

FEAB August 11th, 2023

**Fairhope Environmental Advisory Board
August 11, 2023
Fairhope Public Library**

Member Attendees: Gary Gover, Amy Paulson, Nigel Temple, Carole Tebay, Jennifer Foutch, Steven Scyphers, Anna Miller

Members not in attendance:

Ben Frater, excused absence

Jim Horner, excused absence

City of Fairhope: Christina LeJeune -Planning and Zoning Department, Nicole Love- grant writer

City Council: None

Honored Guests: Sarah Chandler, Cynthia Rush, Carl Couret

Guest Speaker: Osprey Initiative, Don Bates, RE: Trash Data

Minutes taken by: Christina LeJeune

Amy called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

FEAB Minutes:

July minutes were amended and approved Nigel 1st, Carole 2nd, unanimous.

Summary of Meeting & Action Items:

1. Don bates with Osprey Initiative presented trash data report for Winn Dixie Pond litter boom. Although the project is successful, the study did not collect a lot of trash or identify consistent sources to target.
2. Amy will brief Corey the Monday after meetings and provide a list of agenda items that were discussed.
3. FEAB recommends the City consider adding a feasibility study for potential graywater reuse opportunities to the next round of WWTP analysis.
4. FEAB recommends the City pursue educational signage on the pier to reduce illegal take of junior bull shark and other protected species.
5. FEAB supports the City's pursuit of Eagle Scout projects constructing reefs made of oysters to promote nearshore estuarine habitat .
6. FEAB passed unanimous Resolution to recommend list of locations for MBNEP watershed identification signs .
7. December's FEAB meeting will be on Friday the 8th at 9:15 am .

Introductions:

1st time attendees were introduced:

Sarah Chandler, recently moved from New Orleans and is looking for ways to get involved environmentally.

City updates:

Winn Dixie litter profiling report:

Don: The Winn Dixie Pond is broken into zones and then cleaned individually. This process helps to better track data for litter source. After chasing legacy litter, the concept is maintenance of the pond and having it turn into its on eco system with native plant restoration. The collected litter seems to be active from random people being random. To date there has been 24 lbs. of recyclable litter and 235 lbs. of disposed litter. Due to very little litter the Big Mouth Gully Pond was added for trash pickup. Don encouraged FEAB to suggest other problem areas for consideration.

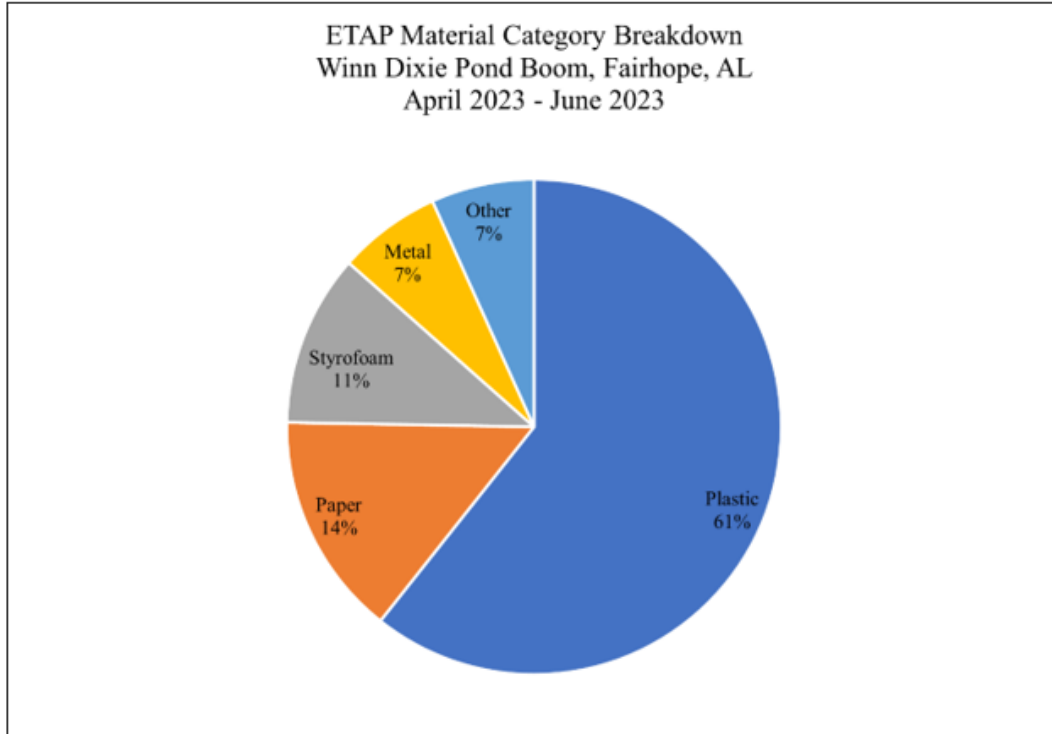


Figure 1: Major Category Breakdown for April 2023 through June 2023 describes the overall percentage composition of materials collected from the Winn Dixie Pond Boom.

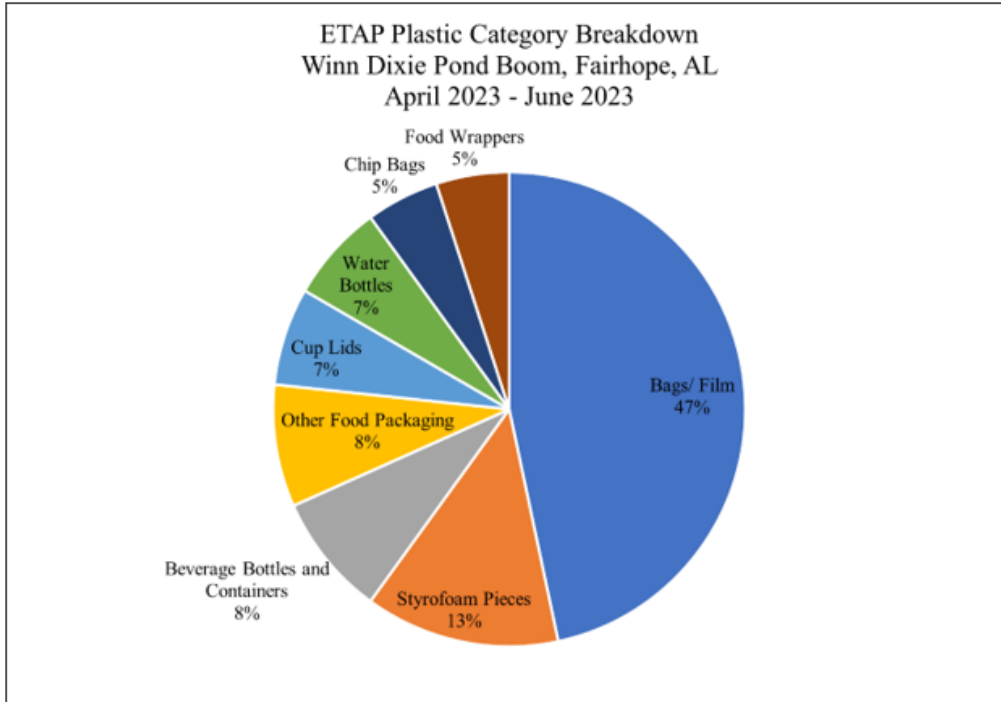


Figure 2: Plastic Category Breakdown for April 2023 through June 2023 describes the plastic materials composition and breakdown collected from the Winn Dixie Pond Boom.

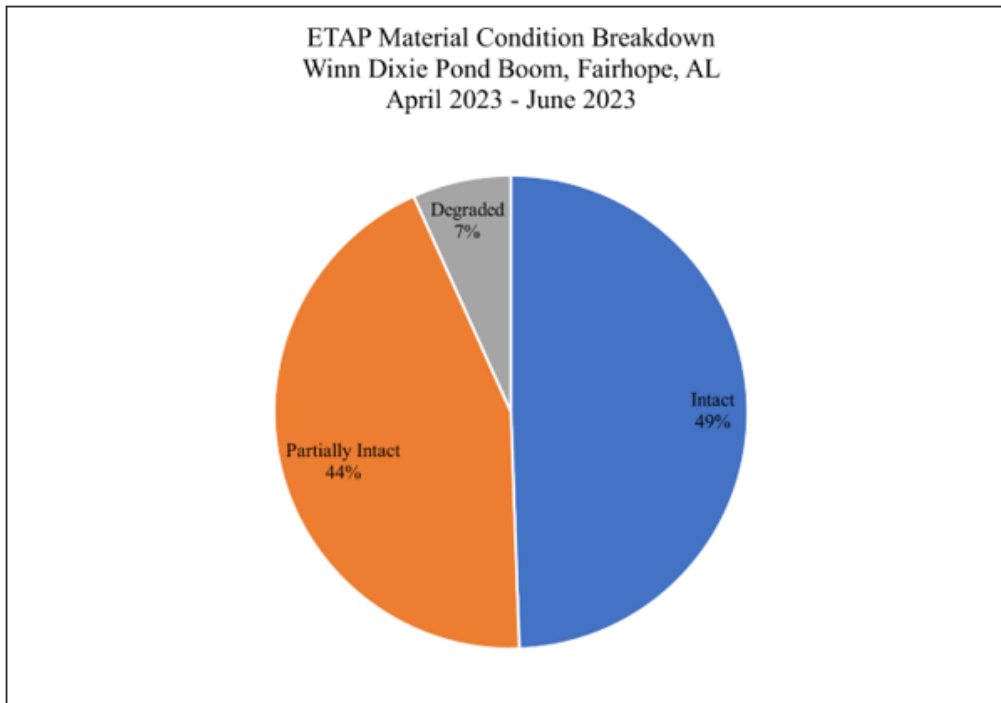


Figure 3: ETAP Material Condition Breakdown for April 2023 through June 2023 describes the overall condition of materials collected in the Winn Dixie Pond Boom. This shows that the site has a more active litter issue because most of the trash is intact or partially intact (it has only been in the environment for a little while).

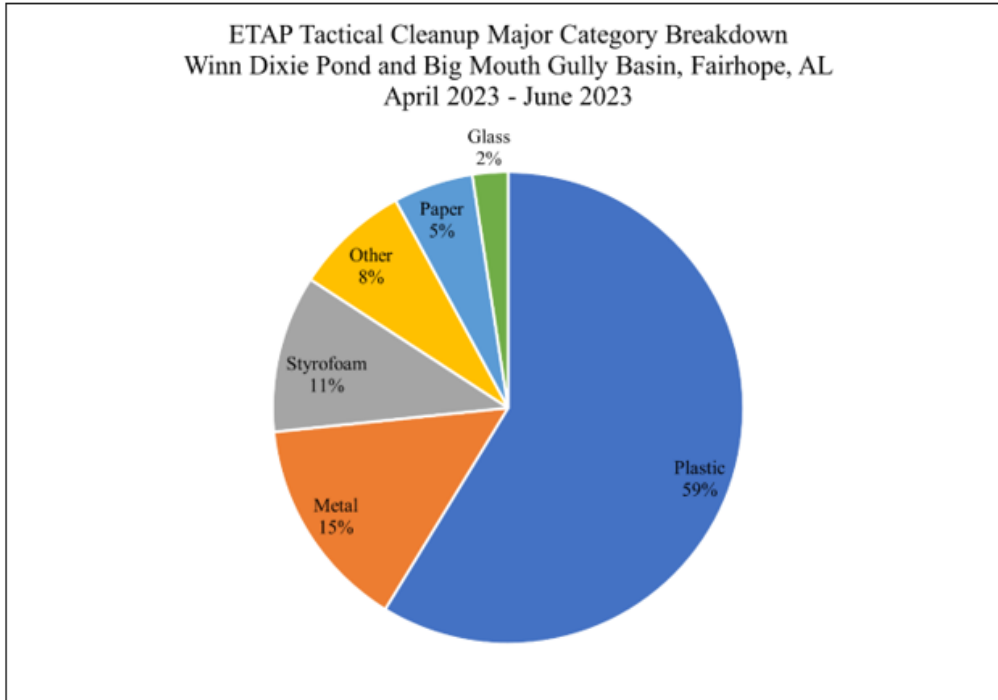


Figure 4: ETAP Material Major Category Breakdown for April 2023 through June 2023 describes the overall composition of materials collected in the zones around the Winn Dixie Pond Boom and in Big Mouth Gully Basin.

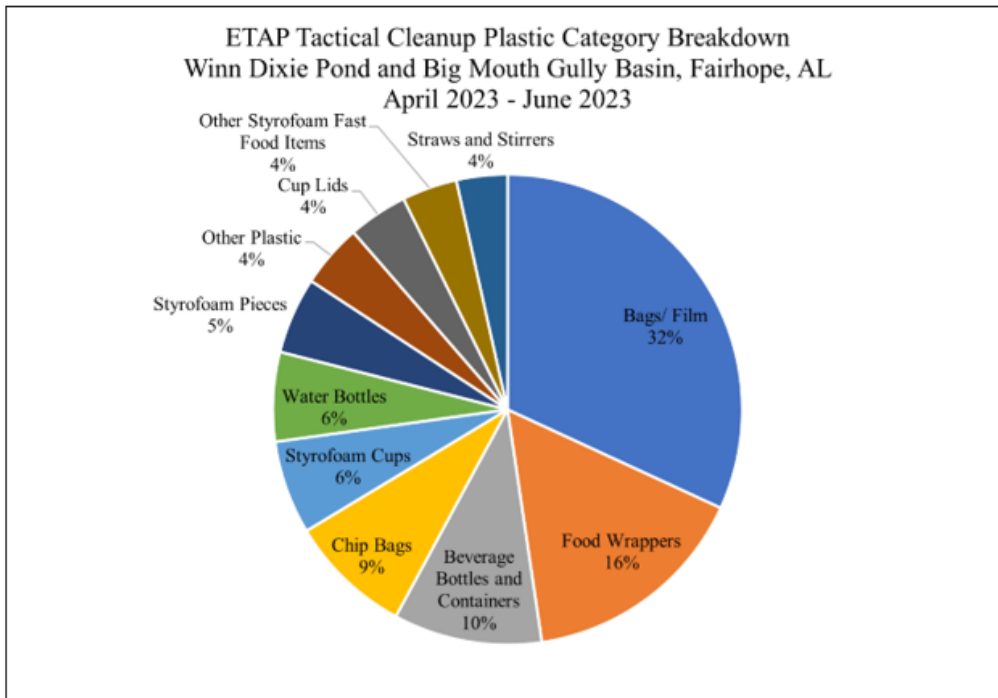


Figure 5: Plastic Category Breakdown for April 2023 through June 2023 describes the overall plastic composition of materials collected in the zones around the Winn Dixie Pond Boom and in Big Mouth Gully Basin.

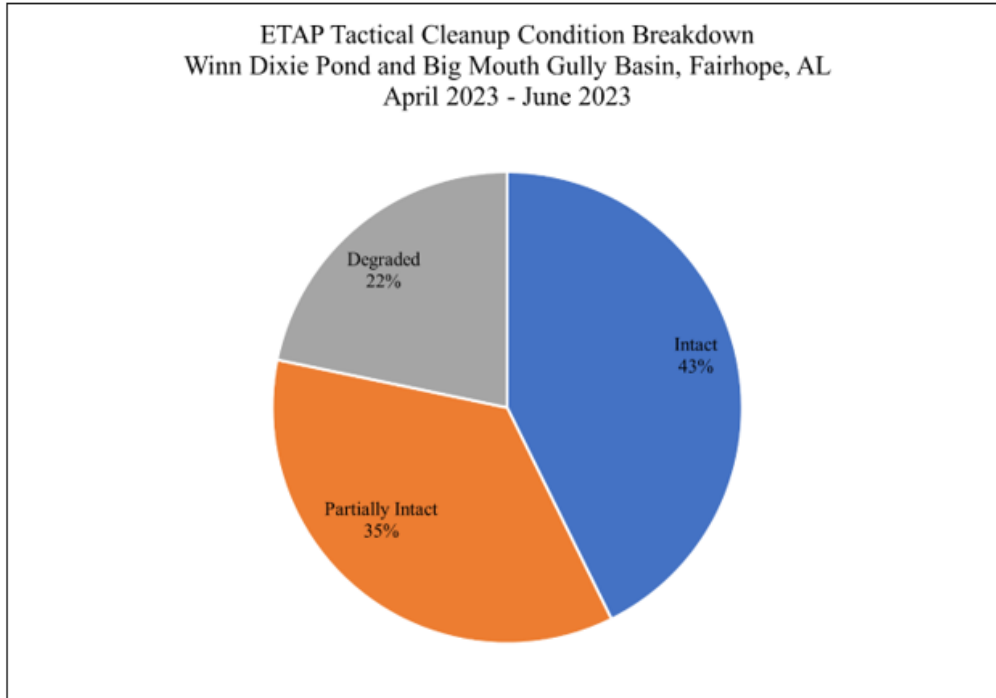


Figure 6: Condition Breakdown for April 2023 through June 2023 describes the overall condition of materials collected in the zones around the Winn Dixie Pond Boom and Big Mouth Gully Basin. This shows that the zones have a semi-active litter issue with some historical litter present as well.

Graywater Initiative:

Amy: Corey supports the idea of graywater. Any water put on lawns should not be coming from water well system and needs to be separated.

Anna: Is Corey referring to new subdivisions or municipal systems as a retro fit?

Amy: With all of things happening at the wastewater treatment, Corey thought it would be a good time to do a feasibility study. This would help design a system that could be enabled throughout the city (private, public, new build, old builds).

Amy: In some other states they are pausing this practice due to the contamination of PFAS and PFOS. EPA has yet to announce a federal standard so the technology to clean the water is not there yet. It can be done but it's very expensive and the city will not likely be able to meet it. If that water is used on lands, you then effect the real estate value of that land from contamination and risk encountering liability.

Nicole: The legislation is currently discussing PFAS and the fines that Cities or other places will be charged for contamination. Even though it might not be the municipality itself discharging, fines will be charged if PFAS are found in water system.

Steven: South has the capability to test for it now, particularly for small fish people consume. There is a nationwide PFAS map for known and suspected places. With Fairhope having an airport they are likely to show up on a suspected list for high probability of contamination from firefighting equipment/training.

Amy: maybe start with a pilot project and focus on gray / purple water on golf courses, which is a large irrigation user.

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Nigel: the city could be held liable if there are any questions about contamination.

Gary: Could find ways to use gray water within existing family homes, although it could be costly. A survey or preliminary study could be useful to classify aspects that are feasible or not.

Amy: In addition to reuse we need to provide other tools in the box. A bigger bang for the buck would be to focus on demand and end of pipe conservation. Recommend consideration of persistent nonvoluntary irrigation schedules (i.e., odd on M/W) and ongoing landscape education regardless of emergency status. Corey's concern is we are growing and therefore have an increase in demand, but demand is unreasonable.

Anna: This is a great opportunity for us to be proactive with water efficiency. We should zoom out and look at multiple conservation options, especially for things such as irrigation which is a large user. Rules could be changed for new subdivisions.

Gary: The City could stop mowing the right of way and instead let it go back to a natural based landscaping or plant wild flowers.

Amy: This leads to this years focal point on native habitats and how relevant they are. Corey is excited to push the native habitat as a water conservation tool. FEAB could help build toolbox that's not based on volunteer behavior but instead give City development goals or full-time restrictions.

Anna: Has provided water conservation list to the mayor with input from Carol, Gary, and Nigel that has proven ways to increase water efficiency. Anna would also like to consider certification incentives for new subdivisions and retrofits.

Gary: Look at zoning requirements. Are they influencing grass lawns exclusively or can the HOA be approached? They could be asked to back off lawn requirements and change rules to what's acceptable for property.

Carol: Does not believe its just the HOA, part of the tree ordinance states all ground must be covered. Not for sure if it applies to just commercial or homeowners.

Anna: Are we requiring permanent irrigation for all new subdivisions or temporary until plants established? All roads lead to impervious surfaces which was included in the efficiency report.

Amy: My neighborhood uses the storm water retention ponds we pump to regularly to irrigate the community lawn around it. Golf courses could do the same, and homes could trap their gray water for reuse. Will report back to Corey and recommend meeting separately to discuss other options. The city could get a feasibility study added to waste water treatment budget.

Eagle Scout Artificial Reef Project:

Steve: Boy Scout (John Shell) earned his Eagle Scout Badge by creating an artificial reef. He collaborated with a group out of FL that designs reefs made from a poly type material that oyster shells are embedded into. They are then mounted underneath docks to provide structure that act as habitat for estuarine / nearshore species (potentially recruiting oyster and mussels, but more likely used by small fish. Mussels and oysters provide filtration and possible water quality benefits. A few hundred were put in as part of the Eagle Scout project over a year. John's dad helped pass off project to environmental partners to take over. There was a big kick off at the Grand with officials from neighboring Cities. Fairhope has an interest in installing 10-15 of these reefs at different locations along our coast. FEAB could advise or comment on locations. This could be a great opportunity to couple signage with Eagle Scout reefs and broader info on coastal marine-related issues.

Amy: Has concern if we deploy reefs with the expectation that oysters will grow (historically this is not the best oyster environment due to freshwater input).

Steve: They probably wouldn't have live oysters but oyster shells are used as structure in the design. This area of the bay is not favorable for recruiting oysters. The structure will be good for little fish, shrimp, crabs, mussels, and barnacles – much about expected species is unknown and would be an experiment in this area.

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Nigel: suggests removing the word oyster because the expectations will be they should have oysters to be functional.

Nicole: When signs go up, we don't want people assuming water is being filtered. Signs could suggest what may grow on or in reef structures. Mayor supports idea and sees it as an educational benefit.

Educational Signs

Steve: would like to see signage at the pier to help with identifying bull sharks and other species that are often caught and, as they do not meet size requirements, should have been released. Signs simply providing QR codes would help with fish rules since they often change. Steve asked FEAB if they had interest or thought Fairhope would benefit from having better signage at the pier.

FEAB: unanimous, enthusiastic support.

Gary: suggested info on what types of fish you could consume and the safe amounts.

Watershed sign update:

Amy: Has final list for watershed signs ready and asked if there were any recommendations.

Amy made a resolution to accept list and share with City, all were in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 4:15p.m.

Next meeting: Friday, September 8th @ Fairhope Municipal Library, 3 p.m.

FEAB CONTACT INFORMATION:

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