



SNEP Steering Committee Meeting

Meeting Summary Memo

December 1, 2023

The Southeast New England Program (SNEP) at EPA Region 1 held an in-person meeting of its Steering Committee on December 1, 2023, from 9 am – 3 pm at the New Bedford Public Library. The meeting is summarized below.

Meeting Date: December 1, 2023, 9 am – 3 pm

Meeting Location: New Bedford Public Library, 613 Pleasant Street, New Bedford, MA 02740

Agenda

- Check-in/ Welcome
- Partner Updates
- Monitoring Framework to Inform State of the Region Report Updates and Input
 - Presentation by Bob Hartzel (CEI) on Progress Thus Far
 - Input from Steering Committee on Content/ Design
- SNEP Forum Feedback Overview
- Highlights from the Salt Marsh Workshop
- FY24 Budget Discussion
 - Brief Update on Ongoing Actions (FY23 and BIL Funds)
 - FY24 Budget Potential Allotments
 - High Level Discussion on Use of Available FY24 Funds
 - *Note: A follow-up call will be scheduled to discuss the FY24 budget once it is known.*
- SNEP Network Renewal Discussion
 - Brief Overview of Network Accomplishments to Date
 - Input From Steering Committee on Future Iteration of the Network (FY25-FY29)
 - Input from Steering Committee on Appropriate Funding Level for Future Iteration of the Network
- Summary and adjourn

Attendees

- Adam Reilly – EPA SNEP Estuary Program
- Bryce DuBois – Ecosystem Services Subcommittee Chair
- Carrie Banks- Mass Division of Ecological Restoration (MassDER)
- Cindy Corsair – US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Danica Belknap – Southeast Regional Planning & Economic Development District
- Emma Gildesgame - The Nature Conservancy
- Haley Miller - EPA
- Ian Dombroski – EPA SNEP
- Ian Jarvis – Mass Department of Environmental Protection
- Jane Sawyers – Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
- Joe Costa- Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program
- Larry Oliver – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Laura Erban – EPA (ORD)
- Margherita Pryor – EPA
- Martha Sheils – SNEP Network
- MaryJo Feuerbach – EPA
- Matt Stamas – EPA
- Mel Cote – EPA
- Natalie Schafer – EPA
- Nicole Haggerty – CEI
- Paul Barlow- US Geological Survey (USGS)
- Richard Friesner – NEIWPPCC
- Suzanne Paton – USFWS
- Tom Ardito – SNEP Watershed Implementation Grants

Partner Updates

- **SNEP Watershed Implementation Grants:** Provided slightly more than \$3M across 12 projects in RI and MA in FY23. Release of next Request for Proposals (RFP) is expected in February 2024
- **Ecosystem Services Subcommittee:** Ecosystem Services Subcommittee- asking contractor to work on assessing salt marshes monetary and non-monetary benefits; Testing SNEP's Integrated Ecosystem Services Framework (IESF) and developing communication materials; Coordinating with Monitoring Subcommittee and SNEP grantees to present projects; DCR streamlining beach visitation data.
- **SNEP Network:** Final year of co-op agreement (established 2019); Outreach about accomplishments; Culminating event- bring communities together that network has worked with; New projects- stormwater training series, working with MA and RI towns
- **Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program:** Providing grants and technical assistance; Infrastructure law funding; Stormwater discharges to Buzzards Bay is big focus; Working to develop additional Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) in Buzzards Bay
- **Mass DER:** Increasing desire for ecological restoration for habitat and climate adaptation; Growing division (doubled staff compared to few years ago); Developing technical resources and tools/ deploying tools to increase restoration work.
- **The Nature Conservancy:** New state director starting in February; Hired new stewardship

manager to focus on SE MA; Bog restoration, etc.

- **USFWS:** Habitat restoration to enhance resiliency; Provide financial and technical support; Salt marsh sparrow – recommendation on species status by USFWS - looking to get good sense of where the birds are and get in front of regulatory burden that may change salt marsh restoration; New staff studying salt marsh birds, looking at post-restoration monitoring to provide info to permitting agents to streamline processes; Amtrack update- working on I-93 baseline data of various culverts and crossings of CT and RI; Working with schools, restoration habitats, educational spaces, Inside Out- state wide initiative to fund outdoor learning spaces across 26 districts- pollinator gardens, buffer habitats, stormwater considerations and professional development for teachers to integrate spaces into educational lessons
- **USGS:** 2 projects in RI, 2 in MA; RI- assessing Academy Cove nutrient transport/ loading rates- field work and modeling, concerning septic systems; RI- susceptibility of waterbodies to septic systems, close collaboration with DEM- TN loads from septic systems to sub-watersheds across state; MA Cape Cod- septic to sewer monitoring in Falmouth, since 2016- impacts on groundwater quality, moving from septic to sewer, changing leaching = concentrations reducing; MA Cape Cod- nutrient management since 2018 effectiveness of nontraditional TN reduction techniques; Complete project = studied link between stream nitrogen loads in 12 streams in Cape, identified with groundwater model, defining contributing areas for stream reaches to correlate with source activities to identify and prioritize those areas for future work
- **EPA ORD:** Looking into alternative technologies and evaluating wetland restoration; reduce nutrient pollution in coastal watersheds -USGS collaboration and assess water quality and intercept the designs/implementation of restoration.
- **RIDEM:** Supervising monitoring and TMDLs; PFAs rules wrapping up- surface water quality action levels and some groundwater regulations- report only rule (>70 ppm for 8 PFAs); Office of Waste - source plan out to public comment- good comprehensive summary; Lakes Hydrilla strain and cyanobacteria- routine bloomers, getting a lot more calls about it, high toxic levels; April 1, 2024- new impairments, new listings; Small stormwater office restructuring- new point person for stormwater in RI
- **NEIWPCC:** Reminders for wastewater operators to get certified, no cost contract with MA to train and certify all wastewater operators; Water testing in Blackstone and Mile River watersheds
- **Cape Cod Commission (in absentia):** Continuing to work helping towns and Cape Cod islands, watershed protection fund to support wastewater projects; 15 projects from 8 Cape Cod communities~ \$600M, hoping for funding; Working on compliance for new Title V and watershed permit regulations; New Freshwater initiative for cyanobacteria outbreaks in ponds; SNEP is funding project currently to use satellite imagery to see if that would help predict where cyanobacteria blooms may happen in the future; Low-lying roads initiative- looking at typically inundated roads and if there are opportunities to elevate/ better configure those roads with flood and water quality improvements in mind
- **Monitoring Subcommittee:** Working toward increasing data availability, partnering with data partners in region who aren't uploading to WQX to get all data copied over to WQX for usage in standardized format; SNEP version of MassBays EcoHealth tracking tool
- **DEM & NBERR (in absentia):** Awarded \$1M for salt marsh restoration
- **SRPEDD:** Ongoing restoration work in SE MA, New Bedford, and another city- watershed and climate action plan of priority projects; Have support from state legislatures; Continuing hydrologic modeling to better understand watershed; Invasive weeds in pond; Regional planning- started climate pollution reduction grant from EPA.

Monitoring Framework to Inform State of the Region Report Updates

SNEP Water Quality Analysis and State of the Region (SRR) Planning- Bob Hartzel, CEI

- Overview:
 - 1. Representative Water Bodies
 - 2. Metrics/ Parameters
 - 3. Data Gaps
 - 4. Methods/ Document Production Plan
- 1. Representative Water Bodies: Identify embayments, major tributaries (in their tidal areas), and beaches representative of common issues in the region or having particular significance for future assessment or trends and inclusion in the SNEP SRR.
 - First wave- which waterbodies are representative of common issues/ currently used as assessment units by SNEP partner organizations. SNEP partners took the lead.
 - In Narragansett Bay and the RI salt ponds region, these units are used by NBEP in the State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed report.
 - In Buzzards Bay, these units are in the BBC's State of Buzzards Bay report
 - In Cape Cod, these units are used in the APCC State of the Waters: Cape Cod report
 - Waterbody assessment units map- different geographic regions; Narragansett Bay has continuous coverage, can see difference in Buzzards Bay / Cape Cod coverage; inter-estuary areas need a way to be wrapped in
 - Second wave- beaches selected based on status as a public marine bathing beach with weekly bacteria testing during the swimming season.
 - A lot of duplicate beaches- one location for beach, one for parking area- was resolved
 - Tool has interactive viewer for draft representative water bodies
- 2. Key parameters:
 - Starting to answer what key parameters should be: looked at The State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed Technical Report (2017), 2015 State of Buzzards Bay, 2021 Report: State of the Waters Cape Cod.
 - Came up with the 3 metric categories for parameters
 - 1. Water Quality/ Pollution Metrics: Total Nitrogen (TN), Total Phosphorous (TP), temperature, pH, water clarity, salinity, Dissolved Oxygen (DO), Chlorophyll-a, Enterococcus, beach closures
 - 2. Coastal Habitat Metrics: Salt marsh, eelgrass, tidal flats, shellfishing
 - Future metrics may include Diadromous fish (MA has data, RI data should be coming in 2025 for Diadromous fish) and stream invertebrates
 - 3. Watershed/ Land Use Metrics: Population, urban land use, impervious cover, 303d-listed impairments, conservation lands, forest, wetlands
 - Water quality parameter benchmarks- SNEP wanted to set benchmarks to get a sense of if the data was good or bad
 - Important to set and communicate benchmarks clearly; not meant to be a TMDL, just ecological based benchmark. Table indicates reference/ rationale behind each benchmark.
 - Some have one number for entire region, some have both MA & RI regulatory numbers used as references
- 3. Data gaps:
 - Don't have access to some data yet. Data gaps in continuous sonde stations in SNEP region.
 - Created histograms to get a sense of sampling frequency of different parameters (samples taken per year), generally many parameters had spikes around 4 samples/ year

- Tiers levels created to evaluate data availability criteria based on sampling frequency, spatial density, and duration
 - Tier 1: At least one sample anywhere, anytime
 - Tier 2: At least 4 samples anywhere in the same year
 - Tier 3: At least 4 samples at the same station and in the same year
 - Tier 4: At least 4 samples at the same station in 4 out of 5 years
- Most assessment units have similar % of waterbodies meeting data availability criteria in first 3 tiers, drops off at tier 4 where data requirements are more intensive
- **4. Methods/ Document Production Plan:**
 - Link between SRR and EcoHealth tool; Provide recommendations on visual and statistical methods for displaying/ presenting this information in future SNEP SRRs and publicly displaying and presenting baseline and future water quality and coastal habitat conditions and trends via the SNEP website
 - Categories: Data preparation, aggregation (statistical methods for combining discrete sampling data), analysis, and presentation
- *Preparation-* TN vs nitrogen species- prepare data
- *Temporal aggregation-* relatively limited data available for most water quality parameters from most stations, some have long periods of data (20 years) while others have much shorter (1-2 years)
 - Report region wide trends based on the most recent 5 years of water quality data
 - Same for habitat and watershed/ land use, but updated less frequently
- *Spatial aggregation-* Want to show big picture trends, not for detailed analysis (e.g., where hypoxia is happening) because of lack of data
 - Water Quality/Habitat Metrics: Important to define SRR coastal assessment area consistently for entire region
 - Delineate/include MA inter-estuarine areas for contiguous region mapping?
 - Watershed/Land Use Metrics: calculate for SNEP entire watershed area (by region, major sub-region)
 - Sample Depth: Include samples collected at all depths, and using robust statistics to vertically aggregate those samples over depth
- *Data analysis-* Want to avoid potential biases in data and ensure that the individual samples are appropriately weighted in final calculations; Generally intended to provide region-wide and sub-region statistics for parameter 5-year medians and percentage of value exceedances of the benchmark for the 5-year period.
 - R scripts and R package used to go through 6 step aggregation analysis
- *Data Presentation-*
 - Summary tables of parameters- lighter column for historic data, darker column for most recent data, simple thumbs up or down or <-> (no change); Data presentation largely adapted from Buzzards Bay report
 - Example presentation of TN on map- gradient of orange to blue dots for median TN concentrations, bar charts showing medians by region (Buzzards Bay, Cape Cod/ Island, Narragansett Bay, SNEP Region) and exceedances on the benchmark
 - Example of simpler presentation of TN on map- just blue or orange dots for above or below the median TN concentration, also has bar charts
 - Example of eelgrass- shows most recent mapping vs historic mapping of eelgrass
- Screenshot of MassBays Ecohealth- example shows similar presentation of results
 - Differences with SNEP tool- won't look at % of 2050 goal, parameters different (e.g., Chlorophyll-a instead of E. coli)

- Regional boundaries pulled out to grab all habitat resources (include all eelgrass beds); will require GIS work for SNEP tool
- *Documentation and Production Plan*- Investigated other SRR document production considerations- 4 different regional partners (Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, MassBays National Estuary Partnership, Association to Preserve Cape Cod, and Buzzards Bay Coalition) and the Long Island Sound Study to get a sense of how they run their state reports.
 - Want the data to be manageable and repeatable
 - Developed a crosswalk to show the relationship between SRR metrics and SNEP monitoring synthesis framework relevant questions- found selective parameters at least partially answer all those questions; few questions were very specific and therefore not answered with parameters.

Questions/ Discussion:

- With using the state standards for benchmarks- states do not expect all waterbodies to get, for example, nitrogen to 0.3 mg/L. Clarify this to the public- are there any better benchmarks available?
 - Goal is for the public to understand what is being done to improve conditions around the region- people get stuck on numbers. Perhaps show trends rather than numbers for benchmarks. Or include a one-page document to explain what the numbers mean, how they're different in MA and RI, and how to understand them.
- For the assessment- look at more management components (i.e., acknowledgment and tracking of government actions to improve the situation). The current focus is on water quality and habitat, but it's important to consider additional management metrics (e.g., Towns can adopt bylaws); Goal of SNEP is same as the National Estuary Program, and they have found the need for management aspects to be incorporated to reach the goal; Show the measurement of what government is doing- impaired waters list is growing and is depressing- but there's more to it, there are things being done; Suggest including some of that in the report- push overarching programs.
 - Some MS4 regulated communities are doing minimum required work- show how even little efforts help overall water quality throughout the region.
 - Examples: Updated stormwater bylaws, Title V updates
 - For governmental aspects- it makes sense to combine MA and RI for water quality aspects in this report, but on governmental side, try to embrace that there are 2 different states, own that the Title V and stormwater bylaw frameworks are different, the ability to get grants is different, etc.
 - This is intended to be included as a part of the SRR.
- In terms of the SNEP region as a whole- is there value to compile the information of the report on the regional level or does it make sense to present data on a subregional level (i.e., Cape and the islands, Buzzards Bay, Narragansett Bay) (more for water quality info rather than the ecosystems). Thoughts?
 - Important to think like a region- want to tell something about where this system is moving as we study it, in 5 years it will look different, and what should we be anticipating about the region. Should think of SNEP as a real region, not just a collection of subregions.
 - Presenting data on a subregional level may be duplicating efforts of subregions; Important to note what are SNEP priority areas? Value would be to inform where resources should be going (e.g., gaps in applications?). Is this report for status and trends only or could it also identify priority areas?

- That would be 2 separate exercises- the SRR to be a status report. For each area- what is SNEP doing to improve conditions, highlight partner projects and other activities; Good suggestion to look at what government is doing for these areas; This report will inform the Strategic Plan which is the next step- making tweaks to priorities.
 - The problem with the Buzzards Bay report is that it is for the whole bay. States that shellfish trends are going down due to CSO eliminations, but that is not consistent throughout region. There could be value at a local level to subdividing and talking about smaller trends.
 - Double edged sword- 1 region report is good but doesn't show how particular areas in the region are doing, some will be in better conditions than others.
 - If I was a town and I wanted to see my town in this report- what info do they get?
 - Right now, doesn't allow for that. Could use Ecohealth tracking tool to look at specific data near town. Reports going to subregional level.
 - Can see most recent data, no barriers to access data. Only barrier to water quality data is how frequent partners are getting data into WQX.
 - At some point, must decide as an organization what is the status. Don't want to reinvent the wheel/ repeat partner reports- maybe direct readers to existing tools and links of SNEP partners
- Take the topic of coastal resilience- what is the recovery time for hurricanes- that is a measure of resilience. Take management responses and broader data that describes what is happening and have a chapter on that. Next 5-year report, chapter focused on infrastructure and economy. Looking at it in little pieces will not allow for us to fix it.
- Question on the data aggregation. Data type and amount (and technique) varies around region- how can we aggregate it to say something about water quality in the region. Are there any red flags?
 - Current considerations: Want to avoid bias in the data, relying primarily on median and big picture trends over time within SNEP region. Filter by date, medians, % of seasons (only non-median); Smoothing out biases, starting with subregions then expanding to whole SNEP region.
 - Hope that in report, attention is paid to river quality, and not just water quality but continuity. Failings of water quality regulation system are where there is failure to integrate physical and chemical parameters and see the links between those. SNEP should help people see those links.
 - Embayments are the focus on this SRR because ultimately, SNEP is an embayment program. Goal is to build on it in the future. Not focusing on river systems or freshwater ponds at this point.
 - MassBay is trying to answer the question to link the habitat and water quality parameters- multiparameter approach; Will see how that plays out to inform SNEP tool
- Report to make connection to the public that surface water and groundwater are major stressors to salt marsh ecosystems and how they adapt/ understand water quality challenges of not only needing swimmable and drinkable water, but also helping habitats.
 - The report questions do include this- is water quality supporting salt marsh, etc. Definitely a connection being made as part of this report.
 - Other things affecting water quality- septic systems, etc. MassDEP tries to get it all connected before a project is approved.

- Using just medians- good way to address concerns of stations with more info than others. Recommend incorporating/ looking into that spread.

SNEP Forum Feedback Overview

- SNEP Forum was held on June 13, 2023, at Bristol Community College.
- **Goal:** To engage with our community members and program partners, to share information gained collectively by SNEP and our partners, and to seek input on the work that our Program has completed, the work ongoing, and the work still to be done. Forum outputs to drive the direction of the Program for the next two years.
- **Purpose:** This Forum seeks input on how SNEP and its partners can best help to meet local needs while also building the framework for more effective approaches to address today's environmental, social, and economic challenges. SNEP will incorporate the results of the Forum's discussions into our funding and policy strategies for the next several years.
- Featured keynote presentations from R1 Administrator David Cash and Dr. Christopher Obropta (Rutgers University)
- 93 attendees (80 in-person, 13 virtual)
- 18 poster presentations
- 11 one-hour discussion sessions
- **Key Recommendations:**
 - Simplify the grant application process.
 - Develop grant training materials such as template QAPPs or a QAPP wizard, match tracking training support, permitting, etc.
 - Develop Technology Transfer materials/events to better "scale up" or geographically expand projects. These materials could be part of the grant deliverables.
 - Assist with coordination between municipalities, non-profits, academic institutions, state/federal governments, consultants, and other project partners to ensure grantees have the technical resources they need to complete projects.
 - Provide regional data collection maps/tools/database.

Discussion:

- In the process of planning SNEP symposium for June 2024- broader look at partner work around region
- Great forum. EPA seeking feedback and talking about the program/ sharing experiences. Next time- want to see emphasize on sharing experiences, cast a wider net for attendance (agencies and organizations may be completely unaware of SNEP, be more outward looking); More grantees- partners should get more people to come.
 - Reason for more introspective= working on alternating schedule with Forum/ symposium on alternating years, symposium is more outward looking
 - Planning Symposium in June 2023
- Improving/tweaking the existing structure of SNEP: feedback was to simplify grant process, cut down requirements/ paperwork, QAPP availability increased

Highlights from the Salt Marsh Workshop

- Salt Marsh Workshop was held September 19, 2023, in Boston, MA.
- **Goals and Objectives:**
 - To identify gaps in information to develop a shared understanding between restoration practitioners and regulators of the multiple permit pathways for restoration and existing permitting rules.

- To identify the types of information required and recommended for inclusion in permit applications.
- To discuss the concept of risk and uncertainty when designing adaptive management strategies and/or corrective action.
- To have a clearer idea of where/how regulators and practitioners can work together on restoration projects.
- To identify continued gaps in information that still exist after the workshop.
- **Meeting Highlights:**
 - ~60 attendees representing federal, state, and local regulators and restoration practitioners.
 - Highly engaged audience with positive takeaways:
 - “The flowchart is an awesome first step to summarize a complex process.”
 - “We need more of these conversations.”
 - “A feeling that MassDEP and EPA regulators are aware of the hardships of the permitting process and that they want to work with scientists/ academics to make it easier.”
 - “Space can exist for these conversations to happen productively between regulatory bodies and practitioners. Perspectives of each side of the conversation.”
- Initial meeting was based on the frustration of navigating MA permitting for salt marsh projects; realizing there might be space for SNEP to get involved- then, put together Planning Team (MA DEP, DER, EPA, CZM, etc.), meeting biweekly to put together agenda and objectives for workshop.
- One of the first times regulators and practitioners have been in same room to discuss
- Missing piece = academics
- Attempt to facilitate building salt marsh resilience with new techniques (runnels, thin layer deposition) and determine what info does MassDEP need to move forward with streamlined permitting process

Discussion:

- DEP recognized and acknowledged the existence of data gaps for informing/ streamlining the permitting process.
- EPA attended Living Shorelines Permitting Workshop hosted by the Northeast Regional Ocean Council last week, it was found that some states do have a more streamlined process for this, to share results from those workshops with SNEP working group.
- Salt Marsh Working Group finds that state agencies are very different, and it is a challenge, but progress is being made. SNEP assistance coordinating this workshop was helpful; Find that MA, at a state level, is good to move forward (DCR commissioner, etc.) and recognize the importance of salt marsh restoration as a priority.
- Restoration projects in the region are starting to advance- will be able to start to see which techniques for restoration are working.
- Need to think about permitting as a whole and how it’s implemented; consistency and clarity should be provided with no regulatory changes (use existing framework in MA, though other states do have streamlined processes, MA regulations are very different).
- Thoughts on streamlining permitting for river restoration similar to the salt marsh permitting flowchart? Dam removal in RI takes years, sediment removal requirements are a lot; SNEP grantees had tough time getting approval
 - Not yet discussed, but SNEP is open to the thought. This was workshop was focused on salt marsh.

- There were some mentions of upstream restoration projects.
- Is dam removal permitting in MA more streamlined? Is it just a RI issue?
 - Flowchart for dam removal in MA exists- SNEP workshop working group tried to emulate that for the salt marsh restoration flowchart
- Where are the drinking water people in this process? We are drinking this water.
 - DEP tries to look at all different aspects of these projects, including drinking water aspects, and work with the applicable Towns as much as possible. Prevalent especially on the Cape. DEP likes to be involved in the beginning to help get a more wholistic look.

FY24 Budget Discussion

- FY23: Typically aim for 80% of total funding for grants, went over at 84%
- FY23 Highlights Base (projects starting in 2024):
 - All info available on provided Meeting Materials
 - *Grants:*
 - 5 Pilot Watershed Grants- starting on third year (4/5)
 - SNEP Network Year 5
 - SNEP Watershed Implementation Grants
 - 2 NEP Awards
 - New grants based on last year's suggestion- Priority Research Grant: (1) Cape Cod Commission Lakes and Ponds Satellite Imagery and (2) RIDEM Eelgrass Research
 - *Contracts:*
 - Admin Support/ EcoHealth Tracking Tool
 - Pilot Watershed Monitoring
 - Hydrologic Response Units- piloted in Canoe River
 - Proprietary Stormwater Monitoring (FY24 \$)- looking to develop EPA stormwater curves for proprietary devices
 - Also supporting a WQX link, beginning to monitor pilot watersheds hopefully in summer 2024
 - *Interagency Agreements:*
 - USGS Groundwater Research
- FY23 Highlights Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL):
 - Most funds to SNIG grants
 - SNEP Opportunity to Advance Resilience (SOAR) grants = \$15M from BIL, need to allocate 40% to disadvantaged communities (~\$6M), creating a program to allocate the funds, done through EPA to keep costs lower, primary focus is to increase climate resiliency in disadvantaged communities. First notice of funding released in July 2023. Selections were recently notified. Released as RFP rather than request for applications (RFA), based on partner feedback (RFAs require more materials upfront, RFPs reduce up front burden). Selections have until Dec 22, 2023, to give remaining documents- more incentive to do that because they will receive the grant money. Formal announcements in Jan/Feb 2025. \$5M investment for next 5 years. Brought someone onto SNEP to work specifically with disadvantaged communities and they will convey the communities' specific needs. Also allocated 2 set-asides to encourage first time applicants to apply (applicants who have not received funding in the last 5 years). Will work towards encouraging different applications (varied by project cost).
 - *Grants:*

- SNEP Stormwater and Natural Infrastructure- will combine FY24 and FY25 funds for funding round in late FY24, probably only one more round
 - RI Decentralized Wastewater Enhancement (FY22 \$)- closed out
 - SNEP Opportunity to Advance Resilience- grants will be announced soon, will have 2 funding rounds with FY24 \$
 - *Interagency Agreements:*
 - USGS RI Septic Study (FY22 \$)
- BIL FY24 Funding (\$3M): mostly into the SOAR (72%), 23% for EPA Misc.
- Base FY24 Funding (amount TBD): Presented chart based off FY23 funding (\$7M). Leaves 31% of funds unassigned.
 - *Grants:*
 - 5 Pilot Watershed Grants
 - SNEP Network Renewal (new)- SNEP current agreement ends next September
 - SNEP Watershed Implementation Grants
 - National Estuary Program Grants
 - *Contracts:*
 - RI Stormwater Retrofit Manual Adoption (new)
 - 5 of 6 of new England states are working on stormwater regulation updates, RI is one state that has not yet embarked on that due to lack of funding; Want to incorporate SNEP retrofit into RI manual where possible and update their current design criteria.
 - Opti-tool enhancement (new)- currently not super user-friendly, want consultants and maybe regional planning agencies to be able to use it
 - Have to hammer down who the target audience is to use it; right now, using it for NH Great Bay for Towns to avoid centralized wastewater sewer and reducing nitrogen in stormwater, tool develops scenarios for the Towns to see options. Was also used in Martha's Vineyard to show where stormwater controls could address water quality and flooding. Other than that, Towns will probably never be able to use it, more for broad, general planning. Eventually, hope for consultants to be trained to use tool, maybe regional stormwater agencies.
 - Proprietary Stormwater Monitoring (FY23 identified project)
 - State of the Region Report
 - Ecosystems Services Contract (FY23 identified project)
 - *Interagency Agreements:*
 - USGS Groundwater Research

Suggestions for FY24 Budget:

- Pilot Watershed Grants- bump up to \$200k from \$150k (Seems to be very effective grant program)
- A lot of good implementation applications, a lot of potential if there is funding.
- Enhance capacity of post-restoration monitoring for salt marsh restoration to inform post-restoration data. USFWS coordination for more technical and/or financial support
- Potential continuation of Stormwater and Natural Infrastructure Grant Program beyond BIL funding

SNEP Network Accomplishments and Highlights: Martha Sheils, SNEP Network

- Network tries to increase cohesion between partners

- Over the past 4 years, network has established itself as a free community resource
 - 30+ community assistance projects
 - 100+ TA requests- technical assistance to SNEP communities, try to answer all questions and if unable, give to local partners to figure out. # of requests increasing every year.
 - NE SW Retrofit Manual is a focus.
 - Attendance to webinars and number of webinars is going down in FY4 due to the Network supporting more in-person trainings.
- Support to local/ regional partner organizations:
 - Largest share (51%) to partner subawards- on the ground TA providers
 - 51% RI, 27% MA, 23% other = mostly UNHSC
 - Consultant contracts (18%)- when community needs assistance, can give small amounts of money to advance projects (\$10-30k) for consultant to do specific task; Consultants mostly from MA and RI; Based on the needs of communities, set up during year 2 so there was an understanding of what those needs were (e.g., write a grant, watershed analysis and design, etc.)
 - Q: Procurement requirements? A: No issues because SNEP engages with pre-approved consultants.
 - Network cohesion (20%)- driving the network direction, website, webinars, admin
 - Indirect (11%)- very low
- \$2M to advance projects- under represents real leverage, not counting partner leverage (ex. Nature Conservancy in MA brought in a lot of resources from TNC, not counted)
 - Helping tribes with watershed analysis to apply for 319 grants (2024 getting MVP)
- Network is a collaborative effort, includes:
 - In-state liaisons, know the communities, on the ground
 - Brought in some experienced partners, regional partners, etc. to strengthen network with unique regional strengths
- Words from partners- takeaway is SNEP can pivot, is flexible, responsive, and fills in gaps where no one else really can (have so many partners, getting them to work together)
- Filling in the capacity gaps: Westerly example
 - Participated in stormwater series training, learned how to use SW curves for retrofits, allowed them to move forward with conceptual design and secure funding for implementation. Also went through RI LID checklist- were catalysts on the journey to clean water.
- Tools and resources:
 - Stormwater Retrofit Manual took 3 years to put into place, took it to all the New England states- UNHSC working with states and amplifying manual to get attention. January 2024- 3 SNEP presentations on it. A lot of interest from consultants.
 - Bylaw Review Tool: strategy team, amplifying by training Mass River's Alliance to present to larger audiences.
- FY5:
 - TA: 5 new communities, 1 tribe
 - Stormwater Retrofit Manual: trainings and TA
 - Stormwater Planning Series: offer to 4 new SNEP communities
 - Next Generation Holistic Watershed Initiative (EPA): network to assist with outreach and translating deliverables
 - HRU Mapping: network will assist with outreach
 - Community Impact Survey: awaiting approval from EPA

Questions/ Discussion:

- There are more requests than can be serviced- TA based on requests- where is there a greater need from Towns that are unable to be provided?
 - Try to work with unqualified applications, try to help prioritize their goals to get a smaller task that can be accomplished
 - Various topics based on needs- i.e., saw communities needing stormwater work, created the stormwater training series
 - Goal is to get them the funding they need to implement projects.
- Has any TA led to SWIG grants or other SNEP grants?
 - Work closely with SWIG applicants to get them ready; also have staff on review committee seeing the needs that come in and keeping those alive as much as possible, try not to drop any communities that ask for TA and make the most of it
 - Partners sometimes just contact each other now
- How do we help communities find SNEP?
 - Have put out calls for assistance, gets amplified through EPA region 1, partners, newsletters, advisory committee; have always had enough responses

SNEP Network Renewal Discussion

- The SNEP Network cooperative agreement must be recompeted every five years. This discussion focused on Steering Committee on the shape that this new RFA should take. This discussion was closed to the public and to entities planning to submit a proposal for the SNEP Network RFA to avoid conflicts of interest.
- Notes on this section are internal and will not be made public.

Summary and Adjourn

The plan in future is to rotate between in-person and virtual meetings. When EPA has the FY24 budget, a call will be scheduled for further discussion.