



Three Coastal Communities Come Together to Share Solutions

They thought they were just getting together with their “neighbors” for a leadership trip. But, upon returning from Myrtle Beach, S.C., the group of 80 representatives from two chambers and two convention and visitors bureaus formed a new, regional group in Baldwin County – the Coastal Alabama Alliance.

The founding organizations are South Baldwin Chamber, the Alabama Gulf Coast Chamber, Foley Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The Coastal Alabama Alliance unites volunteers from three cities – Foley, Gulf Shores and Orange

Beach – with a common mission: “to provide a vehicle for area-wide communication, collaboration and cooperation in addressing shared issues that are integral to the continued improvement and economic viability of the South Baldwin County area.”

The group is divided into six clusters:

- **Attractions**, chaired by Don Stafford, Ribs & Reds;
- **Community Affairs**, chaired by Tracy Holiday, Craft Farms;
- **Development**, chaired by Ed Hand, Volkert & Associates;

- **Marketing**, chaired by Pedro Mandoki, Plantation Resort Management;
- **Regional Advocacy**, chaired by Robert Craft, Craft Farms;
- **Workforce Development**, chaired by Charlie Glanding, Courtyard by Marriott. Donna Watts, president of the South Baldwin Chamber and facilitator of the development cluster, says creating the Coastal Alabama Alliance has been “a monumental but rewarding task.”

The Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Center (AGCCVC) produces an e-mail

newsletter, providing updates on the group’s progress and proving that each cluster has been working actively toward their goals. According to AGCCVC President, Herb Malone, the groups have been successful in “identifying common goals as well as approaches to reaching them” in each of these areas.

In May 2004, the Coastal Alabama Alliance is planning another leadership trip to Florida’s Sanibel/Captiva Island/Clearwater area, according to Watts.

Putting the “Cause” in Causeway

Since its creation in 1927, the Mobile Bay Causeway has joined Mobile and Baldwin counties economically and socially. The first land route across Mobile Bay, however, has posed some environmental challenges since it blocks the interchange of salt and fresh water in various places.

If the efforts of the Scenic Causeway Coalition are successful, the causeway will be named one of the nation’s newest scenic byways and become eligible for federal funding that can be used for causeway preservation and marketing programs.

Federal byway maps and marketing materials will list the causeway as a destination roadway for tourists from across the country. Being designated a federal scenic byway will be a major economic boon and will bring national attention to coastal Alabama.

Casi Callaway, executive director of Mobile Bay Watch and founding member of the Scenic Causeway Coalition, says the coalition’s first major success came when the state named the causeway as a state scenic byway – an accomplishment that paved the way for federal designation.

“It has been an ongoing labor of love by a lot of people, and plans are starting to take shape,” says Jim Williams, coalition chair. Williams, who works for Baldwin Accounting and Tax Service, is

in a unique position to appreciate what is happening. Both his home and his office are located on the causeway.

Through the help of former Congressman Sonny Callahan and, now, Congressman Jo Bonner, a \$250,000 grant was secured thanks to the state’s scenic byway designation.

Funding is being used by coalition volunteers to retain a consulting group to create a corridor management plan and launch a three-year hydrological modifications impact study to determine how the health of the bay and its estuaries are impacted by the roadway.

The result of this volunteer-driven “science project,” says Callaway, will be “a great and complete history of the delta, as this kind of data has never before been collected.”

The master plan is to be completed in May 2004. HDR Engineering Inc., an architectural engineering and consulting firm based in Atlanta, with offices in Fairhope and Pensacola is leading the project.

Scenic Causeway Coalition board members meet on the second Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at The Shoulder on the Causeway. The public is invited. For more information, call Mobile Bay Watch at 433-4229.



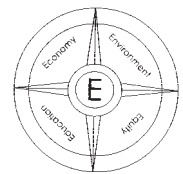
Jim Williams, Scenic Causeway Coalition chair and Casi Callaway, executive director of Mobile Bay Watch, prepare for the coalition’s November board meeting as the sun sets over the Causeway.



Fair Housing

Eileen Chestang, enforcement coordinator for Mobile Fair Housing, and Michael Pierce, executive director of MLK Redevelopment Corp., facilitated sessions at the 2003 Mobile Fair Housing Mayor’s Conference. Over 60 people attended the two-day workshop on “Developing Our Communities Through Homeownership and Affordable Housing” at the Arthur R. Outlaw Convention Center. The event included sessions on exclusionary zoning, redlining, mortgage lending, predatory lending and other related issues of fair housing. Mobile Mayor Mike Dow introduced keynote speaker Shanna Smith, executive director of the National Fair Housing Alliance, Washington D.C.

Smart Growth For Coastal Alabama - A Balancing Act



This conference hopes “to inspire, educate and enable participants to gain a balanced understanding of smart growth principles and the potential impact on our coastal region’s economy and quality of life.”

March 25, 2004
9:45 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.
Directly after the Envision Coastal Alabama Annual Meeting

Arthur R. Outlaw
Mobile Convention Center

For more information contact:
Wendy Allen at wndy1000@netzero.net or
Charlene Lee at charleneleeal@yahoo.com.

City of Mobile Recognized for Smart Growth

"Smart Growth for Mobile: A New Alternative," a plan developed by the city of Mobile's urban development department, took top honors in the outstanding planning program category at the annual conference of the American Planning Association's Alabama chapter.

Mayor Mike Dow directed the urban development department to begin the new initiative in May 2002. The purpose of the initiative is to develop planning policies and practices to address the manner in which inevitable growth and development will occur in Mobile.

Like many American cities, Mobile's prevailing development practices have greatly contributed to inefficient land use practices, increased traffic congestion, consumptive development of environmentally sensitive areas and wasteful use of city infrastructure and resources.

Following Dow's action, a smart growth steering committee consisting of representatives from other city departments and professionals from all facets of the development community, including local developers and those with grassroots interest, was formed.

In early 2003, the committee unanimously accepted the smart growth initiative and there appears to be a growing level of cooperation

between the public and private sectors concerning Mobile's growth.

A letter from Mayor Dow included in the award application stated: "This innovative program introduces development alternatives designed to improve and strengthen the city of Mobile's overall economic, physical and social sustainability."

Realtor Richard Weavil of The Weavil Co. LLC called the urban development department "progressive in 'thinking outside the box' and... steadfast in their efforts to make sure that this important initiative does not lose momentum."

George Crozier PhD, another advocate of the initiative and executive director of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, wrote: "Prior to this initiative, the interest from the community had been nil, but the combination of 'freedom of choice' and enhanced economic return has created an extraordinary level of participation and enthusiasm that I have not seen in almost 40 years of community activism."

Everyone involved with the initiative is excited about this award. Laura Clarke, director of urban development and staff liaison to the committee, says her department is "thrilled by the honor of being recognized by our peers and having Mobile at the forefront of such innovative efforts."

Connecting the Dots: Coastal Planners' Information Exchange

In an effort to promote a regional approach to sharing information that affect the natural resources along Alabama's Gulf Coast, 32 community planners, policy makers and natural resource protection managers from the Alabama and Mississippi coasts met at Dauphin Island Sea Lab in October. The meeting was sponsored by the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium and the Dauphin Island Sea Lab Coastal Policy Center.

The information exchange covered a wide range of subjects from transportation, to smart growth and development practices, to such topics as clean marinas and waterways. Presentations included highlighting several successful programs:

- Planning and architecture projects covering a variety of planning issues critically important to small towns striving to economically revitalize town centers and stimulate growth that protects natural resources.
- Principles of sustainable development in Mobile and Baldwin counties
- Healthy Coastal Communities Initiative (HCCI) presentations, workshops and conferences comparing economic and environmental impacts of present policies and practices to alternative

sustainable policies and practices.

- Grassroots Inc., an innovative program for realtors, developers, property owners and policy makers available through accredited continuing education courses.

"Today 53 percent of the U.S. population lives within 50 miles of the coast with a projection that 75 percent of the population will live in the coastal zone by 2025," said David Yeager, director of Mobile Bay National Estuary Program and Envision Coastal Alabama environment team chair. "The impacts of this growth are tremendous, and these forums are held to help agencies and organizations develop specific initiatives addressing issues associated with coastal growth."

Presenters included Kimberly Brown PhD, director of the Carl Small Town Center at Mississippi State University; Wendy Allen and Charlene Lee, co-founders of the Healthy Coastal Communities Initiative; and Emily Sommers, executive manager of Grassroots Inc.

For more information about the Coastal Planners Information Exchange, contact LaDon Swann, director Mississippi Alabama Sea Grant at 228-818-8843, or Yeager at 431-6409.

Running for- or Away From - Public Office

Whether they were encouraged or discouraged, prospective politicians were certainly fairly warned of the peaks and valleys of public office at a recent series of campaign workshops.

Sponsored by the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce and the University of South Alabama's College of Arts and Sciences department of political science and criminal justice, the event drew more than 40 people.

From political novices to pros, the three-evening program offered two-hour information sessions on topics including campaign planning, fundraising, marketing yourself as a candidate, polling, media and filing requirements.

David Johnson PhD, USA's dean of the college of arts and sciences, chaired the event, calling it a success. "If someone was thinking about running, they got a lot out of it. The purpose was to educate people on what they would encounter so they could be prepared."

Presenters included State Sen. Bradley Byrne; Mobile County Commissioner Sam Jones; Tim Baer, former executive director of the Alabama Republican Party; Chuck Spurlock from Sen. Jeff Sessions' Montgomery office; Bill Yeager of Timbes & Yeager; Keith Nicholls, director of USA's polling group; Mike Marshall, editor of the Mobile Register; Chuck Bark, news director of Fox 10; and Mobile County Probate Court Judge Don Davis.

In addition, a panel offered several personal perspectives on campaigning and holding office. Judge Herman Thomas of Mobile County Circuit Court spoke about judicial campaigns; Sen. Vivian Davis Figures discussed campaigning for issues;

Beth Marietta Lyons, an attorney, explained how to register with the Alabama Ethics Commission; and former State Rep. Chris Pringle shared his insight on surviving a campaign.



Mobile County Commissioner Sam Jones (top) and State Senator Bradley Byrne (below) presented the opening session on "Defining Yourself As A Candidate" at the 2003 Campaign Workshop held at the University of South Alabama.



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