

## Alabama Waterfront Access Study Committee

June 2, 2009  
Main Dining Room  
International Trade Club  
Mobile, Alabama

### Minutes

Attendees: Ahmad Ijaz, Samuel Addy, Brett Dungan, B.G. Thompson, Cline Jones, Will Brantley for Barnett Lawley, James Lyons, Rep. Steve McMillan, Stephanie Showalter, Mary Thompson, Tina Sanchez, Jessica James Boyle, Bradley Hiatt, Melissa Schnieder, Steve Sempier, PJ Waters, Bill Walton, Wanda Sandagger, Courtney Coddington, Brian Fredieu, Meg Goecker, Mike Voiland, Tracy Redding, Neil Johnston, Dr. LaDon Swann, Christian Miller, Marie Dyson, Jody Thompson

Chairman LaDon Swann convened the meeting at 10:00 am. Dr. Swann presented a summary of the recently-introduced HR 2548 “Keep America’s Waterfronts Working Act of 2009.” If passed, this Bill would create a Federal program which would provide grant funding for working waterfront land acquisition to states with an approved waterfront management plan. B.G. Thompson asked if safe harbors would be included. There is no mention of safe harbors as an eligible acquisition.

Chairman Swann led the group in a discussion of a definition of working waterfront. The Committee was presented with definitions used in other states, as well as the definition used by the Alabama Working Waterfront Coalition. Though it was agreed that a definition must be determined, the discussion was tabled until a later time.

Mike Voiland of the North Carolina Sea Grant presented the history and achievements of the North Carolina Waterfront Access Study Committee. The North Carolina Committee delivered a report of recommendations to the North Carolina General Assembly in April 2007. The General Assembly adopted some of the recommendations, and put into place, including the creation of the Waterfront Access and Marine Industry (WAMI) Fund, which provided \$20 million in funds to acquire working waterfront properties.

LaDon Swann presented two video oral histories of the working waterfront of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Stephanie Showalter, director of the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Legal Program, delivered an overview of the Legal Program and how it can assist the Committee. The Legal Program provides non-biased legal research and information. The Legal Program will review the final recommendations to the Legislature and fulfill any specific research requests.

LaDon Swann presented the Committee with suggested recommendations discussed at prior meetings and programs that exist in other states’ waterfront access programs. A discussion was led, and the Committee made the following draft recommendations.

The State of Alabama should:

#### Planning/Zoning Issues

- Complete a Comprehensive Working Waterfront plan, as defined in the “Keep America’s Waterfronts Working Act of 2009” [HR2548] to be eligible for funding if implemented by Congress.
- Create a waterfront access program, similar to the Waterfronts Florida Partnership, to assist Regional Planning Commissions and municipalities in incorporating working waterfront and water access issues into comprehensive planning, and the implementation of those plans.
- Craft standardized sample working waterfront planning language, such as overlay zones, historic districts, etc. to be used by municipalities in existing planning.
- Encourage the use of business improvement districts, industrial parks and transfer of development rights for water access areas.

#### Financial Incentive Issues

- Implement a “suite of tax options” – this needs to be better defined.
- Seek unique methods of funding waterfront access conservation, such as increased boat registration or fishing license fees.

#### Economic Issues

- Conduct a statewide economic inventory of working waterfronts and waterfront access, with factors including: tonnage shipped, nature-based and heritage-based tourism, transient boating business, job creation and retention, sociological and geographical data, and GIS mapping, and should capture the loss of opportunities due to land use changes. Update this inventory every ten years.

#### Infrastructure Issues

- Encourage increased funding for US Army Corps of Engineers dredging projects, specifically waterbodies not on the regular schedule.
- Encourage the exploration beneficial use of dredge material for waterfront access.
- Encourage the adaption of tonnage reporting to better reflect economic values of shipping on waterways.

#### Education and Outreach Issues

- Create a standard definition of working waterfronts for the State of Alabama.

- Define “public access” (following Coastal Zone program definition?)

These draft definitions will be emailed to the Committee for discussion and approval. Over the next six months, three public meetings will be held across the state to gather comments on the draft report of recommendations. Comments will be submitted to the Committee, and the report of recommendations will be submitted to the Legislature, once approved by the committee, during the 2010 Legislative session. The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 pm.

All presentations, supporting documents, reports, and presentations are available at:  
<http://masgc.org/wwf>