

**GOMA Federal Working Group Call Notes**  
**8.28.14**

**Participants:**

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Todd Davison - NOAA  
Chip Groat – The Water Institute of the Gulf  
Ray Allen – Coastal Bays and Bends NEP  
Lee Trevenio-- Coastal Bays and Bends NEP  
Charlie Henry – NOAA DRC  
Kate Spear –USGS  
Heidi Stiller – NOAA  
Robin Burns – NOAA  
Chris Pease – FWS  
Chuck Wilson – GOMA/GoMRI  
John Bowie – EPA  
John Turpac – FWS  
Kristin Laursen – NOAA  
Patric Harper – FWS  
Kim Albins – NOAA  
Hank Hodde – NOAA  
Lakeshia Robertson – EPA  
Larry Handley - USGS  
Diane Howe – FEMA Region 6  
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Mike Minor – BOEM  
Becky Allee – NOAA  
Cheryl Brodnax - NOAA  
Amy Clark – NOAA  
Laura Bowie – GOMA  
Mike Carron – GOMA/GoMRI  
Dwayne Armstrong - NASA

**Agenda:**

**GOMA Updates by Laura Bowie**

- Upcoming conferences (more info coming in GOMA newsletter)
  - Bays and Bayous will be December 2-3, but abstracts are due tomorrow (Aug 29<sup>th</sup>).
  - Sea Grant Week is the week of September 7-12 in Clearwater Beach, FL.
  - Coastal Resilience Conference Oct 8-10 in Galveston.
  - Oct 20-23 in Illinois is Hypoxia Task Force Meeting.
  - RAE is in DC November 1-6.
  - GOMRI conference will be Feb 16-19 in Houston.
- Today, would like to highlight Resilience Team efforts to pursue a grant with Lowes to translate Homeowner's Handbook to Spanish and Vietnamese at least in MS (and maybe other states). The partnership with Lowes will provide discounts to homeowners who use the Handbook to improve their home.

## The Water Institute of the Gulf – Chip Groat

- Only been around for 2.5 years
- Not affiliated with agency or university but an independent 501c3.
- Also of note is that the Institute is a research org and intended to be applied research organization.
- Key partners and supporters include:
  - CPRA – Particularly interested in the Institute b/c it creates the capability in-house and partnerships with expertise needed to implement 2012 Plan and help create the 2017 MP.
  - Baton Rouge Area Foundation was interested in having this asset to create a marketable commodity to export expertise to other parts of world.
  - Mary Landrieu saw an opportunity for a hub of expertise that serves LA and the Gulf and international opportunities.
- Programs are binned by topical areas in which they cover. (See org chart slide)
  - Natural systems monitoring and modeling box is the largest one. It represents an emphasis in the program.
- Up to 40 people on staff.
- A couple of thematic focus areas to note:
  - Integration of Applied Research so that data plugs into policy and planning.
  - Knowledge to Action - Expect to take our knowledge (and others' knowledge) to turn it into something decision-makers can use. CRPRA depends on good applied info, for example.
  - Partnerships – This a critical theme. Have a made a point to bring into the program large numbers of people from universities, agencies and business, and NGOs. Communicate and involve all of these folks in the work we do.
- Linking knowledge to action: 90% of funding now comes from CPRA in the form of task orders related to the implementation of the Master Plan. (planning, monitoring and project development)
- Examples of Research Priorities
  - Have strong programs in support of MS River Hydro model, diversions too and lots of folks in the field gathering sediment info, cores, plants, etc. Determine how much sediment is available through the coast.
  - Looking to improve prediction of subsidence.
  - Fisheries is a priority. Would like to see landscape work consider relevance to fisheries.
  - Modeling is important to simulation land forms, processes and characteristics is key
  - Recently launched effort to ID opps for real-time forecasting for coastal conditions.
- MS River Hydro Model is partnership with the state and COE. 7 models were critical to 2012 MP. State wanted to see models continue to improve and be integrated. This involved basin-wide modeling, and the Institute has been partnering with Deltares on this.
- SWAMP (System Wide Assessment and Monitoring Program) – Have been tasked by state to look at monitoring infrastructure that exists and potential dual applications. Want coast-wide info so state can look at the health of the coast and develop a report card not only for project areas but the coast too. So looking at what data is needed to do this and what additional monitoring is required. Still in a thinking process on this. Looking to NFWF to help support.
- Research community does work that's critical to understanding the coast. We are charged to make it applicable and also innovative so that it can be used by CPRA. So run a research program, too.

- Human Dimensions Program
  - Ability to involve community interests, citizens, etc. where input is listened to and relates to their interests and make it part of a program is a real challenge. Trying to help CPRA recognize what needs to be added to the planning process to address this.
  - The Coastal Atlas is being developed to look at versatility, adaptability, movement over time of communities.
- Other Program Initiatives
  - Water, Law and Policy
    - Looking to add value to water resource challenges at the state level that may go beyond the states even, so looking at water law and policy. Identifying gaps in the technical base. There's a consortium on water , law and policy
  - ID info needed for effective management. Howe we value resource base and sustain it is key. Looking to ID info needs to make sure policy is based on good science.
  - Finding applied research needs for protection and risk reduction. This is a work in progress. Want to find expanded role for applied science in this area.
- Water Campus is coming soon! There's money to build. Will have an outreach center, offices, research space. Plans should soon be complete and groundbreaking should happen this fall.
- The Water Institute has been identified as the RESTORE COE in LA.
- For more info, visit [www.thewaterinstitutue.org](http://www.thewaterinstitutue.org)

#### Questions/Comments:

- Helps to understand what all the Water Institute is involved in.
- You talked a lot about work in LA. What are plans to work with other Gulf States?
  - We are relying on COE's and desire of people who are already engaged and using this as a way to engage. We have reached out to experts from other states to participate in expert panels but no formal collaboration mechanisms beyond this.
  - Maybe we (with Laura's help) can help link to resources in GOMA.

#### **Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program – Ray Allen**

- Based in Corpus Christi
- A local non-profit (501c3), established in 1999.
  - From 1994-1998 operated as part of state agency, but once plan was developed in 1999, we created the nonprofit for the NEP.
- Coastal Bend Bays Plan was developed in 1998. Includes 50 action items and 7 priorities to help move forward with implementation. Provided a chance to partner with locals
- CBEB Priorities
  - Public access/recreation
    - Trying to ID user needs for access to resources and look at ways to minimize impacts. Sometimes have people using 4-wheel vehicles in wetlands and sometimes just providing parking helps.
  - Environmental education and outreach
    - Sponsoring 8000-10000 students/year.
    - Able to get large numbers out to properties and introduce them to basic concepts. Educators do a good job of tying in activities to education standards.
  - Water quality

- We are a CWA Program. Partners at EPA are focused on water quality and habitat. Component about freshwater inflows. We are in the dry part of TX. Watershed is in the desert. Seem to be in continuous droughts. Managing water is crucial (monitoring water quality and managing freshwater inflows). Work with NOAA and TX GLO to accomplish this.
  - Fish and wildlife conservation
    - Program area goes from Aransas Wildlife Refuge to North of Corpus to Laguna Madre to the south. Lots of wildlife including endangered Whooping Crane. Have to work with private landowners to provide supplemental water for wildlife (e.g., cranes and ducks).
  - Maritime commerce
    - Corpus is a big port city. Barge traffic is increasing. Lots of dredging and management of waterways. Talking about beneficial use of dredge materials and thinking of it as an asset. Port of Corpus Christi is an important partner. They provide funding for the program.
  - Monitoring and research
    - Network system working with state and federal agencies tasked with monitoring as part of day to day activities. NEP tries to fill data gaps that are important for assessing health of bays. If there are problem areas that require additional data, we engage in this, too.
    - Some species fall outside of range of being monitored (e.g., diamondback terrapin). Working hard to understand population dynamics and whether it's stable, growing or declining.
    - Also doing seagrass work.
  - Habitat protection and restoration
    - Staff of 12 and a lot of what they do is manage projects with partners and contractors.
    - May have 25-45 projects underway at any time. Trying to do habitat protection and restoration where we can.
    - Working with TNC on oyster reef restoration. Restoring this habitat has good economic benefits.
- Nueces Bay Restoration Project
  - Historically, islands here used to support lots of birds. Used to be 50+; now there are only 5 islands. Found \$\$ in 2004/2005 to help with restoration. Thousands of birds use this site for nesting. Populations are rebounding. Focus is to restore and manage nesting habitats.
- Matagorda Island Marsh Restoration
  - Aransas National Wildlife Refuge
  - 15000 acre marsh complex.
  - Landowners had built a series of levees to keep saltwater out and essentially drying out wetlands. NEP partnered with FWS and found money to develop a strategic plan to ID places to go in and breach levees and restore and improve hydrology.
- Egery Flats Marsh Restoration Project
  - Close to Aransas River. 300 acre marsh complex that over time due to road construction had impaired water flows. Documented loss of emergent marsh habitat. Did a feasibility study and found water quality wasn't what was needed to sustain emergent marsh habitat. Turned into a highway culvert project to improve water circulation. Partnering with TXDOT. Looking for RESTORE or NFWF funding to do this work.

- Nueces Bay Marsh Restoration
  - Lost lots of marsh habitat in this area over time. Did design, engineering and permitting work to restore 180 acres of the 300 acre marsh complex. EPA and NOAA funding contributed to this work. Also FWS stimulus funds.
- Nueces River Delta Shoreline Protection Work
- Acquisition for Conservation
  - Hadn't anticipated this opportunity initially.
  - Acquiring 10-11000 acres.
  - Good opportunities for research and mangemet
  - Acquireing lands from willing sellers has been a challenge but there are lots of good benefits
  - NAWCA helped fund. Looking for NRDA funds as well.
- Funding for work comes from EPA and TCEQ are major funders.. Lots of local commitment from the cities and counties. Also compete for grants. Always have a good list of projects for funding.

Questions:

- Noticed you have good public participation for projects. All speak to local resilience. Does this resonate with your partners?
  - Yes with partners, but less so with local officials and general population. Sense there's a commitment to maintaining healthy and productive systems. It's hard to talk to people about climate change but easier to talk about SLR. Have to choose terms carefully.