

Southeast New England Coastal Watershed Restoration Partnership

Draft Summary 5th Work Group Meeting

April 4, 2013 1:00pm – 4:00pm

MassDEP Southeast Region Main Office

Meeting facilitator: Ellie Tonkin, EPA Region 1

Introduction

Ken Moraff kicked off the meeting by discussing the status of the budget. Assuming there is a roll-over of 2012 due to continuing resolution, there is no new money for FY2013. The President's Budget for 2014 is set to come out soon¹. Even though there has been a change of staff in Senator Reed's office, Ken reassured the group that this effort is still a priority for the Senator. There has also been some activity and developments on the NBEP front where EPA New England has been working with the Executive Committee in program evaluations.

The goals and objectives of this meeting were to discuss: 1.) a process for selecting projects; 2.) an organizational structure for the Partnership; 3.) what makes this effort different than other existing efforts in the region.

A Process for Selecting Projects

Overall the group accepted the draft criteria that EPA distributed, but there was some discussion that a preliminary step was needed before implementing the process of assigning weights to criteria for ranking purposes. The idea of pre-screening projects that are proposed was discussed and accepted by the group in order to reduce the amount of work that would be done by each applicant. The pre-screening process may include a brief Request for Information (RFI) that would give the group a sense of the type of project being proposed and what restoration objectives the project will accomplish.

It was evident that the group felt that different types of projects would need a different set of criteria. For example, a feasibility study or capacity building project would not be evaluated in the same way that a demonstration project would be. The group then discussed how to allocate the funds for different types of projects whether it is based on a certain percentage or based on funding projects in separate phases.

Ken Moraff recapitulated the discussion by stating that the criteria are not enough to address the effort that the group is trying to do. The group is in an operational stage which focuses on what the function will be moving forward with a focus on capacity building and leveraging. Some of the work will be to identify areas where work is underway, while other work will identify gaps in specific areas. The other piece would be the process of selecting projects and applying the criteria. Ken also concluded, based on other discussions, to come up with a formulation that has a broader mission with an initial focus that could be present for a certain period of time. What makes this effort unique is the nexus of water quality and habitat restoration, and while the broad focus will be on achieving the three goals outlined in the Partnership's vision (restoring physical processes, improving water quality, restoring essential habitat), nutrients and stormwater are two key areas of focus during the first phase of the program.

¹ There is \$2 million allocation for this effort written in the President's Budget for FY2014.

There was some discussion regarding the use of existing authorities (i.e. NEPs), and if this is indeed the case, the process could be defined by the limitations of these authorities. There may be no need for a competitive process and there might be a consensus from NEPs around a particular project. The authority would also depict who the funds would go to and how it is transferred to the grantees.

After a short break, Walter Berry shared his perspective on the progress that the group has made since the last Work Group meeting in January. He suggested that the group is currently trying to figure out what the group is going to do and where they are going to spend the money that comes in. He also reminded the group to focus on a nexus to the coast and non-point nutrients by looking for solutions and knowledge gaps which emphasize transferability of projects.

An Organizational Structure for the Partnership

The group made suggestions on which elements they each felt would be necessary for the success of the Partnership. These suggestions included:

- Look at existing NEPs and “cross-fertilize” in order for them to come together in a functional way
- EPA provides the momentum, while a group of participants and practitioners on a steering committee or a workgroup that work strategically and oversee both the near and long term directions of the overall effort
- Have a contact person and a coordinator staff person. If there are resources available, hire a full-time employee to staff the effort
- Have some committee that represents each state, the NEPs and EPA
- Organize a science/tech advisory committee on an as-needed basis
- Look at the organizational structure that Senator Reed laid out for the group and use that
- If a citizen’s advisory group is included, be careful that the people who understand the big picture: an EPA led effort on nutrient impairments
- Bring in ad hoc groups as things move forward
- Try not to have too many committees
- At the very least, have a 2-teired structure with an upper level decision making group and a more frequent convening staff level group

Announcements and Next Steps

Bill Hubbard gave an update on how Hurricane Sandy funds will be spent in New England. Since specific projects have not yet been selected, those with restoration project ideas should send them to either Cathy Rogers or Bill Hubbard to get them in the mix.

The New England Clean Energy Council (NECEC) hosted a Technology Forum at EPA in early March. This forum brought together local emerging and mature clean energy companies to network and to talk about their innovative technologies. The NECEC is hoping to make a decision soon for where the grant money will go.

EPA will consider all of the suggestions from this meeting's discussion and present options to the group on a conference call in May. The next meeting will be held on June 6, 2013 at Save the Bay in Providence, RI.

Meeting Attendance

Name	Organization
Jane Austin	Save the Bay
Walter Berry	EPA, ORD
Caitlin Chaffee	RI CRMC
Joe Costa	Buzzard's Bay NEP
Rick Devergilio	Cape Cod Conservation District
Ed Dewitt	Association to Preserve Cape Cod
Bill Hubbard	Army Corp of Engineers
Johanna Hunter	EPA Region 1
Tim Gleason	EPA, ORD
Sue Kiernan	RI DEM
Ann Lowery	Mass DEP
Ken Moraff	EPA Region 1
Paul Niedzwiecki	Cape Cod Commission
Ed Reiner	EPA Region 1
Richard Ribb	Narragansett Bay NEP
Ann Rodney	EPA Region 1
Elizabeth Selbst	EPA Region 1
Karen Simpson	EPA Region 1
Jonathan Stone	Save the Bay
Doug Thompson	The Keystone Center
Ellie Tonkin	EPA Region 1
John Torgan	The Nature Conservancy
Rebecca Weidman	Mass DEP