April 8, 2008
Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Chairman Jeff Marker, Rick Harris, and Matt Hewatt. Also present were the County
Administrator (Hunter Walker), County Engineer (Roger Blaylock), and Marine Extension Agent (Christina Verlinde). Chairman Marker called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

Harris moved approval of the minutes from the February 5, 2008 meeting; Hewatt seconded, and the vote carried unanimously. (3-0)

Navarre Beach Pier Update

Blaylock said the new pier will go out for bid this summer. He said things are progressing on permitting. Blaylock said staff is in the process of going through prequalifications and determining whether contractors need to be prequalified. He said the pier is an expensive project and staff wants to make sure people have the capabilities (both experience and financial capabilities) to complete the project. Blaylock said the current permit is set up to allow work to possibly begin after turtle season this year. He said funding from FEMA is based on the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) clearance stating Santa Rosa County will not obstruct or demolishturtle nesting areas. Blaylock said completion of the pier is expected in the fall of 2009. Harris asked the difference in length of the existing pier and the new pier. Blaylock said the new pier will be the same length as the existing pier (1,200 feet). He said an alternate end to the pier will be added to the bid process. Blaylock said the alternate will be to extend the pier to 1,500 feet. He said current funding is only for 1,200 feet, but the permit will be for 1,500 feet. Blaylock said the extra 300 feet will cost approximately $1 million. He discussed what the new pier will look like and where it will be located.

Hewatt asked if the debris from demolition of the existing pier will be hauled off. Blaylock said yes. He said the permit requires debris to be hauled of in a legal manner. Blaylock said staff is discussing the possibility of incorporating the debris into an artificial reef area with several different groups. He said logistics have not been worked out. Blaylock said the debris will not be able to be used for a near shore marine sanctuary because of timing issues. He said FEMA will pay for the demolition and legal disposal of the existing pier.

Oyster Shell Restoration Project

Verlinde said a grant was applied for with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Coastal Program. She said the awards have not been announced. Verlinde said the oyster shell restoration project is scheduled to move forward. She said the shell will be placed between Garcon Point and White Point. Verlinde said a meeting was held with the Department of Agriculture and oyster men regarding oyster shell restoration. She briefly reviewed what was discussed at the meeting and said she felt the meeting was very successful.

Marker asked about a project being done in a sanctuary or preserve. Verlinde said submerged land leases and oyster reefs on submerged lands were discussed with the Department of Agriculture. She said it was felt a demonstration/workable site in the Yellow River Marsh Aquatic Reserve might be a good idea. Verlinde said the proposed site will be a lease site where shell will be placed and oyster men will work the site. Harris said it is his understanding that the proposed site will be a working site that oystermen can tong oysters off of. Verlinde said correct.

Chairman Issues

Marker asked for an update on the Mulat Bayou channel. Blaylock said Commissioner Stewart met with the homeowner's association and implementation of a MSBU for funding is being looked at for the dredging of the channel. He said staff is trying to obtain permission from FDOT (Florida Department of Transportation) to utilize a portion of the federal highway Interstate 10 right-of-way for a spoil site. Harris said he believes there is a homeowner's association meeting tonight to further discuss the dredging issue.

Verlinde said a lake watch water quality monitoring will be established in the Mulat Bayou area. She said three sites previously monitored will be used for this monitoring. Verlinde said the Lake Watch Program is a University of Florida program that provides water quality analysis to lakes all over Florida and along the coastline. She said water samples will be taken monthly for analysis. Verlinde said the data generated from the water sample analysis can be used for background data. Harris said the Mulat Bayou homeowners were told there have been no water quality checks completed other than what the homeowners have done themselves. He said a lady from the DEP was at the homeowner's association meeting and she indicated she had completed some water quality checks of Mulat Bayou sometime around 2003.

Other Business

Harris asked the result of the request for funds by the City of Milton for facilities at Russell Harbor Landing. Walker said the City of Milton requested funds from the County's Boater Registration Fee Fund, but the project was determined ineligible for use of those funds. He discussed Boater Registration Fee Fund guidelines.

Harris asked the status of the derelict vessel at the foot of the Navarre Beach Bridge. Walker said inquiries being received from salvage companies are being referred to the FWCC (Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission). He said it is his understanding the FWCC is proceeding with the derelict vessel process. Harris asked who needs to be contacted to see if the vessel can be used as reef material. Blaylock said there is a legal process by where a judge declares the vessel derelict and then an agency can step in and move forward with a possible reef project utilizing the vessel. He said the big issue with this proposal is the funding and cleanup associated with the vessel. There was discussion on a warrant being issued for the owner of the derelict vessel. Walker said he felt the process to have the vessel declared a derelict vessel has not yet begun. Harris said the process to declare the vessel derelict will probably begin after the owner of the vessel is prosecuted. Walker said he felt the plan is to make the owner take care of the
vessel himself. Harris said he felt the owner will save money by assisting with cleanup of the vessel and using the vessel as a reef. Walker said he felt a grant application can be submitted or Boater Improvement Funds can be used for the reef project. He said he is not sure on liability issues associated with the vessel. Harris said he would like to see the vessel used as a reef. Walker suggested Harris contact Avis Whitfield and FWCC to check on the status of the derelict vessel. He said staff can get

involved withthis project if needed.

Verlinde asked if Marine Advisory Committee members have any ideas on what Boater Improvement Funds should be used for. Marker said it would be hard for Marine Advisory
Committee members to make a recommendation when regulations are not completely known. He discussed the dredging needed for the Mulat Bayou channel. Marker said he is not sure what kind of contribution can be made to the Mulat Bayou Channel dredging project, but he is interested in helping with the dredging project if possible. He said the Mulat Bayou channel dredging project is going to take a combination of funding. Marker said he heard possible sources of funding may be a MSBU, recreational funds, and boater improvement funds. He said he wants the Mulat Bayou channel dredging project to be kept in mind when deciding what to spend Boater Improvement Funds on.

Walker said agencies are not interested in helping an applicant fund projects throughgrants if the applicant has too much money in its bank account. Marker said he wants to get any grant funds available for projects. Walker said grant funded project ideas are needed by the May 6, 2008 Marine Advisory Committee meeting because the grant deadline is May 20, 2008. Marker asked if Verlinde has a list of possible projects for the committee to consider. Verlinde briefly discussed several possible projects. Harris asked if county funds will be used to rebuild the Archie Glover Boat Ramp. He said he felt some funds need to be spent fixing up that boat ramp. Blaylock said Boater Improvement Funds can not be used for maintenance or replacement. He said the Archie Glover Boat Ramp will be repaired when the Interstate 10 Bridge workers leave. Marker said he felt channel markers are a good idea. There was discussion on past grant requests for channel markers. Walker said he is not sure if grants for channel markers will be successful with the amount of money currently in the bank. He said a good amount of funds needs to be set aside for the Mulat Bayou dredging project. Harris said he wants to dedicate funds to the Mulat Bayou dredging project and to help get the derelict vessel relocated for use as an artificial reef. Walker said he is not sure if there are any issues with docks or boat ramps in the County that need to be considered. He said Avis Whitfield may be able to inform the committee of any needed projects in the County. Harris asked if boat launch site facilities can be improved using Boater Improvement Funds. Blaylock said yes. Harris said the shell pile site in Bagdad needs improvement, and he discussed improvements he felt can be made there. Blaylock said courtesy docks are not difficult to obtain and are easy to permit.

Verlinde said another option for BoaterImprovement Funds is for research. She said background data makes justification for activities like dredging easier. Verlinde said someone can be contracted to compile data on boat ramps to see if county boat ramps are qualified for Tier 1 grants. She said she will send information on the research option to committee members. Marker asked cost of the researchoption. Verlinde discussed cost and match funds for a research project. There was discussion on the point system used to determine match funds for grants. Harris asked if college students can be used to collect data for the study. Verlinde said she felt students can be used for surveys, but she is not sure if they can be paid for the work. She said she will check to see how other counties are handling research projects funded with Boater Improvement grant funds. Marker asked Verlinde to send information to committee members as soon as possible so questions can be asked and answered allowing more time for discussion and decisions at the next meeting. Verlinde said she will get information to committee members and said she will check to see if the amount of funds currently available in the Boater Registration Fee Fund will have any effect on possible grant requests. Blaylock said he needs to make a correction concerning eligible options for use of Boater Improvement Funds. He said repair is an eligible option for Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects. There was discussion on the Archie Glover Boat Ramp being an inexpensive repair. Marker asked the cost of the Mulat Bayou Channel Dredging project. Blaylock said between $200,000.00 and $300,000.00.

Public Forum

Scott Martin said he is trying to get state waters permitted offshore for artificial reefs. He said he is protesting the Army Corps of Engineers' new proposals for artificial reefs. Martin said he would like to see artificial reef zones expanded in Florida state waters and more extensively expanded in federal waters. He said the Army Corps of Engineers is not currently willing to expand artificial reef zones. Martin said artificial reefs are habitats for all kinds of species. He discussed FWCC funding artificial reefs in federal waters but not having any control over the reefs.

Martin said Santa Rosa County is in the Army Corps of Engineers Jacksonville District in regards to off shore. He said Santa Rosa County needs to try to get back into the Mobile District. Martin said he believes Santa Rosa County was only supposed to be in the Jacksonville District temporarily, but the County has been in the Jacksonville District for the last 20 years. He discussed why the temporary jurisdiction over off shore waters was initially granted to the Jacksonville office. Martin said any on shore issues are handled through the Mobile office, but any off shore issues are handled through the Jacksonville office. He said the state waters off of Santa Rosa County are deeper than anywhere else in Florida. Martin discussed water depth throughout the State of Florida.

Harris asked what Martin is requesting of the Marine Advisory Committee. He asked if Martin wants a letter of support to be sent to different agencies from the committee. Martin said yes. He said any help is appreciated. Harris asked if Martin has contact information for agencies or individuals the letter needs to be sent to. Martin said yes. Harris said he felt the Marine Advisory Committee can discuss sending a letter of protest or a letter supporting the fishery in Santa Rosa County at the next meeting.

Marker said new artificial reef restrictions will bring individual artificial reef deployment to an end. He said he felt the new artificial reef requirements will result in artificial reefs made of unsuitable materials illegally being placed in waters. He said he supports drafting a letter discussing negative impacts of the new regulations. Marker said Robert Turpin is well informed on what needs to be done concerning the artificial reef program in Northwest Florida. He said he supports Turpin in his effort to discourage newly proposed artificial reef regulations. Martin briefly discussed changes being proposed for artificial reefs. Harris said the committee can look at this issue further at the next Marine Advisory Committee meeting.

Verlinde said Martin brought up two issues. She said one issue concerns the LAARs (Large Area Artificial Reefs) area in federal waters and the other issue concerns obtaining permitted sites in state waters closer in shore. Martin said the same organization has control over permitting in both areas. He said he has tried to find out who is establishing the new regulations and what the reasoning is behind the regulations.

Adjournment

The next scheduled meeting of the Marine Advisory Committee will be on Tuesday, May 6, 2008 at 5:00 p.m.

There being no further business to come before the Marine Advisory Committee, the meeting adjourned at 5:47 p.m.