January 8, 2008
Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Chairman Jeff Marker, Vice Chairman Rick Harris, Matt Hewatt, Pasco Gibson, and Billy Kimbrough. Also present were the County Administrator (Hunter Walker), County Engineer (Roger Blaylock), and Public Works Director (Avis Whitfield). Chairman Marker called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Harris moved approval of the minutes from the November 6, 2007 meeting; Hewatt seconded, and the vote carried unanimously. (5-0)

Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman for 2008

Marker said the chairman and vice-chairman for 2008 were voted on at a previous meeting.

Archie Glover Boat Ramp Area

Pamela White said she has a boat with a 6" draft. She said her boat has been stuck in the pass 3 times since the Interstate 10 Bridge work began because of dirt kicked back by bridge work. White said she has been given many reasons why the pass can not be fixed. She said the extra sand in the pass is killing sea life. White said she wants to know why this problem is not being fixed. She said the pass needs to be dredged to 3 or 4 feet at low tide. White said she is grateful the Interstate 10 Bridge is completed but said it is now time to fix the pass. Marker asked if White has witnessed sand being churned up by bridge work. White said she has physically seen dirt and filth coming into the canal when the pounding work from the bridge was taking place. She said she has also witnessed oil draining into the water from the bridge worker's boats at Archie Glover Boat Ramp. White said the pollution is getting heavy. She said the alligators typically seen in the area are missing and she believes it is due to the pollution.

John Dawson said he contacted the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) when he started noticing there were no longer any fish or dolphin in Mulat Bayou and bait fish numbers were severely diminished. He said he received data from the EPA concerning Mulat Bayou dating fromthe 1970s to 1995. Dawson said the EPA stated they will be collecting data from the bayou again in approximately 5 years. He said he contacted the Interstate 10 Bridge contractor about the sediment problem. Dawson said he was told the pile driving being done to construct the bridge does not move sediment; therefore, the problem is not caused by the bridge work. He said he can not get his boat out through the pass, but his main concern is the lack of flushing. Dawson said dredging is needed. He said it is clearly visible at low tide that the channel is almost completely silted in and flushing is extremely down. Dawson said he received instructions from the EPA on how to gather data from Mulat Bayou. He discussed the process and the results. Dawson said he is worried about sea life more than not being able to get his boat out. He said Mulat Bayou is dying, and the County needs to do something before it is too late.

Harris asked Dawson to suggest somewhere the pumped out silt can be placed. Dawson discussed several places he felt silt can be placed. He said dredging needs to be done, and it needs to be done right to limit the number of fish killed. Dawson said he knows there is no easy answer to this problem, but said he is willing to work with anyone who will help resolve this issue. He asked the cost to dredge the channel. Blaylock said between $200,000.00 and $300,000.00. Marker said the Marine Advisory Committee felt the bridge work is partly responsible for this problem. He asked Dawson for copies of the data that was collected from Mulat Bayou.

Ferdinand Espiau said he is seeing a decrease in sea life. He asked ifMulat Bayou is classified as a navigable waterway and if there are navigable waterway access rules. Blaylock said he is not aware of any navigable waterway rules that apply to Mulat Bayou. He said the only way the County can dredge a pass in any county bayou is if there is an existing man made channel.

Blaylock said the only reason the County was able to dredge the channel ten years ago is because the original channel was cut when the Interstate 10 Bridge was built. He said only the existing channel can be dredged; otherwise, there will be environmentalopposition. Espiau said it is very challenging to get through the channel. Marker said the County will have to work within permitting guidelines and find funds forthis dredging project.

Blaylock said rules and regulations have changed since the channel was last dredged. He said the dredging is possible but will not be easy. Blaylock said the dredged material can not be returned to the water. He said the material must be impounded and filtered leaving only clean return water. Blaylock said most channel dredging projects are funded through MSBUs. He said the cost to dredge the Mulat Bayou channel is high because of the additional cost to transport the sediment material to a different location. Blaylock said the sediment can not be placed in any of the places suggested by Dawson because those sites are protected wetlands. Espiau said if something is not done to correct this problem soon, the bayou will die and there will be no wetlands to protect.

Walker said the State is responsible for state waters. He said this channel has been shoaling in for a while and has had navigation problems for the last 6 or 7 years. Walker said the Marine Advisory Committee has asked the Board of County Commissioners to look at this problem several times in the past. He said the County does not have control over this matter, the State of Florida does. Espiau asked if the County has to initiate the process to set up a permit for dredging. Blaylock said the County would be the applicant. There was discussion on who has the authority to begin the dredging process. Marker said the State has the final decision on whether the channel can be dredged. Blaylock said the County does not maintain the Mulat Bayou channel. He said the previous dredging of the channel was a decision made by the Board of County Commissioners at that time. Espiau asked if the County can take over maintenance of the channel. Marker said he felt the County will not want to take on the responsibility of maintaining state waters. Espiau asked if the fact that sea life in Mulat Bayou is dying can be brought before the State. Marker said yes. He said anyone can contact the State about state water issues. Harris asked all concerned citizens to contact the Board of County Commissioners, the State, and the DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) about this problem. Gibson said citizens may have a problem getting DEP's help because the channel is not the natural flushing of Mulat Bayou. He discussed the natural flushing of Mulat Bayou.

Sam "Skip" Moudry said the channel was dredged more recently than 10 years ago. He said the Interstate 10 Bridge is built on top of the old channel. Moudry said the filling in of the channel since the bridge construction began is evident by the fact crew boats can no longer go straight through the pass like they did when the construction first began. He said the bridge construction

company does not care about this problem because they will be leaving when the bridge is completed. Moudry said someone has to take responsibility in order for a solution to get started. He asked what the next step is to get this problem fixed. Marker said the Marine Advisory Committee has tried to move forward to solve this problem but has not been successful. He said the committee has contacted the bridge contractor to see if they will take responsibility, but the bridge contractor said the bridge work did not cause the problem. Whitfield said FDOT (Florida Department of Transportation) was contacted about this issue. He said FDOT stated nothing is in the bridge contract that requires the bridge contractor to do any dredging; therefore, the bridge contractor is not going to pay to dredge the channel. Moudry asked if FDOT is responsible. Whitfield said the County needs absolute proof the problem was caused by the bridge work. He said the County has no proof. Moudry asked what the next step to move forward to a solution is if there is no proof and no responsibility determined. Marker said he is not sure of the next step. He said he felt there is some liability if the bridge was built across the channel. Moudry asked who knows the next step if the Marine Advisory Committee does not know. Marker said citizens showing up and voicing their concerns to the Marine Advisory Committee gives the committee the proof that there is an issue. Moudry asked how citizens get the Board of County Commissioners to help. Marker said the Marine Advisory Committee can bring this issue before the Board of County Commissioners, but every concerned citizenalso needs to contact his or her commissioner about this problem.

Walker said the next action is for the Board of County Commissioners to direct staff to do a study on the feasibility of dredging, determine what can actually be dredged, and the cost of the project. Blaylock said the Board of County Commissioners is going to want to know how this project is going to be funded. White asked why the fine placed on the bridge contractor can not be used for the dredging. Blaylock said the fines were not levied by Santa Rosa County. Walker said the contractor works for the State of Florida and the money from the fine went to the State.

Marianne Richardson asked who built the Archie Glover Boat Ramp and the Mulat Bayou channel. Blaylock discussed how the Mulat Bayou channel was formed and paid for with State funds. Richardson asked who maintains the Archie Glover Boat Ramp. Blaylock said the County. Richardson asked if the County can apply for a federal grant for dredging. Walker said the County has looked for grants for dredging but has not beenable to locateany.

Dwight Gobeli said he believes Santa Rosa County Search and Rescue launch their boats from Archie Glover Boat Ramp. He said no one is going to be able to launch from Archie Glover Boat Ramp if something is not done soon. Gobeli discussed the problem with getting boats out through the channel. He said a seawall needs to be installed if the channel is dredged to prevent filling in of the channel in the future. Harris said a seawall or a rock jetty is a good idea but the cost will be high.

Marker suggested the citizens in the audience contact their county commissioners and voice their concerns about the channel before the bridge work is completed and the contractor leaves.

Kenneth Schepper said he spoke with Commissioner Stewart about this problem several times. He said he was under the impression the channel is suppose to be dredged when the bridge work is complete. Schepper said he was told there were funds set aside in Parks and Recreation for dredging the channel. He said he felt like he was misled. Schepper asked if a petition will help and who the petition needs to be sent to in order for something to be done. Walker said a petition can be given to him, and he will forward it to the Board of County Commissioners. He said the County can do an assessment to determine what can be done, what can be permitted, anticipated cost, and possible funding sources. Walker said he will speak with the County Attorney about this problem.

Marker said he contacted Commissioner Stewart about this problem six months ago. He said he informed Commissioner Stewart that there were concerns about the bridge work causing damage in the channel and at the Archie Glover Boat Ramp. Marker said he wants the bridge contractor to take care of any damage the bridge work has caused. He asked when the Interstate 10 Bridge will be completed, and if there are plans to repair damage at the Archie Glover Boat Ramp. Whitfield said the bridge workers only used the west ramp at Archie Glover Boat Ramp. He said the boat ramp is in poor shape, but it was getting in poor shape before the bridge work started. Whitfield said rebuilding the west ramp was already anticipated, but it was delayed until the bridge work is completed. He said the west ramp can be rebuilt for minimal cost. Espiau asked if a study can be authorized by the Board of County Commissioners to see if damage tothe channel was caused by bridge work. Marker said the process starts with citizens contacting their commissioners. Walker said he felt proving the bridge work caused damage will be difficult because there is no base line for comparison.

White said the State has received money from fines imposed every time the Interstate 10 Bridge workers dumped debris in Pensacola Bay. She said citizens feel like this issue is a lost cause because no one is listening. White asked why nothing is being done and why no one seems to know who can fix the problem. She said she felt the County Commissioners are not unified on park issues. White said the Archie Glover Boat Ramp is a park and she wants to know how to get it fixed so Santa Rosa County citizens can use it. Marker said he knows citizens are frustrated about this problem. He said citizens voicing their concerns about this problem give the Marine Advisory Committee empowerment to bring this issue to the Board of County Commissioners. Marker said this is an ongoing problem and citizen support can help with finding a solution. He said money is the biggest barrier withgetting this problem solved.

Harris asked the citizens in the audience to avoid getting frustrated to the point they stop trying to get this problem fixed. He said the only way to solve this problem is to be persistent in their fight to get the channel dredged. Harris said he felt the only way this problem will be solved is for Santa Rosa County citizens to contact everybody they can think of that might be able to help with this situation. Marker thanked the citizens in the audience for their concern and drive to help solve this problem.

<u>Boat Ramp Fee</u>

Harris said he contacted Paul Hinson about getting a list of county tax collectors and parks departments in Florida. He said he has not received a response. Harris said he wants to compile data from other counties on how they operate.

Marker said he was in support of boat ramp fees, but he is not sure boat ramp fees are a good idea anymore. He said implementing boat ramp fees is a long process, and he felt property values will escalate faster than funds can be generated to purchase land. Marker said he spoke with Robert Turpin to find out how Escambia County generated over $4 million to use for boat ramps and land acquisition. He said Turpin stated the funds came from Escambia County's local option sales tax. Marker said he is hesitant to impose any type of fee at the present time due to current budget constraints and property tax issues. Harris said he wants to continue gathering information and compiling ideas of what may be able to be done in the future.

<u>Chairman Issues</u>

Marker said he spoke with Turpin about issues concerning reef deployment grants. He said the LAARs (Large Area Artificial Reefs) area has been an issue lately with local fishermen and charter boat captains concerning deploying reefs and regulations. Marker said new requirements for permitting to deploy reefs were received and they are basically prohibitive. He said the requirements are to the point that it will effectively bring individual deployment to a stop and make it extremely difficult for counties to find materials and meet qualifications to make reef deployments within the permit guidelines. Marker said the county needs to voice its concern that reefs will no longer be able to be deployed. He said there will not be enough money or time to make reef deployment possible. Harris said the Oriskany does not qualify under these new guidelines. Marker said the reef deployment requirements need to be re-examined to find a more sensible alternative.

Staff Updates

Walker said Christina Verlinde is out sick. He said Verlinde talked with Amy Baldwin, the new Eco System Restoration person at the DEP, about working on oyster restoration between White Point and Garcon Point. Walker said Verlinde is trying to get with the Department of Agriculture to discuss the placement locations and materials associated with oyster reefs.

Walker asked Harris if he would mind calling Mr. Fowler with the Redfish Tour Inshore Fishing Association about the use of the Navarre Boat Ramp for a fishing tournament. He said he is not sure exactly what Mr. Fowler is wanting. Harris said he will call Mr. Fowler. He said the Redfish Tour Inshore Fishing Association wants to have a redfish tournament using the Navarre Boat Ramp. Harris said the tournament will involve a large number of boats. He said a fishing tournament can be a great economic value to the area, but it will take parking spaces away from local fishermen that use the boat ramp. Harris said the proposed date for the tournament is June 21st , and June is the beginning of prime time for use of the Navarre Boat Ramp. Blaylock discussed the type of organizations that typically request use of the Navarre Boat Ramp parking lot. Harris said the fishing tournament will need a place to set up to weigh in fish. He said it may be possible to use the State Park area or somewhere else close by for weighing in the fish. Hewatt said Sailor's Grill and Juana's Pagoda Grill are right by the Navarre Boat Ramp, and they re familiar with hosting large events. He said their beachfront may be available for use for a fishing tournament. Hewatt said a fishing tournament on a Saturday will not affect tourist staying at the beach because Saturdays are changeover days (guest leave at 10:00 a.m. and new guest arrive at 4:00 p.m.). Blaylock said a Saturday fishing tournament will affect local fishermen that use the Navarre Boat Ramp. Hewatt said events take place all the time and people deal with the temporary inconvenience. He said some local fishermen may want to participate in the tournament. Gibson said there is a convenient boat ramp and sufficient parking by Juana's Pagoda Grill. He said he felt the Redfish Tour Inshore Fishing Association needs to be directed toward using Juana's Pagoda Grill for a weigh in area for the tournament. Marker said he felt this is a great idea, and he wants to see what opportunities are possible for this event. Walker asked Harris to work out logistics with the Redfish Inshore Fishing Association. Marker said the fishing tournament is a good economic event. Walker said the Navarre Chamber of Commerce and the Tourist Development Council may be interested in this event. There was discussion on using the Navarre Park on the soundside for a weigh in area. Marker said tournament participants will not be an inconvenience in the parking area. He said the participants will launch very early in the morning and will not return until close to the deadline time late in the afternoon. Marker said parking may be the only issue.

Other Business

Harris said he spoke with Amy Baldwin about getting together to talk about the oyster restoration business. He said Baldwin indicated that all grants require matching funds. Harris said Baldwin also indicated DEP may be able to help with a portion of the match and with some of the work. He said he would like to meet with Gibson, Baldwin, and Verlinde to discuss possibilities for oyster restoration. Harris said Baldwin spoke positively about doing oyster restoration projects.

Adjournment

The next scheduled meeting of the Marine Advisory Committee will be on Tuesday, February 5, 2008 at 5:00 p.m.

There being no further business to come before the Marine Advisory Committee, the meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.