

**ALABAMA GULF COAST RECOVERY COUNCIL  
FIVE RIVERS~ALABAMA'S DELTA RESOURCE CENTER  
TENSAW THEATRE  
30945 – 5 Rivers Boulevard  
Spanish Fort, Alabama 36527  
December 4, 2015 - 1:00 p.m. Central Time**

A public meeting of the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council (AGCRC) was held at the time specified above at the Five Rivers~Alabama's Delta Resource Center, Tensaw Theatre, Spanish Fort, Alabama. Director James K. Lyons, Vice-Chairperson of the Council, presided over the meeting.

The Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (MESC) presented its Alabama Center of Excellence proposal to the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council (AGCRC) at a meeting open to the public. The MESC's written proposal was submitted in response to the Solicitation for Proposals published by the AGCRC on May 13, 2015.

This meeting offered the AGCRC an opportunity to engage in an open discussion with MESC representatives as the next step in efforts to proceed toward selection of Alabama's Center of Excellence.

**ALABAMA COUNCIL (the "MEMBERS"):**

- 1) The Governor of the State of Alabama:  
Robert Bentley, Governor/AGCRC Council Chairperson - ABSENT  
Zach Lee, Director of Local Government Affairs at Office of the Governor,  
PROXY to Governor - PRESENT
- 2) The Director of the Alabama State Port Authority:  
James K. Lyons, Director/AGCRC Council Vice-Chairperson - PRESENT
- 3) The Chairman of the Baldwin County Commission:  
Charles F. "Skip" Gruber, Commissioner (Office of Chairman) - ABSENT  
Tucker Dorsey, Commissioner (Office of Vice-Chairman) - PRESENT
- 4) The President of the Mobile County Commission:  
Jerry Carl, Commissioner - PRESENT
- 5) The Mayor of the City of Bayou La Batre:  
Annette Johnson, Mayor - PRESENT
- 6) The Mayor of the Town of Dauphin Island:  
Jeff Collier, Mayor - PRESENT
- 7) The Mayor of the City of Fairhope:  
Tim Kant, Mayor - PRESENT
- 8) The Mayor of the City of Gulf Shores:  
Robert Craft, Mayor - PRESENT
- 9) The Mayor of the City of Mobile:  
Sandy Stimpson, Mayor - PRESENT
- 10) The Mayor of the City of Orange Beach:  
Tony Kennon, Mayor - ABSENT

**AGENDA ITEM #1:**

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER AND ESTABLISH QUORUM**

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

"Okay, we'll go ahead and get started. I think we've got everybody here that is going to make it. Thank you for being here with us, the Alabama Restore Council, as we get a step closer to naming our Center of Excellence. I feel that you all know that this is a component of the Restore Act, with that specifically set up for each state to have a Center of Excellence. It is the responsibility of this Council to name the Center of Excellence. Before we get started with the program, I am going to go ahead and call roll (*Roll called...Attendees listed above*).

“Okay, to get everybody up to speed, I am going to let Eliska Morgan, the Executive Director for the Restore Council, walk you through how we have gotten to where we are today in the naming of the Center of Excellence. Eliska, go ahead...”

**AGENDA ITEM #II:**

**CONFIRM MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES CONSORTIUM PROPOSAL COMPLIANT WITH AGCRC SOLICITATION FOR PROPOSALS PUBLISHED ON MAY 13, 2015**

Eliska Morgan (AGCRC Council Executive Director):

“Thank you. Good afternoon. It’s interesting; we actually released and published our competitive process for public comment last December 17th (it’s amazing how quickly a year goes by). But we did publish that public comment for over (45) forty-five days with the comment period ending on February 2nd. Then after consideration of the comments, the Council then released the final competitive process, along with the final solicitation, and at the same time published the solicitation for acceptance of proposals. That happened on May 13th, and it remained open for over forty-five (45) days, closing on June 30th. The Council received one (1) response to our solicitation. It was submitted on June 29th by the Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (MESC/Sea Lab/DISL), and if you will indulge me, I’m going to refer to them as the Sea Lab from here on out, because it is a whole lot easier to say. In July, the Council suggested a subgroup be formed to review the proposal for compliance with the solicitation and to determine if additional information was needed from the Sea Lab to clarify any issues in the proposal. The proposal was limited to twenty (20) pages, which made it fairly challenging to include a great deal of detailed information. So the subgroup confirmed compliance and requested additional information from the Sea Lab in August; these questions that we had focused primarily on providing a detailed budget as well as providing some clarity to their proposal review and their outreach process. Responses to the subgroup’s questions were received from the Sea Lab on September 22nd, and the subgroup then reviewed the responses and subsequently met with Mr. David England, who is the Finance Director for the Sea Lab, to walk us through some of their more specific budget items to provide additional clarification on their direct and indirect cost and more specifically how their modified total direct costs were calculated. And if you are not from the world of academia, that is a very confusing process. So Mr. England was very helpful and adequately addressed the questions that the subgroup had, and, as a result, the subgroup then made a recommendation to the Council that they could move forward in this process and begin by having a presentation by the Sea Lab. Today, Dr. John Valentine, who is Director of the Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium, will give the presentation. As most of you probably know Dr. Valentine, he has extensive knowledge on coastal issues and is very well respected in his field, not just in this community, but both statewide and nationally. Dr. Valentine, it is an honor for us to have you with us today. So it’s all yours.”

**AGENDA ITEM #III:**

**PRESENTATION OF MESC/COE PROPOSAL**

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

“Thank you. On behalf of the faculty, students, staff and friends of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, I want to thank Alabama’s Gulf Coast Recovery Council for providing us with an opportunity to publicly present our statement of qualifications to each of you as was permitted in response to solicitation for proposals that Eliska mentioned a few minutes ago and with regard to Alabama’s Restore Act funded Center of Excellence. There is a little bit of housekeeping I want to do right off the bat on our statement of qualifications as Eliska referred to. We are sometimes better known as the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL), and you see our spadefish logo on a lot of the activities that we do in Mobile and Baldwin County. But legally, we are the administrative home for what is called Alabama’s Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (MESC). I’ll explain to you in some detail what that means in just a minute. The MESC, as we are known within academia, was founded in 1971 by the Alabama Legislature, and the intention of the legislature was to minimize duplication and services provided by higher education to our State’s sixty-seven (67) counties. Our organizational stovepipe is really quite simple. We have a Board that is comprised of twenty-two (22) Presidents from our member institutions. From this Board, a subset of five (5) Presidents is mandated in the legislation for our Executive Committee and day-to-day oversight of the MESC’s activities. Just so you will know, three (3) of the five (5) Presidents are permanent members of the Executive Committee. Right now, that is President Jay Gogue from Auburn University (AU), new President Dr. Stuart Bell from the University of Alabama (UA) and Dr. Tony Waldrop from the University of

South Alabama (USA); and periodically those parties change depending on their career ambitions. Two members of the Executive Committee are selected from this Board from the smaller schools, so they also have representation in the decision-making process. Currently, they are Montevallo President Dr. John Stewart and Chancellor of Troy University, Dr. Jack Hawkins. And if you communicate with Jack, make sure you spell TROY out in all capital letters, because that's what I always get, I always feel like I miss something when I communicate with him. I am the current MESC Executive Director, and I report formally to the Executive Committee on a semi-regular basis. At a minimum, we have an annual conference call where we talk about state appropriation in our budgets. But as a rule, I communicate with them via other calls and visits to their campus every year to make sure that we stay in touch and stay on the same page. Just to show you the distribution of our member schools, you can see in these red dots, we serve the entire State of Alabama. And there are twenty-two (22) schools that are distributed primarily around our watershed outlets, just so you can see what these are. A list of these schools are right here on the right, and this red asterisk shows you the schools that have graduate programs in Marine Sciences.\* You might not think that we have that many in the State of Alabama, but we have quite a few.

Consortium Participants: (\* schools with graduate programs)

Alabama A & M University  
Alabama State University \*  
Athens State University  
Auburn University \*  
Auburn University at Montgomery  
Birmingham Southern College  
Huntingdon College  
Jacksonville State University \*  
Judson College  
Samford University \*  
Spring Hill College  
Talladega College  
Troy University  
Tuskegee University \*  
University of Alabama \*  
University of Alabama at Birmingham \*  
University of Alabama at Huntsville \*  
University of Mobile  
University of Montevallo  
University of North Alabama  
University of South Alabama \*  
University of West Alabama

"And frequently, those graduate students come to Dauphin Island to do their graduate research at some point during their career. Our mission statement is simple. Our intentions to serve all sixty-seven (67) counties in one way or another in the State of Alabama and our specific goals are to provide leadership in the fields of marine research, education; and we serve in community engagement through the Mobile National Estuarine Program and a host of state committees that we are also serving members of.

"We have three (3) core programs in our statement of qualifications that I want to talk about. These relate to education and to outreach.

- The first is the community engagement piece, which is a Public Education Aquarium called "The Estuarium."
- We have a Discovery Hall Program, which a lot of you know something about, which has K-12 Education and Teacher Training.
- And then we have University Programs which provide Graduate Education, conducts Basic and Applied Research, run the National Science Foundation Program called Research Experiences for Undergraduates, and then an extensive Undergraduate Education Program.

“Just to show you what our public aquarium looks like in this panel you see here, even if you have not been there, I encourage you to come. We have about ten thousand (10,000) square feet of exhibit hall at the moment under roof with lots of displays that emphasize the importance of water to the citizens of the State of Alabama. We sit at the base of the fourth largest watershed in the continental United States in terms of fresh water. What you haven't heard as much about in the community is that locally in Mobile and Baldwin County; we have thirty-nine (39) other small watersheds that contribute to the productivity of both Mobile Bay, but also the near shore waters of Coastal Alabama. So to me it makes our display make it pretty clear that the one thing that unites all of us in the State of Alabama is water and the remarkable biological diversity that is supported by that water. I mentioned we have some ten thousand (10,000) feet of some exhibits at the moment. We have just completed construction on an additional twenty-five hundred (2,500) square foot annex that will house some new exhibits. I am hoping that will come online sometime in the early summer. And just so you can see with the number of citizens, voters or taxpayers, however you want to look at this, this is our annual open house called 'Discovery Day.' It comes up every spring. Everyone is invited, and it's free admission and you get to tour the labs, meet our scientists, see our exhibits; and we have been averaging between four and five thousand (4,000 – 5,000) visitors every year since we started doing this, so the point of the slide and this particular picture is to show you just how much interest your citizens have in managing properly the resources of Coastal Alabama. There is a lot of interest in our community. For Discovery Hall, some of the performance metrics we compile on an annual basis show that our programs are very, very well received across the state. On Dauphin Island, some twelve thousand (12,000) children come on average each year to take part in our field trips. We also offer a host of workshops for teachers - Science education. And the teachers and students come from all sixty-seven (67) of our State's counties, to come visit us. We have a Pre-K summer day program, we have overnight programs; and we have residential programs and community outreach – touch labs, field exercises, boat trips, and nothing more exciting with a kid who has been longlining and gets a shark that comes up on the boat, and again, the teachers' workshops. We also recognize that there are an awful lot of economic challenges in our state. We know that a lot of our school systems cannot afford the price of the fuel or lodging that it takes to come and visit us and take these field trips. Through support by our foundation, PNC Bank and ExxonMobil, we have been able to create an educational vehicle called “Bay Mobile.” It takes our classroom on the road, and last year we reached some thirteen thousand (13,000) K-12 kids. If you go to boat shows or Earth Day or any of these other local events, you will see this vehicle is also present in and during these shows. And now as we all have to embrace new technology in the last two years, we have become extensively engaged with Alabama's Access Program, and we are offering virtual labs and lectures through the Access Program. And I can tell you the demand for these courses exceeds what we are able to supply, not because of us, but because there is just not enough slots supplied by Alabama's super computer for us to project these courses upward. Last year, we had sixty (60), and last month we had some sixty (60) schools sign up for the twenty (20) slots that we had available. So again, there is a lot of statewide interest in what is going on in Mobile and Baldwin County. In terms of our College Programs, our third core program, educational outreach is something called University Programs. Our College Programs run year around. And currently, we have graduate students and faculty and residents at the Lab - The University of South Alabama, we have Auburn faculty on our campus right now, and we have faculty from the University of Alabama...truly a collaborative network exists on this campus in modern time. Our faculty is internationally recognized for their research, and they conduct this research throughout the world. Just some examples, we've had our folks in Antarctica, the Bahamas, and Belize just in this past ten (10) years, extensively in the Florida Keys, among other places. So we project the good news about science in the State of Alabama throughout the nation. We also have what is equivalent to a bright and gifted program for undergraduates, the REU Program. It is our fourth round of funding for the National Science Foundation. It is a highly competitive program. This past year, we had about one hundred twenty (120) applicants for the eight (8) available slots. These children come from all over the continental United States to work in Coastal Alabama on issues of concern to all of us. In our Undergraduate Program, which is now closing on fifty (50) years old, we have grown to offer thirty-two (32) semester courses during the course of the summer. That is an extensive body of Marine Biology work unlike any that is offered anywhere else in America. Our courses are broad in their training. They get classroom training as I mentioned right here, and then as you can see in the left panel and the right panel, every day they get extensive hands-on exposure to what scientists in the Marine fields do. So it is a very good practical approach. Each of you are in the business of supply and demand, and there is always the question of

why we want to do this in the State of Alabama, so I'll refer you to the blue bars that you see that run from 1986 through last year. These blue bars represent the credit hours that we have been offering each year since 1986. The important point to note is that this has grown upwards substantially since its origins. And even more so, right after the Deepwater Horizon event. The enrollment in our undergraduate courses is getting close to eighty percent (80%). So there is a lot of demand for the college curriculum that is offered in Coastal Alabama. And these students, as you will see here in a second, came last year from sixteen (16) of our twenty-two (22) member schools. That is pretty good engagement, pretty good marketing, and pretty good participation by the twenty-two (22) members. And importantly, while the University of Alabama and USA and Auburn all contribute substantial numbers to our enrollment, the smaller schools that are found throughout our twenty-two (22) members contribute almost forty percent (40%) of the demand for our courses. So in every way I can think of, we are serving Higher Ed as was originally intended by reducing redundancy. Our research, as I mentioned briefly, is similarly recognized for its excellence. Studies by our resident scientists range from things that are conducted on vessels as small as beakers, the size of a teacup, to big ships that are in our ecosystem. So we are able to scale from the very small to the very large in very controlled ways. So when we talk to you about what we think you need to be focused on, we are talking to you from the perspective of data and experience, not from stuff we overheard years ago. We are actually talking about what we have done. I would also mention, I skipped over this important point, but in the last five (5) years, we have brought in sixteen million dollars (\$16,000,000.) in extra Nero-funding from outside the State of Alabama.

"We operate according to the National Academy of Science recommendations, and we involve our studies in what we call "Best Available Science"; it's a set of principles.

These principles include:

- Relevance – (That is why the taxpayers want to pay for the things we are doing).
- Inclusiveness – (That means we are engaging with the community on what we are doing and what we are finding).
- Objectivity – (We are not advocates; we speak strictly from our data).
- Transparency & Openness – (We had over six hundred [600] hits on the media this past year, not just at.com but all the way up to the Washington Post; so we are highly transparent, and we are awfully open).
- Timeliness – (We are timely; we respond to our contract demands on time).
- And then we do something that you are not familiar with, which is Peer Review. (It is an opportunity for your critics to evaluate the quality of your work anonymously. You don't get a chance to rebut when this stuff comes in, so you get an independent objective evaluation, kind of like what we are watching as the Presidential election goes on).

"We are going to make available both of our research vessels – R/V Alabama Discovery and the R/V E.O. Wilson. The Alabama Discovery is a sixty-five (65) foot offshore vessel that we also use in our K-12 programs and our undergraduate programs, and then the forty-six (46) foot R/V E.O. Wilson is also available for in-bay work and real nearshore work. Just on the side, if you don't know who Dr. Wilson was, E.O. Wilson, he was a local kid that went to Murphy High School and eventually became the Father of Biodiversity, Emeritus at Harvard University and has won at least two Pulitzer Prizes I know of for his work. So we do produce very, very good sciences here. We have a lot of unique facilities that you won't find anywhere else in the nation, and the one that I'm particularly proud of, is what we call our Mesocosm Facility. And what you see in this lower photo is a series of a thousand (1,000) gallon tanks that allow us to do very well replicated, highly controlled experiments that will allow us to separate fact from fiction with regard to agents of change in our coastal environment. We also have four (4) five-thousand (5,000) gallon tanks that allow us to work with animals as big as sharks. So we are doing science about as well as science can be done in the State of Alabama, but certainly I feel nationally. The ACT requires that this research be conducted in an area defined as the Gulf Region. You may have noticed that in the legislation. Specifically, what that refers to is adjacent land, water and watersheds that are within twenty-five (25) nautical miles of our coastline. So you can't go too awful far offshore. You can go offshore as far as the EEC boundary. So there is a well-defined region that we are allowed to spend RESTORE ACT money in. We have extensive experience working within these boundaries, as evidence in Baldwin County. We have done over eighty (80) projects since the year 2000 for about five million dollars (\$5,000,000.) Support for that five million dollars (\$5,000,000.) largely comes from outside of Baldwin

County, and even the State of Alabama. But you can see, an awful lot of people are interested in preserving the integrity and the biological resources of Baldwin County. Similarly, in Mobile County, we have done over one hundred-and-fifty (150) projects since the year 2000. And again, you can see a diverse array of funding agencies from throughout the nation have contributed support to the kinds of studies that we have been trying to work on. I mentioned Relevance in the "Best Available Practices". Some examples of the kind of studies our resident scientists have been doing, most have great value to the citizens of this state; for example, using artificial reefs to improve the health of Red Snapper populations, Triggerfish, Amberjack. But we are also looking at the impacts of invasive species, like Lionfish, on the health of our fisheries in this state. And one thing we learned from the BP experience was that if you don't have a clean environment, your economy is going to suffer from this so there is high heuristic value at least from an economical perspective in funding these kind of studies. Within the City of Mobile, we have Apple Snails and Milfoil who are metaphors for Lionfish in invasive species impacts. Some of you know, I know Commissioner Dorsey knows that we were very active in evaluating the effectiveness of living shorelines in restoring or preserving resiliency of habitats such as marshes and seagrasses and you might think of them as just weeds that get in your feet when you're trying to go swimming. But the facts of the matter are these are very important nursery habitats that protect the young of a whole host of commercial and recreationally important species that contribute to the livelihood of residents in your communities. Bayou La Batre is an excellent example of Blue Crabs and Shrimp. We've also worked primarily in Baldwin County in the effects of nutrient pollution in triggering what are called macro alga blooms that overgrow these seagrass habitats that provide nursery protection for the young of a host of recreational and commercial species. And then one that I was involved in was separating fact from fiction with the regard to the impacts of the Mobile Bay Causeway on the health of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. In principle, the advocates had it right, there was a negative effect of the Causeway on the ecology of the Delta, but it wasn't about salt-wedge penetration into the Delta. It was all about the physics of the situation. So there is a scientific explanation that should drive what your restoration decisions will be rather than an advocacy position, so the data showed why that is accurate.

"In terms of the things we have to worry about constantly is the public's perspective about how we handle the money they send to us. What are we doing with their taxes? And I want to point out that we have a forty (40) year record of experience handling very large science projects. And Eliska mentioned the complications of managing academia and funds from the National Science Foundation and EPA. This is not a trivial task. Our financial policies and procedures are compliant with all OMB Circulars, and we are about to go through a change in OMB Circulars right now, but we are up-to-date on this, thanks to our Finance Director. And David England, who is sitting in the back rather leisurely while I give you this, is responsible for seventeen (17) consecutive state audits without findings. That's pretty darn good in the time when distrust is so great. So wave your hand, David! (*Audience Applauds...*) The applause wasn't big enough for you to get a raise!

"Alright, so now for the matter at hand, which is the Center of Excellence, as directed by Section 1605 of the ACT, we are going to simply call this the Alabama Center of Excellence (ACE). And that in no way suggests that we prefer Crimson Tide over the Auburn Tigers, it just simply is what the state's designation will be. The submission of ACE will be to provide results from innovation research on areas of coastal concern relevancy issues to interested members of government and public. We are going to make this in such a way that you can go to your voters and say, 'This is what we are getting for the money that came from the RESTORE ACT, Section 1605.' Our Organizational Chart is going to be relatively simple. It's going to have me at the very top of this as the Director, and remember I emphasize how collaborative we are in our nature, and we are leveraging heavily with other agencies in the area so that we are not duplicating effort. That means we are going to be including Mississippi/Alabama Sea Grant in our effort and Mobile Bay National Estuarine Program (NEP) in our effort. We are going to have a Science Advisory Committee. It is going to be comprised of experts from outside the State of Alabama. And the reason is, we want to do everything we can do to avoid triggering conflict of interest complaints from Department of Treasury. And if we have scientists from within the State of Alabama, the likelihood is that they are going to be from one (1) of the member schools, and therefore, they could be argued to try to influence the decisions that we are going to make. Ken is not here, but our best recognized scientist internationally is Dr. Ken Heck, who has done a ton of stuff with seagrasses. He will act in my stead when I'm away for whatever reason that the job might call for me to do. We are going to hire a full-time

Program Manager, tentatively; it's Renee Collini, who is working with Sea Grant and the NEP. So we have had existing relationships already with these existing organizations. Outreach is going to be provided by Mississippi/Alabama Sea Grant, who is being paid by the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative, which is that five hundred million dollar (\$500,000,000.) pot of money that BP set aside to conduct research, because we didn't know much about the Gulf. David, I just mentioned, who drafts a fully functioning Data Management Center which you may not know exists, but I am going to tell you about it in just a minute. And then, of course, Roberta, who is the NEP Director. So that is what our organizational structure looks like. I have condensed all the bullets that I was asked to provide in the solicitation for proposals, but basically the summary statement is that we are going to develop a competitive research program. So people, I am just competing for the bids that you put on the screen. They are going to be competing for the monies that the Treasury sends our way. They are going to be required to produce innovative research that is in compliance with the direction from the RESTORE ACT in four (4) areas of interest. I'll show you what those four (4) are in just a minute, but the funds can only be expended for five (5) particular focus areas according to the ACT. And I will show you what those are. Wherever possible, we will leverage these science projects with other Gulf-focused science programs. And I mentioned in the text of the document, the Gulf of Mexico University Research Collaborative or GoMURC, and I'm the current Chair of this organization. It is comprised of all the major Lab Directors around the Gulf of Mexico. We talk almost weekly in a conference call. And what that does is provide me an opportunity to compare and contrast the science that we are going to fund with the science that they are trying to fund. And what we are going to try to do is reduce redundancy and expenditures in the Gulf of Mexico or in some cases we will encourage collaboration across state boundaries in order to get a broader perspective on the meaning of something like Snapper fishing. There are a couple of Snapper studies that are bound to come up. Why would Alabama not want to be talking to the scientists in Florida where the Snapper are moving back and forth from to get a better idea of how to manage this economically critical resource? We are going to improve core infrastructure in terms of observation which can be used for policy. We are going to conduct data synthesis and final report generations from all the data that is funded by this innovative research. We are going to be speaking to as many government entities as we can providing science driven solutions to the challenges that each of you run into in your daily jobs. And very importantly, after four-and-a-half (4-1/2) years of conversation, make sure that we are compliant with all of the U.S. Treasury and the State of Alabama financial requirements; not a trivial amount of work for the effort that we have got to work with.

"I'm not going to go into all of the Performance Metrics because they are in the document that we submitted, but I simply want you to know that we have a very detailed set of plans and a very detailed set of milestones that both we have to reach programmatically on a quarterly and annual basis, but so too will the scientists who are funded by this effort. So it is not as though we give them the money and then they come back four (4) years later and say well here's what I found out. They are going to have to show us that they are making progress all along the way.

"We have a pretty detailed grant selection and review process. I mentioned conflict of interest, and I have become very aware of how messy consortia can be. And you always have to be aware of the possibility that your members see you as a competitor when it comes to funding, all the more so as our funding contracts. So we are going to follow a process somewhat similar to what the State of Alabama follows in that we will submit our Request for Proposals to the twenty-two (22) schools. And I am going to send it directly to the Presidents, who will in turn circulate it to all of the investigators that they think are appropriate. We will set a deadline for preproposals to be received in my office. At that point, I will be handing the evaluation process over to Mississippi/Alabama Sea Grant, who has a hundred (100) years of experience managing these sorts of competitions. And the reason I want that is to remove me from the evaluation process and the possibilities of conflict of interest. They have experience of what is called the Technical Review Panel, which is usually constructed of experts from outside the state that they are working in, and we are going to insist on that so that there is no influence of the institutions on the decision process. And then after they evaluate these recommendations with an eye towards what is dictated in the RESTORE ACT, we will move forward and invite proposals that are identified as fundable, that is, in compliance with the guidance provided by the ACT and Treasury to submit full proposals. The Technical Review Panel will come back together once we receive these, and they will evaluate these proposals in detail. And the proposals will be also evaluated by anonymous reviewers. So the Panel will

get these proposals, they will mail them out; they will get critical comments from experts in the field. The comments will be held in confidence so the Panel members do not know who wrote the comments, and then they themselves will review the proposal. So we are going to have multiple layers of review for the funding that we have available. And I will point out that this panel review technique is highly recommended by the National Science Board. So we are in line with the "Best Practices" of the scientific professions. We are not creating anything that is new. Once we decide which proposals look like they are the best in terms of quality and whether we feel they are fundable, and by that I mean, in compliance with the ACT, we are going to send that subset of all the proposals we receive to the Mobile Bay National Estuarine Program. And we are going to take advantage of their existing organizations, and particularly one (1) committee called the Program Implementation Committee. And that is comprised of all sorts of folks in the community - NGO, state officials, local officials; and they are going to evaluate these proposals for relevance to the issues that each one of you are experiencing on a day-to-day basis. So we are not just going to fund the best science we can fund, we are also going to fund the science that has the greatest return to each one of you here on the Council. They are going to come back with recommendations and a quantitative ranking of all the proposals. Mississippi/Alabama Sea Grant will come to me, and then we will make some funding decisions. I will inform the Executive Committee, my Executive Committee, of what the funding decisions are going to be, but they are not going to be allowed to veto these, because again conflict of interest is a potential problem that's out there. So, what do we think we are going to be able to fund with the money that we have available? Well, the first bullet talks about the Real Time Coastal Observatory System, and I'll show you a little bit more about this in just a minute. But everywhere I've ever been people agree that monitoring needs to be done. Everybody also agrees that somebody else should pay for it. And we have been cobbling together from various locations for a very long time, this Observatory System, and I'm going to show you why it's relevant to you in just a second. We believe, based on the current funding levels that we can fund eight (8) major research studies in Mobile and Baldwin County essentially, and they are going to be funded to the tune of about three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000.) But you know sometimes the best discoveries don't come from the big projects. And we have an awful lot of young, very talented investigators among the twenty-two (22) schools. So we are also going to set aside a small amount of money for what we call Exploratory Research. Probably they will do this in a one-to-two (1-2) year period. It will be innovative research that's risky, but we might learn something that we didn't know about how productivity in Coastal Alabama is determined, in all likelihood by our watershed. And then, importantly, just to show you how efficient we are in managing state money, we are only going to charge thirteen percent (13%) of the total amount that is being allocated for this effort for administrative fees. That's pretty darn good by every standard that I know. So, the question came up about what would be the four (4) areas that we might focus on.

"Section 1605 of the ACT dictates the money can only be spent on five (5) particular areas of investigation:

- The Coastal and deltaic sustainability.
- Coastal fisheries and ecosystem research and monitoring,
- Sustainable and resilient growth...I could certainly see some proposals coming in there, and the social side of sciences has been growing dramatically,
- and then - Comprehensive observation, monitoring and mapping.
- Of the five (5) options that were available and allowable by the ACT, the only one we don't see having talent in among the twenty-two (22) schools is - Offshore energy development, research and technology. That's the one that we have a noticeable lack of skillsets in for marine offshore energy.

"So, I mentioned the Real Time Coastal Observatory System. And these pictures show you the existing sites that we have right now. We've had these in place for about twenty-five (25) years. And what you see is there are four (4) locations in Baldwin County and three (3) locations in Mobile County. What we are collecting is real time data that is available to anybody who wants to see what is going on in Coastal Alabama. You might question how this is relevant. But you can just see - this is public access, total visits on an annual basis to the website that produces these data and makes it available to the community. Look how much this has grown just in some five (5) years. The interest is really great in this, and who might be using this? The National Weather Service, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric



Administration, the Alabama Department of Public Health uses this site frequently. I see Chris is here, 'Hi Chris'...the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources uses this website, the National Data Buoy Center, Coast Guard uses this website frequently, and they were concerned when we thought we might have to shut this down. The Alabama Port Authority uses this site frequently as does the Alabama Department of Transportation, because they are concerned about the safety of the Ferry when it is running back and forth. Very, very useful data sets are being generated by this site. Now the question of complexity and academic accounting came up right off the bat. And this is foreign to each of you, I realize that. You are more familiar with direct cost than you are allowable indirect cost, and so David has created this explanation for you that is much better than what we could do if we just wrote the pros out and handed it out. The direct costs are those that are assignable basically to a single project, just one (1) project. Indirect costs are costs that cannot be easily partitioned to a single project. Examples include: lab technicians who work full-time on a project; travel related to a single project, materials, fringe benefits...well you get the idea. These are directly assigned to a single project. For big organizations like ourselves, indirect costs are determined by the federal government, and they are based on our costs for depreciation, utilities, budgeting, departmental administration, library and the like...all of which perform a critical mission in our ability to sustain research but are not easily billable to a single project. So that's kind of the difference between the two. We try to talk your language as often as we can. It has been a long time, but I've never forgotten a conversation with my Father who was a career Marine, and he died in his forties (40s) and lasted through the eighties (80s). And I told him what I was going to do in graduate school. I want give you all the expletives that went with it, but basically it was...'Why would people want to pay you to do that?' That was the question that came back to me. And despite the fact that I had just got out of the Army, I didn't want to use any expletives back, because I knew he was still tougher than me, but the bottom line is...you guys don't have a good economy if the community doesn't believe the Gulf of Mexico is healthy. That is part number one (#1). This either or argument that has existed for thirty (30) or more years is a false choice. I also point out to you in 2012; we had an economic impact survey done by the University of South Alabama just to find out what we do in the community. At that point, our state appropriation was about \$3.6 million dollars (\$3,600,000.) USA estimated that our economic impact from that \$3.6 million dollars was thirty-eight million dollars (\$38,000,000.) on the community. So for every dollar we got out of Montgomery, we brought back ten (10). Pretty darn good return on the taxpayers' investments, I think. So with that, I'm not going to go any further, and I'll throw the floor open to questions, but I think you get an idea of why I think we are quite qualified based on our forty-five (45) years of existence and our performance metric. The audits and everything are available online. If you just contact me, I will gladly direct you to the materials along with our annual reports. We are quite open, and we try very hard to be relevant. Thank you."

**AGENDA ITEM #IV:**

**COUNCIL DISCUSSION OPPORTUNITY WITH MESC REPRESENTATIVES**

**AGENDA ITEM #V:**

**COUNCIL DISCUSSION ON ALABAMA CENTER OF EXCELLENCE DESIGNATION**

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

"John, unbelievable. To start off, how did you come about, you mentioned that you are going to fund, I think it was, eight (8) grants at three hundred thousand (\$300,000.) and eight (8) at thirty thousand (\$30,000.), how did you come up with those numbers and qualities?"

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"The guidance, it starts out with the guidance that we got from the solicitation for proposals. So we knew about how much money was going to be available during the course of this phase of the Centers. We also knew about how much each University charges for overhead, so with the money that was left; we made a decision about what kinds of studies would make the greatest initial impact on the Council's ability to make future conservation decisions. And we estimate that it's about a hundred grand, one hundred and fifty (\$100,000. - \$150,000.) a year is what it takes to conduct solid science in our communities by our scientists. So that is our estimate. And then I knew from my experiences with the National Science Foundation (NSF) that these exploratory grants also have the opportunity to have great returns. Beyond that, you have scientists who are in Montgomery, Birmingham and wherever with extraordinary skill sets, but their deans aren't going to let them just come down here. And the opportunity to get this diversification of science in our two (2) counties led me to believe we needed a way to

stimulate involvement for the new and younger. NSF usually goes between 20 and 30 thousand (\$20,000. - \$30,000.) So that's how I came up with those two numbers."

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

"Okay. Has anybody got any questions?"

Mayor Collier (Town of Dauphin Island):

"It is really not as much of a question, Dr.Valentine, but you mentioned about the GoMURC. I can't restate what that acronym stands for off-hand, but essentially you were talking about the collaborative efforts among not only the Alabama Center for Excellence but the other states as well, I think that's something that you obviously can't, in my mind, that if you have all these different groups that are working out there, it would seem to make sense that they would have some connection so that there is not a lot of duplication or we kind of fill gaps as much as possible so that at the end of the day we have the best available information possible across the broader spectrum. Is that what I think I heard you say? Is that's what's going on?"

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"That's correct. Our intention is to use this money to the maximum extent that we can. We want to minimize duplication wherever possible, but if there are ways where two (2) states have mutual interests in a particular question and we can get the scientists from those two (2) states to work together to make a bigger study than we can fund by ourselves and get more return on the investment, that's what that organization will do. And like I say, we talk every week. We have conference call schedules. I know exactly what's going on in the State of Florida and Mississippi, in particular. We are even using this as a springboard for other kinds of collaboration, particularly with Mississippi. We have been talking about some grant proposals that we want to submit that would be in a highly competitive sort of way, but collaborations are the buzz words now in science. You know, it's like it has just been discovered. But we have been doing this since 1971, and we know how to do this. I didn't bring the slides that I could show you, but if you remember when the oil spill hit, and we realized that we didn't have any monitoring data to speak of to tell what was going on out in the Gulf; BP gave Governor Riley a five million dollar (\$5,000,000.) check. So Governor Riley directly moved the money to George Crozier, who was my predecessor, and then he asked me to do something with it. So we went from no network of scientists to a science network that involved eighteen (18) of the schools and one hundred twenty (120) investigators in four (4) months and that's where you saw a lot of the early stories coming out on the Gulf, because there was so much 'is not, is no' that was driven by the twenty-four (24) hour media cycle. Almost all of that was negative, and so born out of that experience was the GoMURC. And you will notice that in the language of the ACT showing how active we were, you will see the buzz word in Section 1605, university-based consortia, broad collaborations; that was directly the result of us. And I got to Alan Hanson, who as you know works for Senator Shelby and Chris D'Elia got to Mary Landrieu's Chief-of-Staff, I can't remember the name at the moment, and because they were the lead authors on the ACT, we were able to get that language inserted. We didn't want to just see that money get lost, so we worked together extensively, but just by our nature we would anyway in sciences, but as lab directors, we know how tight things are. And we are always trying to get the biggest bang for the buck. We are also very adamant in our view that the Gulf of Mexico has gotten the short shrift for a very long time when you look at the relative distribution of research dollars coming out of Washington. The Gulf of Mexico has been flat lined for almost fifty (50) years and you can look at the...I can send you the plot from the EPA Gulf of Mexico program. Meanwhile, Chesapeake Bay and Great Lakes have grown precipitously. What makes us less important to the nation than these other bodies of water? And why did it take BP to get us this? So that's another element of what our initiative is about. So, you know, I'm not sure that I completely answered your question. We are working together a lot."

Mayor Collier (Town of Dauphin Island):

"I think that's the general question, and I think you've answered that. That you're in contact with these other state individuals and there seems to be very much of a willingness to continue the collaboration, so that's a good thing."

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"When we get together in St. Petersburg in February for the big oil spill conference, we'll be sitting a sidebar for a couple of hours to back them, too."

Mayor Collier (Town of Dauphin Island):

"Well, let me...just one quick follow-up on Jimmy Lyons' question or comment about the size of the dollar amounts for the projects – the eight (8), three hundred thousand (\$300,000.) and eight (8) thirty thousand (\$30,000.) What is the anticipated time line roughly that some of this stuff will not only get started but hopefully get completed? Do you have somewhat of a broad idea on that?"

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"Yeah, I mean the Sea Grant and I have a lot of experience with these kinds of things. So we still have some hurdles we have to clear. We have to negotiate with the Administrator for the State of Alabama and after that we have to go through some hurdles with Treasury and those will really be the holdups, and not the State of Alabama, but Treasury has been extraordinary intrusive. And we are going to have to get through whatever the requirements are. We have had no discussions with them in three (3) years, so if we were cleared good to go the end of January, I would say sometime this summer we'd have Request for Proposals on the table. I know that there will be a lot of lobbying that will come from the Presidents because only their university will do the very best research. I'm not silly to think that's not coming, but we are going to do what I believe is right for Coastal Alabama, and I think focusing on the watersheds, you know, and like I said there is thirty-nine (39) of them locally, and it's awfully hard to know who's contributing what. There is no sense to have these broad regional line initiatives when we may have areas we need to target for resiliency and restoration and things like that."

Mayor Collier (Town of Dauphin Island):

"Thank you, Jim."

Mayor Craft (City of Gulf Shores):

"I have a quick question. Will the assumption that some of the past events and some of the ongoing current events and future events will result in some stop depletion and diminishing numbers of marine life and diminishing habitat with saltwater or even freshwater? What plants did it protect that give that environment for protection of breeding? What is the nexus between the research you do and the potential to get that replaced and restocked?"

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"We will be able to give you the data that tells you what you need to do to restock. My concern is a lot of stuff I hear in the newspaper and on TV are things we thought twenty (20) years ago, not what things we think now. For example, the Magnuson-Stephens Act, like it or not, it worked and Snapper are back. You know, they work very effectively so now the trick is how do we adjust the harvest such that there's a balance between the economic needs in your community and a sustainable fishery. What things we need to do about seagrasses? There are a lot of different thoughts about what is really going on with them. There are things that you can fix and there are things you can't fix. There is a lot of interest in my case in knowing whether it's the big watershed, Birmingham and Montgomery that is affecting what happens in Mobile in the artificial reefs and all the rest of it. Or is it the local watersheds, Dog River, Fowl River and Weeks Bay? That's probably the most important question that I think we could focus on. What is it that is driving our area? And we just don't have that much data, we just don't have that much data, but we will get it because federal law now requires us to have that material, that information, deposited within twelve (12) months. And we have a fully functioning Data Management Center; you contact me Monday and I'll get you the links. Another thing that I don't have in the pile right now, but let's say, some of the federal council decisions that will come after the first of the year allow me to move the monitoring effort to them. Instead of us using the Center money, we will be able to use federal money to stand up the Observatory System. I think it would be really useful for us to get all the legacy data, that's the data that is hidden in file cabinets, and deposit it in this electronic Data Management Center so your environmental management folks can come directly to us and ask us what we know about this area before we go and get our permits. It probably helps with your permitting process. So, I think I have answered your question."

Mayor Craft (City of Gulf Shores):

"Yes sir, you did. Thank you."

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

"Any more questions? Tim."

Mayor Kant (City of Fairhope):

"I know you've got this line down to four (4) particular areas, and I'm going to skip over the energy section. It seems to me with all our great environmental groups we have over in Mobile and Baldwin County, they have been trying to do certain types of projects for years, but funding has never been there. And to be so open to just anything, wouldn't you maybe pick one-or-two-or-three that you really want to fund and make sure that we have enough money to do those instead of limiting to you just three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000.) If something came in and it really needed to happen that was four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000.) that would give more of an impact to the fisheries and what we are doing environmentally in Mobile Bay. I just want to make sure that we are not forgetting all that."

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"I understand that question, and I don't mean for this answer to be flippant, but every single one of the awards is going to think they should get four hundred thousand (\$400,000.) and the others should get two hundred, so..."

Mayor Kant (City of Fairhope):

"Well, I understand, but what I'm saying is we have some on the books now that the NEP, I guarantee if I got Roberta down here, she could list four (4) or five (5) that they have been trying for years...and I'm just saying, it would be nice if possibly those could be things that were mentioned as possible projects we would like you to consider, not saying TO DO them, and leave it at three hundred thousand (\$300,000.) I understand if they think it could be open and go crazy, but I just would like you to maybe consider that. And the other part, whatever we do, there ought to be an action plan after that so when we have this information that we can take this and try to figure how to fund to make it happen, because what I don't want to see is more research put on the shelf somewhere. I want to take this research and be able to accomplish something to benefit the citizens of South Alabama."

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"Well, I will respond in two (2) ways to this:

- The first is - we will have a Science Advisory Committee, an extra collection of external experts from around the country who will be evaluating the research that we are doing.
- Part two of this is - in this lower left box right here, Mobile National Estuarine Program is going to have input on who gets funded and doesn't get funded through the lens of the Coastal Consistency Management Plan (CCMP), which is probably the best vented program we have right now in Coastal Alabama.

"So, it's going to be relevant, and I can just tell you as all of you know, I have been in all of your offices talking about the Sea Lab and promoting our programs and what we do for you. Let us hear from you and that is also going to be a part of our outreach which is supplied by the Mississippi/Alabama Sea Grant. An example of leverage, they are not charging us for that. So, we are able to leverage already our partnerships with them to try to do this. So, it's not going to be an ivory tower, you know. The notion this could be considered heresy, I recognize, that we've going to restore things to the way they once were - is no longer relevant. We want to restore things to the maximum productivity we can achieve that is in the benefit of the taxpayers of the State of Alabama, but we are not going to be able to go back to the way things were when you don't know the way things were. So, it's all going to be relevant. I hope that I answered that question."

Mayor Kant (City of Fairhope):

"Around about way."

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

"Any more questions or comments? I have one more. Ultimately, the Restore Council and everybody else that is answering to the Department of Treasury and their Office of Inspector General, and I really kind of think this is...they are a little bit outside of what they normally do. You are quite accustomed, obviously, from reading your proposal and seeing your presentation today, you are quite accustomed to dealing with federal grants and a variety of agencies. Do you have any fears or concerns that Treasury is going to be overly difficult to deal with?"

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"I have some, but I'd rather not publicly say what those are, because of the five (5) state cooperation that we have. I'm very aware of what's being said in the other states, and I guess the one thing that I will say is that I sense distrust."

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

"Distrust of Treasury?"

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"Other way around, so we are going to be absolutely as transparent and open as we possibly can with this money. But whether it's Treasury money or the Governor's money or Commissioner's money, you know, I'm very cognizant of the fact that all we have to be is accused of misusing funds, and we'll be guilty. We move heaven and earth to double check and make sure that that is not a possibility. We absolutely are aware of this, and the last thing that we want to do is put any of you in a position where you are held on the spot, which I'll certainly be held on the spot by my twenty-two (22) Presidents."

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

"Do you think that your, this cooperative effort that you have with the other states, was it...GoMURC?"

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"GoMURC, they call it."

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

"GoMURC, yes. Do you think that will extend to the various Centers of Excellence and have that same level of cooperation that you have been sharing?"

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"Yes, the only one board member who would not be a Director of the Center of Excellence is in Louisiana. LSU is not going to be the Center of Excellence in Louisiana. It is going to be something called The Water Institute. And the Louisiana member on the GoMURC board is the LSU Dean for Oceanography. He may be moving to Florida here before long, but I don't see any reason why we would not continue these conversations. If anything, during my twelve (12) months sitting as the Chair of this group, I'm going to be pushing for them to consider the bigger question which is promoting the needs of the Gulf of Mexico in Washington. And I think all of you know that collectively our five (5) states are the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) largest economy in the world. Why shouldn't Washington, D.C. be paying attention to us? It's not just Baldwin County in Montgomery or Mobile County in Montgomery; we have the same issues nationally. Why aren't we getting more attention? We are huge in terms of the contributions to the nation's GNP; something like two trillion dollars I think is the estimate that's out there."

**PUBLIC COMMENT (As Time Allows):**

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

"Okay, anybody else. I will very briefly entertain any questions from any of the audience, but please have nothing but doing with this proposal. If it has to do with anything else, we don't want to hear it. We are really here to deal with the Center of Excellence. Go ahead..."

*(Inaudible...No microphone)*

Speaker #1:

Raoul Richardson (International Used Oil Research Institute (IUORI) Director):

"Dr. Valentine, excellent presentation. I mean if the key word is transparency and, of course, the ability to be able to kind of focus on this Center of Excellence, the only question that I have is not relative to dollars or number of proposals or given our relationship with the collaboration with the University of South Alabama. I'm not so concerned about that. My question was specifically directed towards what about things, notwithstanding number three (#3) item, which was relative to the ocean energy concerns. Is there any opportunity for allocation of funds if someone comes up with an idea relative to innovation, education, collaboration that is going to really benefit the consortia of ideas in our community represented that doesn't fall within that categorization, in other words, what we would categorize, you and I, as an unsolicited proposal?"

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"You know, with the amount of money we have, I don't see how we can set aside a contingency fund to do that at this moment. And beyond that, we are legally obligated to adhere to the guidance in the ACT, and Treasury will be scrutinizing every decision. We will be making publicly available every review, every panel discussion. The transcripts will be made available. The best way I can think of to detox the circumstances that Florida went through with Treasury is to be open and transparent. But right now with the guidance I have, there is going to be a single RFP during this cycle, and you know, if the Council directs me to set aside a contingency fund, I would certainly do that; but it would have to come at the expense of the research projects that we currently have funded. If more money were to come into the pot - absolutely. I would like to see graduate student fellowships where we pay for supplies and travel so they can work in Mobile and Baldwin County. We would get new science but we would also expose future academicians to the wonderful resources that are down here in the communities we live in. There are four (4) or five (5) other things that I would bring online after conversation with the Council about whether it was allowable or not, but...so...I don't see how we can do a contingency fund with the guidance that I have at the moment and the legal limitations."

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

"Yes."

*(Inaudible...No microphone)*

Speaker #2:

Janet DelaOliva-Ripp (Coastal Wildlife Rescue and Research Center Executive Director):

"Do you know of any organizations or any of the schools that are planning any projects that concern shorebirds, sea birds or water fowl?"

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"You know, off the top of my head I don't, but in Mayor Johnson's community, we are sponsoring their first professional academy called the Coastal Studies Academy. Right now they are focused on oyster aquaculture, a college marine biology track; and we are talking about horticulture because the plants to do marsh restoration are going to have to come from somewhere. I'd like to see something like this grow up in Baldwin County. Our educators would love to be involved with your high schools over there. So the opportunities exist, and like I say, we have that extensive summer program. And, you know, it's a little early to tell what revelations we might be able to come up with in regard to those kind of things but, you know, in the end if we haven't made this environment sustainable for our children's children, we haven't really done too much. Yes, Casi."

*(Inaudible...No microphone)*

Speaker #3:

Casi Calloway (Mobile Baykeeper Executive Director):

"John, I have one question about these slides that you have up. What does TRP stand for?"

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"Technical Review Panel."

Casi Calloway (Mobile Baykeeper Executive Director):

"Okay, perfect. So that comes from the Mississippi/Alabama Sea Grant team, and then it comes back and that's where the pick will ultimately have review?"

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"So, you know, we are going to get everything from near Nobel winning science to, you know, ecological significance of leggings in Alaska for the Gulf of Mexico. That's just what's going to happen. So they are going to go through this with experts from outside the State of Alabama. And the reason is we don't want our member institutions influencing the decision process. They are going to characterize these proposals in terms of fundable, not fundable. So they are just going to focus on the quality of the science. Then these things are going to come to me. I'm going to get with the Program Implementation Committee (PIT), which is comprised of NGOs and interested citizens and elected officials from Mobile and Baldwin County. And they are going to independently decide what this has got to do with improving the resiliency of Coastal Alabama. And there is an index that the Socio-Biologists have come up with. It will be used to prioritize fundable choices from the citizens' perspective. And all that stuff is going to come back to me and LaDon and Roberta, and we are going to sit down and make our best guess on what should happen."

Casi Calloway (Mobile Baykeeper Executive Director):

"I love that process, and I love the involvement and inclusion of the NEP. I think it is vitally important that they be included, and they be involved. The other piece of that, and I am confident that you all will cover the science from the NEP's Science Project Committee. They also have a Citizen Action Committee (CAC)...Community Action Committee. While this may end up being too technical in many cases for them to fully grasp, that group has a lot better understanding of what impacts and how they would be impacted on the ground from the perspective of a project going into place. Is there a possibility of incorporating some review or some discussion with the CAC...could it happen...?"

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"No, I'm not averse to doing this if the Council wants me to do it. I can come back to the citizens' group and say, 'Here's what we have decided, what do you think?' And at least, I'm not opposed to doing that, but the Council would have to direct me to that because that was not identified in the solicitation for proposal. I would mention two (2) things. Since we started talking about the Sea Grant involvement in the State of Alabama, almost three-and-a-half (3-1/2) years ago, Mississippi is now using this approach and Texas and so, an example of the collaborations between them. We are the only state that is doing irrelevance review. None of the other states are getting input from government and from the citizens. And I know there are a number of citizens who are also involved with PIT, so we could expand the PIT; that could be a possibility."

Casi Calloway (Mobile Baykeeper Executive Director):

"Or have a joint meeting so that..."

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"I have no problem hearing comments. For those of us who went to Leadership Alabama, we all say - diversity is a gift. So why not have a few more opinions to make sure we make the right decision. Yes..."

*(Inaudible...No microphone)*

Speaker #4:

Walter Ernest (Pelican Coast Conservancy Director of Operations):

"John, do you have a formula when the RFPs come out that will equally distribute the funds in the coastal counties..?"

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"No, I was going to go with the best available...I'm following the guidance provided by the National Research Board in Washington and the National Academy of Sciences. The ethical part is coming from the National Academy of Sciences and these PI(s) will be held to that standard. I hate to get into that and turn it into a political decision, you know. In the end, it's going to be distributed throughout the State of

Alabama. I just wished we had twice as much to work with, because then I would gin up a real monitoring program.”

**CLOSING COMMENTS:**

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

“Okay, John, thank you. The proposal was excellent to the follow-up questions that you sent to the committee and by the way, I do want to thank the committee. We had Jerry Carl who served on the committee, Dan Dealy representing Baldwin County, Franklin Johnson from the Governor’s Legal Office, Eliska, and Phillip West representing the City of Orange Beach. But they, having read the proposals and the answers too, that was not easy work just going through it and assuring that everything met all the criteria that was set forth, so I appreciate, John, your efforts and your team’s efforts in putting the proposal together and our review committee’s work in reviewing to insure that we had something. We are trying to be very deliberate in how we go about this. We got slapped on the hands by Treasury about a year-and-a-half (1-1/2) ago. We certainly want to avoid that. But in any event...is there any further discussion, any comments, questions that any of the members have? I think this juncture it might be in order to have a motion?”

Mayor Collier (Town of Dauphin Island):

“Mr. Chairman, I will be happy to do that unless there are any more conversations to be had. I don’t want to cut anybody off.”

Mayor Kant (City of Fairhope):

“Can I will bring up one (1) point that we brought up? I know the Treasury when dealing with dollars wants to be sure that there is public meeting or public input somewhere during that cycle. I guess that’s a part somewhere in there that you will when you come out with your four (4) or five (5) projects that you want to fund, there will be a point at that point where citizens can actually have that input at that point so we do have a public meeting. I know they fussed at us about not having a public meeting, so I assume if we go down the same road as long as that’s in the process...”

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

“I’m waiting to see when we get to that point; there will be feedback from that. I know that once we satisfy the State of Alabama’s interests, the Treasury is going to come in with theirs and since we are the last of the five (5) to be designated, they are going to be using everything they have learned from the other four (4) states on us. So the good news is because of GoMURC, I know mostly what’s been said. And we have no problem presenting what we are going to do and the sixteen (16) projects total that will be funded. And it could go up substantially more if the Federal Council picks up the monitoring stations, so that could turn into the contingency fund you were asking about. So, as long as the Council is flexible and the Administrator is flexible, you know, but I’m not going to make any unilateral decisions because the worst thing I could do is have my twenty-two (22) Presidents see me written up in al.com. If Gus Malzahn thinks he’s in a bad spot, he’s got nothing on what would happen down here.”

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

“Okay, anything else....Jeff?”

Mayor Collier (Town of Dauphin Island):

“Mr. Chairman, it would be my pleasure to make a motion that the Gulf Coast Recovery Council accepts the proposal submitted by the Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium to serve as Alabama’s Center of Excellence and then to also move forward with the developing and finalization of a specific Scope of Work.”

Commissioner Dorsey (Baldwin County Commissioner):

“I second my friend’s motion.”



Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

"Alright, we have a motion and a second. Do we have any discussion on the issue? If no further discussion, I will call for all in favor to say 'Aye' (*Vote of 'Aye'*) Anyone opposed? Okay, looks like we have a unanimous vote. Congratulations."

**AGENDA ITEM #VI:**

**NEXT STEPS**

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

"Now the next step is we have actually got to get an Agreement drafted. And I think probably the simplest unless somebody has an objection or another idea, I think probably the simplest thing would be to turn it over to our Administrators, Eliska and the Department of Conservation. I'm sure they will have access to the Governor's Legal Team for legal support, but go ahead and charge them with actually drafting the Agreement and then once that is drafted, we can circulate that to the members to see if any there are any questions or concerns before we move towards finalization. 'Does that seem doable, Patti and Eliska? Any objection to that?' Okay, well that sounds good, so that's what we will do, and I guess that is all the business that we had today. This meeting was very specific for this purpose, and I'm pleased that we have made some progress here. Patti..."

Patti Powell (ADCNR State Lands Director):

"I have nothing to add to this. I want to make one (1) announcement unrelated to this Council but just when you are done."

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

"Okay, go ahead."

Patti Powell (ADCNR State Lands Director):

"Just as a reminder and those signed up on our Alabama Coastal Restoration website, we have already got the notice and the reminder. So forgive me for being duplicative, but next week, December 9<sup>th</sup>, there is a meeting of the Federal level Council, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council in Biloxi. And so if anybody would like any additional details on that meeting, I'll be around for a few minutes. The Council will be meeting to vote on the initial draft-funded parties list that was published previously for comment, as well as the Spill Impact, or as we professionally call it, Bucket Three (3). The formula will also be voted on. I just wanted to offer if anyone has any questions or wants any information about that meeting, just see me after this meeting. Thank you."

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

"Thank you, Patti. Anything else?"

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**NEXT MEETING DATE:**

No future meeting date was announced.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):

"I'm going to entertain a motion to adjourn."

Commissioner Dorsey (Baldwin County Commissioner):

"I'm glad to be back with everyone. John, just want to say, 'Excellent presentation and very comprehensive.' All the questions, I was kind of lined up to ask were answered here or answered through the other questions. I appreciate the efficiency that you are also operating with and the cost administratively, as well as obviously the need for the transparency question. I'm really complimentary of your work. Thank you."

Dr. John Valentine (MESC Director):

"Thank you, Commissioner."

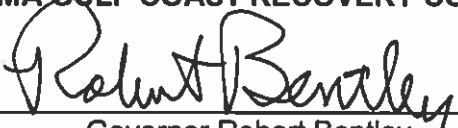
Director Lyons (AGCRC Vice-Chairperson):  
"Okay, thank you. Anybody else?"

Mayor Collier (Town of Dauphin Island):  
"I move that we adjourn."

Commissioner Dorsey (Baldwin County Commissioner):  
"Motion seconded."

Meeting adjourned by Director Lyons - 3:30 p.m. Central Time.

**ALABAMA GULF COAST RECOVERY COUNCIL**

By:   
Governor Robert Bentley  
Its Chair

**ATTEST:**

By:   
Director James K. Lyons  
Its Vice-Chair