



Southwest FL Oyster Working Group
April 13, 2015 from 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm
Laishley Park Community Room, 120 Laishley Ct, Punta Gorda, FL

This meeting will be **available remotely** through WebEx by clicking on this link: [Join WebEx meeting](#)
(OR go to <https://puntagorda.webex.com> & under Browse Meetings, Search for CHNEP)

Please RSVP for the meeting at: <http://doodle.com/kvh4534en8vib4kw>

Meeting Purpose: To review the CHNEP Priority Oyster Restoration Sites & Rankings developed by the Southwest FL Oyster Working Group Subcommittee, which will be used to seek funding & permits.

Attachments:

- Excel table of Priority Oyster Restoration Sites & Rankings developed by the Southwest FL Oyster Working Group (SWFOWG) Subcommittee during its recent meetings (May 8, 2015, Oct. 10, 2015, Jan. 14, 2015 & Feb. 19, 2015) & field visits (Oct. 2014 – Jan. 2015).
- KMZ file of Priority Oyster Restoration Sites & Rankings to be viewed with Google Earth (click on icon below):



OystRestMar2015.kmz

- Maps of Priority Oyster Restoration Sites & Rankings are available on CHNEP FTP site at:
Address: <ftp://ftp.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us>
User Name: chnep
Password: Beach Party777
Folder: SW FL Oyster Working Group 2015 04 13

Agenda

1. Welcome, Introductions & Meeting Purpose – Judy Ott, CHNEP
2. How Priority Oyster Restoration Sites were Identified & Ranked by SWFOWG Subcommittee – Jaime Howell, Jaime Boswell LLC & Judy Ott, CHNEP
3. Summary of Priority Oyster Restoration Sites, Rankings, Objectives & Methods – Laura Geselbracht, TNC
4. Discussion of Priority Oyster Restoration Site Potential Partners & Funding – SWFOWG Participants & Anne Birch, TNC & Judy Ott
5. How Priority Oyster Restoration Site List & Rankings will be Used to Initiate Permitting – Andrea Graves, TNC
6. Next Steps – SWFOWG Participants & Judy Ott, CHNEP
7. Adjourn – Judy Ott, CHNEP

THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Two or more members of the Everglades West & Caloosahatchee Basin Working Groups, Peace River Basin Management Advisory Committee, Peace River Basin Management Working Group, or Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council may be in attendance, & may discuss matters that could come before the respective body.

SWFOWG Subcommittee Priority Oyster Restoration Site Identification and Ranking Process Summary for TAC July 16, 2015

December 10, 2012 – The CHNEP Oyster Habitat Restoration Plan was approved by CHNEP Management Conference:

- The CHNEP Oyster Habitat Restoration Plan was developed with assistance from TNC and the Southwest FL Oyster Working Group (SWFOWG).
- The Plan includes maps produced from the Oyster Habitat Restoration Suitability Model (RSM) which identify areas within the CHNEP most suitable for successful oyster habitat restoration.
- The goal of the Plan is to enhance and restore self-sustaining oyster habitat and related ecosystem services throughout the estuaries and tidal rivers and creeks within the CHNEP.
- Because of lack of historical oyster distribution data, and based on current understanding, the appropriate oyster restoration vision for CHNEP is to attain a range of 1,000 – 6,000 acres of total oyster habitat within the study area.
- The short term actions needed to attain the long term restoration included in the Plan are:
 - > Map oyster habitats by type within the CHNEP estuaries by 2020.
 - > Design, implement and monitor the success of pilot oyster restoration projects in a variety of habitats in 50% of the CHNEP estuaries by 2020.
 - > Increase public awareness of ecosystem value of native oyster habitats by including community stewardship components in each oyster restoration project.
 - > Assist partners in seeking state, federal and organizational funding opportunities to support oyster habitat restoration projects.
- The RSM and Plan identified greater than 42,000 acres as 80-100% suitable for restoration, which is about 19% of the estuarine portion of the CHNEP.

Following adoption of the CHNEP Oyster Habitat Restoration Plan, a subcommittee of the SWFOWG worked together to identify and prioritize potential oyster restoration sites throughout the CHNEP study area by conducting field visits and reviewing data.

May 8, 2014 – The SWFOWG Subcommittee met to review the RSM maps and narrow potential restoration regions based on additional data and local knowledge:

- The subcommittee reviewed the RSM maps and identified areas modeled as high restoration suitability that, based on local knowledge, are not currently suitable for successful restoration. Examples of unsuitable areas included: a) where hydrologic restoration is needed (Dona and Roberts Bay, Matlacha pass near spreader canal outlet, Caloosahatchee River), b) areas that are too exposed to weather and anthropogenic affects (e.g. Boca Grande Pass), and c) other areas where water quality, current or navigation conflicts would limit restoration sustainability.
- Each subcommittee participant also chose three general locations that they would prioritize for restoration by placing dots on the maps, and provided reasons to support the suggested locations. Examples of reasons for selecting specific locations included: a) restore and enhance oysters and dependent species habitat, b) improve water quality and water clarity, c) reduce sedimentation and erosion, d) enhance coastal resilience to sea level rise and climate change, and e) protect state managed lands.
- The subcommittee identified a total of 31 sites and general areas throughout the CHNEP region potential most suitable for successful oyster restoration.

October 30, 2014 – The SWFOWG Subcommittee met to review the recommendations from May meeting in greater detail and rank each site as High, Medium and Low priority:

- One of the main considerations in ranking was if the sites were located in areas where shellfish harvesting may be allowed. These areas, although they may be highly suitable for restoration, were considered a low priority due to the risk of harvesting reducing the benefits of the restoration. These areas may be a high priority if one of the primary purposes was to enhance shellfish harvest.
- The subcommittee identified a total of 38 potential restoration sites, including 22 high priority, 4 medium priority, and 12 low priority sites.
- Subcommittee members volunteered to conduct site visits of the potential restoration sites.
- A list of basic parameters for the field visits was identified and a field data sheet was developed and used by subcommittee members during the field visits.

January 14, 2015 – The SWFOWG Subcommittee met to review the site visit information and rank remaining sites as High Medium or Low priority:

- Subcommittee members review and discussed the additional information from provided from the site visits.
- The sites were prioritized based on a number of considerations, including: a) space availability, b) seagrass presence, c) likelihood to succeed based on environmental characteristics, d) sediment type and depth, e) presence of live oysters near the site, and f) potential benefits of the project to local resources.
- Some of the larger regions previously identified were broken down into a number of more specific sites.
- The subcommittee identified a total of 91 potential restoration sites, including 21 high, 12 medium, 25 low, 5 omitted, and 28 undecided.
- Over the next month additional information was gathered by subcommittee members.

February 19, 2015 – The SWFOWG Subcommittee met to review additional information and site rankings:

- Subcommittee members reviewed additional information.
- Additional potential new locations under piers and bridges were discussed.
- The subcommittee identified a total of 53 sites totaling 28 acres within 11 estuary strata, including 25 high priority (16 acres), 9 medium priority (2 acres), 21 low priority (10 acres), 3 reference and 25 omitted sites.

April 13, 2015 – The full SWFOWG met to review the priority restoration sites and rankings from the Subcommittee and provide additional information:

- Committee members received a summary of the process used by the subcommittee to identify and prioritize potential oyster restoration sites.
- Committee members provided additional local knowledge about the potential sites.
- Committee members also added details to the potential objectives, methods and partners for each of the sites.
- Committee members reviewed the suggested rankings and added order of importance to the High priority sites.
- The Committee identified a total of 53 sites totaling 28 acres within 11 estuary strata, including 25 high priority (16 acres), 9 medium priority (2 acres), 21 low priority (10 acres), 3 reference and 25 omitted sites.

Next Steps:

- Share map and list of CHNEP priority oyster restoration sites with the TAC at July 16, 2015 meeting.
- Seek partnerships from TAC to actively seek funding in coming months.
- Work together to identify and apply for potential funding sources for oyster restoration and mapping.
- Continue meeting with SWFOWG to seek regional and project specific permits for oyster restoration and keep oyster restoration moving forward.

Priority Oyster Restoration Sites & Rankings from SWFOWG Full Committee April 13, 2015 CHNEP All Estuaries

