

**Gulf County RESTORE Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Summary
Gulf County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Port St. Joe, Florida
May 26, 2015, 1:00 p.m. (rescheduled from 11:30 a.m.)**

Attendees:

Jim Anderson- City Port St. Joe*

Warren Yeager – Gulf County Board of County Commissioner (BOCC) District 5*

Pat Hardman – Coastal Community Association (CCA)*

Guerry Magidson – Chamber of Commerce/ EDC*

Don Butler – County Administrator*

Mike Nelson – Gulf County GIS Coordinator/ Analyst

Lynn Lanier – Gulf County BOCC

Sherry Herring - Gulf County Clerk of the Court

Jessica Koelsch – National Wildlife Federation

Michelle Childs – Gulf County Economic Development Council

Christie McCleroy – Gulf County Economic Development Council

Cheryl Ulrich – Dewberry

Stella Wilson – Dewberry

Paul Johnson – Ecology & Environment, Inc.

* Denotes official RAC Member

- Following introductions of those present, Dewberry provided a PowerPoint (see attached) of today's agenda, the Dewberry Team, Multi-Year Implementation Plan (MYIP) process and schedule, needs assessment as next task, and homework for RAC members before next meeting.
- Due to delays in convening the RAC meeting caused by a BOCC meeting overrun, County staff recommended and group agreed that the next RAC meeting convene at 4:00 p.m., instead of 11:00 a.m., on the same date and in the same location as indicated for other RAC meetings in the presentation handout.
- Dewberry will assist the County in identifying its major goals and objectives for this program and how they can get the biggest bang for the buck in projects. Example – Economic/ Environmental Recovery/ jobs/ tourism/ schools/ more residents.
- Dewberry pointed out that once treasury approves County's MYIP, it becomes a "federally approved plan", which the County can then leverage and match additional funding sources for implementation.
- P. Hardman can provide studies that support that Cape San Blas (CSB) is the economic driver of the county – tourism/ construction/ new residents.
- P. Hardman expressed that CSB beach protection/ restoration projects should be viewed as infrastructure and can provide good science-based environmental/ economic/ tourism/ jobs benefits, but need recurring funds to maintain infrastructure once built, like "asphalt on a road".
- St. Joe Port has similar science-based environmental/ economic/ tourism/ jobs drivers and benefits.

- An example was given by J. Koelsch that living shoreline projects were recommended in Santa Rosa County MYIP that resulted in a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation-funded project, saving the County the dollars for other Pot 1 project funds.
- D. Butler stated that stormwater, drinking water, and septic to sewer projects are equally important to the County.
- W. Yeager noted that Florida Gulf Consortium will provide their Gulf-wide vision, goals, and objectives at next meeting in Pinellas County in August.
- The County may want to consider review and realignment of RAC committee members to ensure their continued interest and commitment, no Conflict of Interest, and representation of Gulf County's citizens and issues before getting into details of MYIP process and projects.
- M. Nelson, County GIS, is available to provide technical assistance.
- Dewberry to work with the County on a new website for RAC/ RESTORE and reported that HAAS Center to provide an specific market analysis for Gulf County.
- Dewberry requested that county, citizen groups, and other agencies to provide documents for consideration in Needs Assessment.
- D. Butler requested more information on what projects are eligible: septic to sewer, stormwater controls? Examples from other counties; would like to see projects that provide incentives to facilitate job growth.
- G. Magidson expressed the need for new, permanent County residents is the #1 priority; local jobs will follow.
- County staff expressed that projects should be financially stable after RESTORE dollars are gone.
- Some attendees expressed concern that focuses on just 172 people living on CSB; how can beach restoration be sustainable?
- W. Yeager and others felt the county has dead lakes, less sea grass, fewer scallops, and other environmental issues and environmentally sensitive areas; would like to see enhanced business development on inland waterways.
- Many present would like to see project selection criteria cover all four categories discussed: Environment, Economy, Infrastructure, and Community.
- Gulf County would like to be positioned as a "global player" regarding imports and exports with the development of the port; would like to see economic diversification and workforce training.
- Gulf County agreed they need to establish and maintain good relationships with state and federal agencies.
- Ecology of the bay and beaches is livelihood for many; need to find identity of county; transportation to jobs is a huge issue; would like for kids to stay in town and have a place to go to school and work.
- J. Koelsch would like to see implementation of The Nature Conservancy watershed plans and recommended projects; sea grass restoration, water quality restoration, repairs to failing septic systems.
- The County felt that drinking water and stormwater are equally important.
- General consensus seemed to be:
 - Need more money for stump hole repair; need new structure.
 - Artificial reefs are needed to help prevent erosion.
 - The Cape and the Port need to grow with higher paying jobs.
 - Need to build wealth and sustain existing wealth.
 - Permanent residents and local jobs are more important than tourism.

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- There is no longer an active master plan for Port St. Joe.
- Next meeting of RAC will be June 23, at same location, but at 4:00 p.m.
- Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.