

Marine Advisory Committee
July 7, 2009
Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Chairman Jeff Marker and members Rick Harris and Dan Wakley. Also present were the County Administrator (Hunter Walker), County Engineer (Roger Blaylock), Marine Extension Agent (Christine Verlinde), and Public Works Director (Avis Whitfield). Chairman Marker called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

The minutes of the May 5, 2009 meeting were approved.

GULF COAST KAYAK FISHING ASSOCIATION

Ferd Salomon of 3201 St. Andrews Dr., Pace, gave an overview of the functions of the Gulf Coast Kayak Fishing Association. He reported that they have about 136 Kayak Fishing members. Mr. Marker mentioned that one of the MAC concerns is Nearshore Reefs and kayakers using the gulf front in areas where power boaters are present. He mentioned boater safety. Mr. Salomon expressed that their association stresses boater safety and he gave an overview of their safety procedures and how they implement them. Mr. Wakley asked about float plans. Mr. Salomon said they do recommend them and it can be as simple as telling your family where you will be launching and where you are going. They also recommend that kayakers take a cell phone and not to go alone. He also stated that kayakers do not like to use boat ramps because they damage the bottoms of the kayaks. Mr. Wakley asked if they favor any specific launching place in Santa Rosa County and if there is anything the MAC can do to assist them. Mr. Salomon requested that Ted Gorder, Vice President of their association answer Mr. Wakley's question. Ted Gorder, 1114 Tiger Trace Blvd., Gulf Breeze responded that they do not like to launch from boat ramps but do need parking for their vehicles and trailers which are near the water or board walk in order to carry their kayaks over the berms. They also would like a reef within 3 miles of shore to fish. Mr. Wakley asked, since there are no reefs within 3 miles off shore of Santa Rosa beaches, if kayakers fish more from other counties. Mr. Gorder responded that they do fish a lot at the old Navarre pier site but that will not be possible with the new pier construction. Mr. Marker stated that we do not have zones off of Navarre Beach that are permissible. Mr. Gorder asked if we could apply for the permits. Mr. Marker said that he would check into it but noted that would not be a project that the MAC can use Boater Registration fees to fund. Mr. Gorder suggested a kayak fishing tournament to fund the project. Mr. Harris mentioned that kayakers do not pay a boat registration fee and it may not be appropriate to use registration fees to improve kayak launching areas. Mr. Salomon explained the issues and difficulties with registering kayaks. Discussion ensued on boating registration and fishing license fees. Mr. Marker restated that they would be hard pressed to use boater registration fees for kayak projects and he wished they could use those fees for artificial reefs but they are not allowed to use the money for reef projects and stated those are State issues. Mr. Salomon and Mr. Gorder summarized that they would be happy with some easy access areas that would keep them separate from boater launching areas and they need boat trailer parking spaces and with regard to off shore reefs they would do fund raisers if the County has an area that is permissible. General discussion continued about kayak safety. Mr. Wakley asked that they go by the Tourist Development Center and drop off information about their association and put something at Juana's and on other area bulletin board

CHAIRMAN / MEMBER ISSUES / REPORTS

Jeff Marker asked Chris Verlinde what we need to do with the Artificial Reef Plan. Ms. Verlinde replied that she had given them copies of the existing plan which can be modified and she also provided copies of the State of Florida's plan and Escambia County's Plan which was authored by Robert Turpin. She stated that our plan which has been around for a while needs some work and she will be happy to work on it using Mr. Turpin's plan as a reference along with some other good plans.

Mr. Marker stated the Nearshore Artificial Reef Deployment is complete and the GPS numbers are available at the reef site for Escambia County as well as the Fishing Forum.

STAFF UPDATES

Mr. Marker noted the current balance in the Boat Registration fee reserve is \$461,023.

Roger Blaylock stated we have our permit from DEP for the dredging of the Archie Glover channel but the Army CORPs of Engineers has not responded and we were advised not to call them for 3 months. Mr. Walker said there is no time frame for them to respond. Mr. Wakley asked if we have a time frame to use the funds. Mr. Blaylock said yes and an extension on the funding has already been requested and received.

Chris Verlinde gave an update on the oyster reef progress. She said DEP has started the surveying but the CORP permit is holding them up.

Hunter Walker updated the group on the Marquis Basin Wake Restriction signage. He stated that the Board approved the request and the County Attorney's office has contacted the FWC and they needed clarification on the distance between signage and are working with the County on that issue.

Ferd Salomon asked about kayak launching at Simpson River boat launch. Avis Whitfield explained that Water Management owns the property and Mr. Harris said Water Management put the pilings there because they were opposed to boat launching at that site. He is unsure how they feel about kayaks and Mr. Whitfield mentioned that Water Management would need to be contacted for permission. Mr. Walker noted that there was a time when the MAC directed kayakers to use that launch area and noted that the County built the ramp in partnership with Water Management. He stated that staff can check on the status of the launch and work on cleaning it up if they are in agreement.

Chris Verlinde said that she talked with the FWC about the Symphonia. It is on their priorities list but they ran out of money before they could get to it. She has checked on grant funding but it will be March before those funds may be available. The investigation has been completed but there are no funds available for removal. It has been declared derelict. Mr. Wakley asked if the County can do it. Mr. Walker stated that it is going to be a substantial project and will need to be contracted out. Mr.

Walker stated that the MAC would have to make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners and if authorized could seek proposals. Ms. Verlinde said there will be some permitting costs. Mr. Walker said we need to investigate the State doing it with their funds and, if necessary, work with the state authorizing up to an estimated amount of maybe \$50,000. Ms. Verlinde said she will call her contact and see how that would work. Mr. Wakley made a motion that County staff investigate options to remove the derelict vessel, Symphonia, and bring options back to the MAC. The motion was approved without objection. Ms. Verlinde noted that Officer Howard Jones has done a lot of work on the Symphonia issue and requested that the committee members offer their thanks if they see him.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Wakley mentioned that the shoreline fishing fee goes into effect August 1, 2009. The Governor has signed it into effect and Mr. Wakley requested that the County PIO get the word out to people so they are not surprised when FWC begins to enforce the requirement. Mr. Walker said that should come from the media outlets.

Mark Griffith of 6648 Castlewood St., Navarre said that the Marine Sanctuary Committee is moving forward on the permitting. He talked with Wetland Science and received some additional estimates on the expenses and there is some heavy funding ahead of them. They have a couple of good sites in mind and they will have packages ready by the end of July which will be in pdf format. The committee would like some public input before it goes to the County officially. They have submitted the Impact 100 Grant application and should have a site visit in August.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting is scheduled for August 4, 2009 at 5:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

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