

**The article below, published in the Alabama Newsletter “Alabama Current Connection,” confirms the ultimate goal of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama is to raise taxes and restrict land use under Sustainable Development.**

**Sustaining Our Coastal Environment: Building a Case for Home Rule**

Association of County Commissions of Alabama  
A taxpayer funded organization.

BY ROBERTA ARENA SWANN  
On January 30, 2006, nearly seventy people listened intently to Mr. Buddy Sharpless, **Association of County Commissions of Alabama**, Mr. Butch Ellis, County Attorney for Shelby County, Hon. Lindsay Allison, Chair of the Shelby County Commission, and Hon. Bradley Byrne, State Senator, as they spoke about how to establish greater levels of Home Rule.



Don Blancher, David Yeager, and Anne Bedsole have a discussion during the water quality home rule meeting.

Home Rule - Read – more taxes for transportation, wetland, open space and more restriction on property rights.

“counties would be well served, however, by expanding their local authority to:  
1) institute better planning and zoning that addresses the different types of wetlands (isolated, hazard mitigation, flood control, etc.) and establish habitat corridors within subdivision regulations; and  
2) enforce federal wetland regulations.”

The meeting was organized to clarify how a greater level of **Home Rule would provide a foundation for addressing transportation needs, wetland and open space conservation, land development/ zoning, storm water management, and sewage/ septic needs** across Mobile and Baldwin Counties. After the speaker presentations, meeting participants broke into small groups to identify specific limiting factors related to these issues and then to brainstorm what types of local authority would be necessary to address those factors. In addition, groups were asked to list immediate actions that could be taken (assuming a sufficient level of Home Rule existed.)

Each of the groups acknowledged that both counties needed greater local authority to develop, fund and manage environmental activities and address the impacts of storm and waste water treatment and disposal, to establish regional authorities for setting minimum standards and aiding in enforcement of local, state and federal regulations, and to institute regional planning and zoning

The Sewage/Septic group identified needs for minimum engineering standards, requirements for residents to hook up to sewer where available, and better regulation of collection systems. The Transportation group’s biggest concern was the negative impacts of sprawl and therefore a need for better zoning. The group that examined wetland and open space conservation recognized that much could be done within existing county and municipal authorities. **These counties would be well served, however, by expanding their local authority to: 1) institute better planning and zoning that addresses the different types of wetlands (isolated, hazard mitigation, flood control, etc.) and establish habitat corridors within subdivision regulations; and 2) enforce federal wetland regulations.** Stormwater management continues to be a major issue along the Alabama coast. In order to more effectively manage it, both counties need to work together to **establish regional authorities that: 1) have the power to recover the costs**

incurred in managing stormwater runoff and resultant erosion, and 2) establish a standardized framework of control ordinances and enforcement. The Land Development group identified several growth issues that could be mitigated with increased authority at the county level. Concerns regarding Extraterritorial jurisdiction, small growing communities wanting to incorporate unnecessarily, growth in areas with no existing infrastructure, and regional land use planning, would be addressed through greater County authority to zone consistently and implement responsive ordinances. **The common denominator among the groups was that overall, regional comprehensive planning is necessary to plan for the coast and zone for sustainable development.** Although this activity does not require home rule, it would be needed to implement aspects of such a plan

The half day meeting, Developing an Infrastructure for Improving Water Quality: Building the Case for Constitutional Change, was coordinated by the MBNEP to follow up with one of many issues identified at last October’s Coastal Planning Summit. Specifically, MBNEP invited a broad range of stakeholders, including elected officials, industry, chambers of commerce, transportation agencies, developers, engineers, and others to continue to hone in on how best to create a sustainable, secure coastal environment.

establish regional authorities that:  
1) have the power to recover the costs incurred in managing stormwater runoff and resultant erosion, and  
2) establish a standardized framework of control ordinances and enforcement.

**The common denominator - sustainable development.**