



Newsletter Fall 2020

www.littlelagoon.org

**Next meeting:
Thursday, Jan 21,
2021, virtual
meeting?**

Well, now in addition to “Stay-at-Home” pandemic orders, we all must deal with the harrowing ride we had with Sally. I do not know about you all, but I want to be done with 2020 and move on hopefully to a better year. Originally, LLPS Board Member Chandra Wright and Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) Gulf State Park Naturalist Kelly Reetz were scheduled to be our guest speakers for Oct LLPS Members meeting. Due to Hurricane Sally, sadly, we have cancelled our virtual LLPS Members meeting and a virtual presentation by Chandra and Kelly. We will make every effort to have them enlighten us at a future meeting.



Little Lagoon Pass Update

a) The last dredging cycle, started on Friday May 22, 2020, and finished up on Saturday, August 22. Demobilization was coincident with a tropical threat to our area in the form of Hurricane Laura which passed by us on the way to landfall in Southwest Louisiana. We did have fringe tropical storm force winds and a ~2-3-foot storm surge. A conforming channel was dredged/completed at the pass prior to demobilization and for the last two weeks of the dredging cycle progress accelerated. Sediment traps north of the pass bridge were not dredged per the current dredging protocol. LLPS did not press the issue as we were happy to finally see the pass channel completed. There was also speculation and concern that a new trigger might be issued due to sand captured in the pass from Laura storm surge and the highly active hurricane season (enough already!).

With the poor progress of the May-August dredging cycle, LLPS Board Member Steve McMillan requested a meeting with Matthew Erickson (Regional Director ALDOT) and Don Powell (Project Engineer ALDOT). Kudos to Rep. Steve McMillan for arranging the meeting! Dennis and Steve attended as did LLPS member/volunteer Lloyd Moore whose experience with ALDOT contract and process evaluation on dredging at the pass was vital. Objectives:

- 1) meet Matthew since recently taking his new position with ALDOT
- 2) brief ALDOT on LLPS activities
- 3) emphasize just how important the pass is to Water Quality and fisheries in the Lagoon
- 4) discuss problems with the most recent dredging cycle

5) discuss problem remediation.

ALDOT appeared to be genuinely embarrassed with the recent contractor performance. They did not argue with any points made about not commencing dredging expeditiously per the court order and not starting where a major channel constriction occurred north of the bridge. They also did not argue about the contractor taking the original equipment and crew to Daphne and essentially leaving us hanging out with less efficient equipment and a less experienced crew. They have been putting pressure on the contractor to not repeat problems with future dredging cycles and plan to “tighten up” contract language with the next contract. Everyone at the meeting concurred we like the technology this contractor brings to the pass and would like to see them remain on the job with some continuous improvement and the right process controls in place.

b) Concerning the Flood Shoals at the north end of the pass, here is a response from Dr. Bret Webb (USA) on plans to measure the sands per the court order: “We were going to survey last week after the dredging cycle concluded, but the weather intervened. We are looking at the next survey window as the third week of September. That will give us our 2020 flood shoal volume estimate. Once completed, I plan on looking at the long-term changes in sediment volumes over a broader area as well, just to ensure we are capturing the annual changes in the most appropriate manner possible.” Obviously, Hurricane Sally changed that plan and Dennis will be contacting Dr. Webb about a revised flood shoal measurement/estimate plan.

Oyster Gardening Update

Prior to Hurricane Sally, our oysters were doing well. Most gardens had good numbers, were being spilt into additional cages based on increasing volume and weight and were beginning to experience a fall growth spurt. As is almost always the case, some gardens this year received shell with a “light spat set” and numbers and volumes with those cages were below or well below average counts. All of that changed overnight with Hurricane Sally which made landfall September 16th in Gulf Shores with a ~6’ storm surge and 105 MPH sustained winds. Painfully slow movement of the storm (we were in the eye for 5 hours) thru our area dramatically magnified the destructive power of the event. Storm surge probably varied within the Lagoon based on geography and susceptibility to powerful due east and north-east winds during the storm. Surge appears to have been lowest in the eastern most Lagoon (somewhat protected from east winds, ~6’) and highest in the western portions of the Lagoon (perhaps as high as 10’) due to a “piling up” of water. Stealing the phrase “perfect storm”, the slow movement of the storm and the extraordinarily strong east vector to winds meant Lagoon piers and oyster gardens were devastated. Dennis’s estimate of pier and oyster garden damage based on observations from gardeners is-

- 1) 27 of 34 (79.4%) reporting gardening piers in our program were severely damaged or destroyed

8th Ave, East end of LL, 16 Sep



- 2) 31.75 of 45 (71%) of reporting gardens were lost
- 3) 71 gardening cages lost
- 4) 5 piers/gardeners not reporting yet.

The nearly 80% pier loss number may be a good small sample survey and might indicate the percentage of piers lost Lagoon wide.

Committee Activity Updates

Watershed Management Plan (WMP) - Steering Committee meeting was held on September 9th. Responses to survey regarding weighting criteria for management measures have been incorporated into the Management Measures matrix. Identifying Critical Areas and Issues, Regulatory Review, Financing Alternatives, and Monitoring chapters are in internal review. Draft of Management Measures chapter is in progress. Geosyntec team started planning for the next community engagement meeting (changed to possibly mid-January due to Sally). A pollution point source proposal for Little Lagoon was submitted by Marlon Cook and Dr. Bebee to Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) for approval and funding but only received partial funding. Another virtual meeting was attended by Dennis, Ron, Lloyd Moore, Don Blanchard, Wade Burcham and Dan Bond concerning the Baldwin County Sewer Service (BCSS) Plant on the Fort Morgan Hwy. and participants agreed a strategy to pursue is 1) contact Gulf Shores Utilities (GSU) plant management to gain competency to understand sewage plant operations and glean information on who to contact with Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) etc., 2) contact ADEM to review plant permit exceedances and ask other pertinent questions, 3) gather as much evidence from Lagoon waters and subsurface thru WQ testing and study, 4) Contact BCSS when we have our ducks lined up if necessary.

Outreach

GSHS Scholarships- Three volunteers have indicated a willingness to form a Scholarship Committee and raise funds for future scholarships for our \$5,000 annual award to a GSHS graduating, college bound Senior. Once again, Hurricane Sally has delayed that effort. When things get back to normal a first planning meeting will be held, and results shared.

Coastal Clean-up- at Mo's Landing was cancelled due to Hurricane Sally. Even more clean-up will be required post Sally. Any volunteers to get the dumpster (pictured at right) off the island behind Oyster House? A big shout out to Greg and Brooke for again organizing Coastal Clean-up Mo's Landing. They did a significant amount of work for the cancelled event. Per Mark Acreman with the COGS- Plans are being drawn up now for a MOU between ADCNR (owner of Lagoon water bottoms) and the COGS to allow the city to conduct a high resolution side scan sonar debris mapping operation and follow with crews to locate and



retrieve Lagoon debris (**FEMA** funded). Post Hurricane Ivan this process was used and highly effective. BTW per Mark Acreman as of Thursday, Oct 1st: 80,000 cu yds of Sally debris have been picked up in GS. Current estimate is 400,000 cu yds will eventually be picked up.

GSHS Outreach. The Hatfield pier where 4 oyster gardens were being tended by Krista Marcum/GSHS has been significantly damaged (>50%). 3 of 4 gardens were lost to Sally. 😞 The students are really bummed to have lost the oysters and pier and the opportunity to tend to gardens. WQ outings by GSHS were about to commence at the pier as well. With luck they will resume in about 2 weeks with pier repair. We also have some “orphan” oysters from other sites to help repopulate the GSHS gardens when the pier is ready. With assistance from mentors Ron and Dennis, GSHS Marine Science student Andrew Meza has embarked on a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) project to identify, measure, and quantify fauna associated with oyster gardens and oyster shell habitat in the Lagoon. After the loss of the Hatfield pier, Laurie and Tom Eberly stepped up and offered their gardens and pier for Andrew to conduct his project. Way to go Laurie and Tom!

Lagoon Weather Stations. Several electronic weather stations and manual rain gauges were lost during Sally (There is that four-letter word again). The electronic weather station at the Hatfield waterfront is to be repaired by Dr. Bebee with USA. Ron is ordering replacement rain gauges for the 2 lost manual rain gauges and would like to know if anyone else on the Lagoon or in the watershed would like one and be willing to maintain and collect data for the effort? MBNEP will pay for the gauges. If you want to help out with this rain data gathering effort contact Ron Phelps at grpphelps@gmail.com .

WQ Monitoring. Our WQ Monitoring Program was also devastated by Sally. Reports are we not only lost our Site 1 SE pier but also the lab due to flooding (see pictures below). We lost Site 2 NE (Hatfield pier) and that will be unusable until repaired (maybe 2 weeks), not sure about Site 3 NW but that pier is the longest pier in the Lagoon and I will be stunned if it doesn't at least require repair, the Site 4 SW pier was also lost for the foreseeable future. WQ outings will be on hold for a while hoping for repair and a return to relative normalcy.



Elections- The following terms are up for re-election October 2020:
 Position 2-Steve McMillan (3-year term) (yes to reelection)
 Position 5-Brooke Shinn (2-year term) (yes to reelection)
 Position 8-Harry King (3-year term) (yes to reelection)
 President- Dennis Hatfield (2-year term) (yes to reelection)
 Vice President – Greg Bourgeois (2-year term) (yes to reelection)
 Treasurer- Deborah Hatfield (2-year term) (yes to reelection)
 Secretary-Karen Pera (2-year term) (yes to reelection)

All officers are nominated to be reelected and the Board has voted on and reelected current officers. Director elections will occur at the January 2021 LLPS Membership Meeting.

Financials

July 1, 2020 thru September 30, 2020	
Starting Balance	\$79,140.47
Total Income	\$325.00
Total Expenses	\$3,201.30
Ending Balance	\$76,264.17

Notable expenses- \$1,812 Oyster Gardening cages, \$1,250 GSHS Scholarship

Membership- 232 out of 337 active members in LLPS have not paid dues for 2020 😞.
 And it is time for 2021 dues!

If you have not paid your dues for the 2020 LLPS Membership Year, please do so as soon as possible. And you might as well pay 2021 dues at the same time. Membership form is attached.



State Park Pier after Sally



Sea Nettle in Little Lagoon after passage of Hurricane Marco

We invite you to be a part of preserving Little Lagoon for generations to come. Your support is crucial if we are to preserve and protect this unique environment. Please join us as a member of Little Lagoon Preservation Society



Members receive a quarterly newsletter, meeting notifications, and updates regarding special issues.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

Email allows us to keep our costs down so that a greater percentage of your donation may be applied toward our goals. Your email will be used by LLPS only to distribute newsletters and any important LLPS communications.

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

\$25 \$50 \$75 other \$ _____

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

\$10

BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP

\$200 other \$ _____

Business members are eligible to place a logo on LLPS brochures and a link to their web site on the LLPS site, www.littlelagoon.org.

**Please complete this form and mail it with your check payable to LLPS
Little Lagoon Preservation Society
P. O. Box 3193
Gulf Shores, AL 36547**