was activated Thursday, April 28, 2010 simultaneously with the State of Florida's EOC activation at Level 2. The recovery operation for our area is being run by the Coast Guard out of a unified command headquartered in Mobile, Alabama. BP is responsible for the funding and the contractors and preventative measures. The contingency plan was put together by the Coast Guard and The Corp of Engineers and DEP. The map of sensitive areas was put together by them with some input from Santa Rosa County. On Saturday, Rick Harris and Pasco Gibson helped identify other sensitive areas which were submitted to the Coast Guard and DEP. There is no shield or preventative technology available. And this emergency response process is reversed to what is normal procedure. Hurricanes are considered local events for which the County is responsible for response and recovery. For this event, the County will work through the State of Florida's Emergency Management. They are a part of the unified command in Mobile. The County is trying to protect Santa Rosa County waterways to the extent possible with the resources available. The County is appreciative of any information given to us and your suggestions are forwarded to our Emergency Management and Engineering Departments.

Jeff Marker noted that the Boom the Bridges plan was suggested by him and local captains. It is designed as a backup in case of failure by the booming of the pass. He noted that some of the ideas being considered are more of a band aid especially since the booming material is not absorbent. There are absorbent booms available and this message needs to be sent to BP especially since they are not going to get out of their boats in Catfish Basin and clean up any oil. They will sink up to their armpits, get bitten by a snake or eaten by an alligator. Those are areas that an absorbent boom would be particularly effective as long as there is a method to take them out and dispose of them. Mr. Marker noted that if oil gets into the grasses it will kill everything including the grass, snail and crab. He noted that booming the bridges should be priority number one but other areas are being boomed because that is what the contractors are set up to do.

Brad Baker pointed out that there is an alternate plan that identifies East River and another choke point to be submitted to go up through the chains for consideration. He pointed out that booming material is limited and the strategy to clear the collections has to be in place. If you boom it you can't let all the oil stay behind it. It will eventually go behind it or over it so you have to be able to collect it in order for the plan to be effective. The booming strategy for the Coast Guard and DEP is to keep it out of the bay, not off the beaches. If it can be diverted east of the pass the sand can be cleaned. The focus is on the inlets more than the beach areas. There is a joint effort with Alabama and we support Escambia County's plan to keep it out of the passes.

Mr. Walker said that the County supports the bridge booming as back up especially the Bob Sikes and Three Mile but noted they will have to be tended.

Mr. Marker explained the concept of booming both sides of bridges thereby creating a calm water area under the bridges that can be skimmed.

Mr. Baker explained that it is not very likely that we will see crude oil because it will go through the emulsification process before it reaches us. We will likely see the sheening and tar balls. Booming is not really effective for what we are likely to see. And BP is applying dispersant subsurface now and their maps show that the process is effective. He noted that the County wants to do everything possible to protect our waters and if putting up booming is effective then it will be done but the oil product we are getting is not the heavy crude it is oil by-products. Tar balls are expected and can be collected with our cleaning devices.

Rick Harris asked how boat traffic will be handled if the bridges are boomed. Brad Baker responded that if that plan is implemented it will be handled by the Coast Guard along with decontamination of boats.

Mr. Wakley asked how many of the skimmer boats are available to Santa Rosa County. Brad Baker responded that he does not have a number but pointed out that the staging area for our County is part of the area recognized as the Pensacola/Escambia staging area.

Roger Blaylock advised that the Pensacola Pass Plan is double booming in a "V" formation from somewhere inland about where the Navy ball fields are located. They cannot do anything in the pass because of the surf and currents.

Mr. Wakley suggested that skimming should follow the tide line and they should use the concrete boat dock as the pooling place for skimming. Mr. Walker pointed out that Escambia County is considering that for part of their plan.

Jack Bonney noted that the bayous need to be protected and recommended double booming. Mr. Marker noted that Indian Bayou, Trout Bayou and Mulatt Bayou are considered necessary areas to be boomed.

Mr. Marker introduced Jim Jimenez, 4203 Crossman Drive, Milton. He stated that Mr. Jimenez is the president of the Emerald Coast Red Fish Club which is probably the largest independent fishing club in the area. Mr. Marker requested that Mr. Jimenez organize volunteers through his website. However, it was noted that volunteers should be organized through the County EOC who is working with unified command headquarters. Mr. Jimenez agreed to be the contact if needed to organize his group. He will meet with Brad Baker to set up the contact info.

Discussion continued about booming, booming material, where it can be ordered and tar balls and the consistency of tar balls.

Mr. Marker suggested that Rick Harris be designated as a Temporary Marine Specialist and have him on the water in a boat monitoring the situation for the county. He suggested that someone make a motion to that effect but after further discussion no action was taken.

PIER UPDATE

Roger Blaylock said the pier construction is on schedule and the ribbon cutting is scheduled for Saturday, June 5th at 9:00 a.m. There will be a news release with the information in late May.

Mr. Marker said that he heard that about 750 tons of rubble had been deployed to reef sites.

Mr. Blaylock noted that a manager has been selected for the pier and will be operating out of the pier store.

DERELICT VESSEL UPDATE

Bid requests for proposals to remove the two derelict vessels located at Shoreline and Navarre have been received. The bids for the sailboat at Shoreline were under $5,000 and the Symphonia was around $15,000. The Board will make a decision about awarding the bids at their meeting on May 27, 2010.

ARCHIE GLOVER DREDGING

The Archie Glover dredging contract was awarded to Deep and Wide Dredging. That project should be underway shortly.

BOATING SAFETY DAY UPDATE

Dan Wakley made a motion that the Boating Safety Day event be cancelled. Rick Harris seconded the motion and it was passed without objection.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting is scheduled for June 1, 2010 at 5:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.