Marine Advisory Committee
June 4, 2013
Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Jeff Marker, Rick Harris, and Pasco Gibson. Also present were the County Administrator, Hunter Walker; Chris Verlinde, Marine Extension Agent; Michael Schmidt, Assistant County Engineer and Avis Whitfield, Public Works Director. Chairman Jeff Marker called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

The minutes of the April 2, 2013 meeting were approved.

RESTORE ACT AND NATURAL RESOURCES DAMAGE ASSESSMENT (NRDA) UPDATE

Sheila Harris, Grants Coordinator for Santa Rosa County gave an update on NRDA funding and the Restore Act. One item specifically that she wanted to make the committee aware of is the $100 million allocated for early restoration projects in Florida through the NRDA funding. She said that of the $100 million approximately $69.4 had been announced in three phases with the descriptions of each phase listed in the packet distributed. She said that along with the description is the line share of the monies that have been estimated for the project. Ms. Harris explained that the state is currently drafting a plan which will include details on various projects and once it is ready, it will be put out for public comment. She added that there have been no projects specific to Santa Rosa County included in the announcements but we have been assured that all of our projects are still being considered for funding. Ms. Harris then referred to the colored chart in the packet which she said explains how the pots of funding were established. Ms. Harris said that the county has established a Restore Page and is currently accepting projects for consideration through the website. To date, 13 projects have been submitted.

Ms. Harris informed the committee that Atkins North American, Inc. had been selected to supplement the staff's effort in submitting projects and seeking funding. Mr. Walker stated that at next week's board meeting a contract will be presented to the County Commissioners for approval. He added that he would like representatives from Adkins attend a meeting of this committee in the near future since a lot of their focus will be on the environment, recreational fishing and the public use of the waterways. Mr. Gibson expressed concern that the funds for projects would not be divided up equally. Mr. Marker said that we need to stay involved and start a priority list of projects. Mr. Walker said he felt it would be best to think as broadly as we can and then as some point narrow down the list.

Ms. Harris reported that the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council had recently released their draft initial comprehensive plan. She said that they want to know if the criteria listed in the plan is valid and what would be the best way to set up an advisory committee. There was some discussion about the artificial reef creation and restoration and the oyster reef restoration and if there was any specific information as to the proximity to our shores. Ms. Harris said that no details had been shared at this time and we would have to wait until they release their draft plan which should be out late summer.

BOATING RESTRICTION REQUEST – MULAT BAYOU

Mr. Walker reported that a request was made by Pat Ross for a "No Wake" zone on Mulat Bayou specifically where the bayou takes an eastward bend. Mr. Walker distributed a map of the expanded look of the bayou. Mr. Whitfield stated that Mr. Ross' request was due to his concern about erosion on his dock and seawall. Mr. Whitfield said that he did not feel that his request would meet FWC's criteria for the establishment of a "No Wake" zone. He added that before FWC would consider his request, they would look at whether or not there was a potential for boating accidents in that area. Mr. Marker said if there are major safety issues then we need to give it some attention but to his knowledge there was not. He added that if there were more homeowners expressing the same concern, then it might need to be addressed. Mr. Harris agreed that he did not feel there is a need for it at this time. Mr. Gibson said that everyone that lives on the water can expect to have some erosion problems. Mr. Walker agreed that he didn't think FWC would approve this request but felt it should be turned over to this committee for review.

CHAIRMAN/MEMBER ISSUES

Mr. Gibson reported individuals swimming at Oyster Pile boat ramp in areas where there is a lot of boat traffic. Mr. Whitfield said there is a sign posted for swimmers not to block access to boaters. He added that this is an enforcement issue and people are not paying attention to the signs and he is not sure what else could be done from a Public Works standpoint. Mr. Harris suggested a small dock being constructed for swimmers at the end of Cross Street which dead ends at the river. Mr. Marker raised the issue of the county being held liable if someone got hurt and Mr. Walker said this had not been done by the county in the past for that reason. There was discussion about the new Bagdad Mill Site Park and Mr. Whitfield said that once it is constructed it might have the potential to draw some folks away from Oyster Pile boat ramp since there were some docks drawn into the design as well as other amenities.

Mr. Marker asked Ms. Verlinde if she had anything to report on grants. She said that she had not applied for the Artificial Reef Grant from the state because she had not received a response from her inquiry but that she would have it ready for next year. Mr. Walker said it will be interesting to see where the reefs will be located based on the NRDA list. Ms. Verlinde responded that several individuals had worked together and submitted it as a regional project through the NRDA process but at this point was uncertain as to what had been passed. She said that it will be announced in the draft plan. Mr. Harris informed the committee that on Thursday, June 13th the Nature Conservancy would be holding a meeting to discuss oyster restoration and other things they are proposing for this area.

PROJECTS / ISSUES UPDATE

Boater Registration Fees as of May 31, 2013 is $96,367.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting is scheduled for August 6, 2013 at 5:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee the meeting was adjourned at 5:40 p.m.