

Draft Meeting Notes
Southeast New England Program (SNEP) Policy Committee
November 28, 2018

Attending

MaryJo Feuerbach	Chair, EPA
Tim Gleason	Office of Research and Development (ORD)
Kristy Senatori	Cape Cod Commission
Tim Pasakarns	Cape Cod Commission
Sara Burns	The Nature Conservancy
Tom Ardito	Restore America's Estuaries (RAE)
Joe Costa	Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program (BBNEP)
Sue Kiernan	Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM)
Brian Dudley	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Andrew Gottlieb	Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod (APCC)
Courtney Schmidt	Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP)
Susan Sullivan	New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC)
Ian Dombroski	EPA
Margherita Pryor	EPA
Ann Rodney	EPA
Caitlyn Whittle	EPA

MaryJo Feuerbach welcomed attendees and reviewed the goals of the meeting to discuss SNEP's FY19 funding and program priorities, including considering options for building capacity across the SNEP region. The introduction was followed by a round of quick updates by attendees.

RI DEM

Rhode Island's recently passed \$47.5M green bond that can serve as a major resource to align with the State Revolving fund, open space preservation, wastewater treatment plant adaptation for climate change, and improved climate resilience. The National Science Foundation also awarded \$19M to the University of Rhode Island to foster collaboration among eight state academic institutions in developing new approaches to assess, predict and respond to the effects of climate change on coastal ecosystems.

BBNEP

Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Director Bruce Carlisle has taken a position with the New England Clean Energy Center. Lisa Engler is currently the acting CZM director.

NBEP

NBEP passed its program evaluation from EPA Headquarters retaining its eligibility for annual Section 320 funding. They are currently interviewing for a new program director after the previously selected applicants withdrew. NBEP is working to establish project priorities based on the 2017 State of Bay report, developing a habitat protection tracking tool, planning an event to commemorate the Blackstone River history next April, and preparing to revise their CCMP as well as the next iteration of their status and trends report.

RAE

There is a RFP from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) out now for habitat. Contact Tom Ardito for information or the NOAA contact.

Cape Cod Commission

Kristy Senatori of the Commission presented an overview of the Commission and its role in developing and providing decision support tools to assist Cape communities in meeting commitments under the Section 208 plan. Some key elements of this assistance include:

- Technical assistance in reviewing and selecting nutrient reduction approaches, especially for nitrogen
- Spurring progress in 11 priority watersheds and 10 towns
- Identifying flexible funding sources and a finance impact model to consider and allocate costs
- Focusing on aligning regulatory processes to avoid layers of sequential, narrow reviews and help establish a path toward watershed-based permitting

The Commission priorities this year focus on monitoring and funding resources. Under an FY18 grant from RAE, the Commission has begun developing a monitoring database that will include data on fresh and estuarine waters as well as groundwater, and will accommodate a range of data inputs including ability to automate confidence decisions on the quality of those data. Key end users will be involved, and APCC will be responsible for developing an annual report on Cape waters based on water quality information in the new database, with the goal being to generate a public policy agenda based on findings.

Discussion around the Commission's update focused on development of the report card and its indicators, scope, and sustainability; the possibility of adapting a model like the Commissions for the SNEP region, the role of the CLF lawsuit in spurring action on the Cape; areas where regulatory flexibility was being sought; and financing tools.

National Estuary Programs

The two National Estuary Programs (NEPs) updated participants on their use of the \$500K each received under SNEP FY18 funding.

Joe Costa: A long-term focus of the BBNEP has been to reduce bacteria and nutrient impairments caused by stormwater. In 2019, the BBNEP will initiate a partnership with the Massachusetts Maritime Academy to work with town Departments of Public Works to map stormwater networks and monitor discharges. This work will build upon past efforts to help prioritize municipal action to better manage stormwater discharges. A complimentary task includes providing and overseeing engineering contractor services to municipalities to develop stormwater best management practice (BMP) designs for priority sites. Other initiatives in 2019 include a salt marsh loss assessment that will include long-term monitoring for elevation and vegetation changes at 11 sites, evaluating the efficacy of using permeable reactive barrier technology as a nitrogen polishing step at the Wareham wastewater treatment plant, and providing mini-grants to local municipalities and non-governmental organizations.

Courtney Schmidt: NBEP is planning to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) this winter or early next spring requesting projects that would address their management plan, including up to three large-scale implementation projects and one to three smaller projects. A possible focus might be nature-based solutions.

RAE

Tom Ardito updated the group briefly on its FY18 RFP, including suggested improvements on its process, and priorities for the next round of RFP, with proposed focus on engaging municipalities; developing/improving tools, methods, and approaches; building institutional capacity; reaching out broadly to communicate with public and professional stakeholders; and measuring, assessing, and communicating results. RAE expects to follow the same schedule as last year, with an RFP seeking pre-proposals in February and final proposal selection in July. Additional work in FY19 will include a May workshop for all FY18 grantees, and participation in EPA's first biennial SNEP symposium scheduled for Fall 2019.

EPA

ORD: Tim Gleason described the ORD initiative to bring its expertise to a project in the Three Bays watershed on the Cape. The aim is to bring ORD's strength in monitoring, modeling, wetlands, and social science to the evaluation of potential nutrient reduction technologies as implemented under real world conditions. Those evaluations will help

inform development of realistic performance characteristics and set the stage for subsequent discussions of adopting and financing implementation of alternative technologies.

Region 1:

MaryJo Feuerbach updated the group on subcommittee progress, including plans for workshops to be held in the March/April timeframe with the goal of informing resource needs and SNEP priorities going forward. The workshops are supported with technical assistance from EPA's contractor, will allow participation by experts in the fields and will be followed by facilitated working sessions to refine the results and findings from the workshops and identify potential recommendations for SNEP funding. The monitoring subcommittee has already held several conference calls resulting in a draft workshop agenda circulated for comment to subcommittee members, with a proposed workshop in March; the ecosystems services subcommittee has also held a conference call with its members to formulate a workshop agenda and is expecting to circulate a draft agenda among subcommittee members in next few weeks.

MaryJo also provided a brief update on SNEP's budget prospects, noting that EPA is operating under a continuing resolution (now extended through December 21, 2018) while Congress determines final appropriations for FY19. While nothing is secured, it seems likely that SNEP will receive another \$5 million.

Margherita Pryor briefly described EPA's current contractual technical assistance activities. These include help in developing a more robust communication strategy, support for the subcommittees (see above), and assistance in developing guidance on effective stormwater disconnection strategies.

Afternoon Discussion on Program Priorities and Funding

The first part of the discussion centered the continued concern over the lack of financial, administrative, and technical capacity for many municipalities in the SNEP region. MaryJo provided some suggested options to address that lack including:

- Providing local grants to enhance municipal partnerships and to install or evaluate new approaches and technologies*
- Using EPA contracts to install and/or evaluate new approaches and technologies
- Organizing site visits where projects could be understood in more depth
- Sharing information through symposiums, workshops, and webinars*
- Developing and sharing guidance on effective approaches with towns, consultants, and other organizations
- Supporting a circuit rider to assist municipalities in developing and seeking funding for implementation projects

*indicates highest ranked ideas in a priority-setting exercise at the end of the afternoon, but in general the group agreed that stormwater management requirements are the driver for getting municipalities to the table.

Following on these suggestions, the group exchanged ideas on how to implement them and whether other priority issues should be addressed along with capacity-building. Ideas fell into a few categories, including financing, technology transfer, and monitoring. Mechanisms to get the work done included grants (either EPA direct or via the next RAE RFP) or EPA contracts.

Group ideas included:

- Support for a long-term central clearing house or team that could work with towns in general, either overall or in each state separately. In addition to experience in wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, needed expertise would cover permitting, treatment technology and financing and approaches for estimating, allocating, and managing costs. Participants noted that funding people as part of one-off projects that include data systems or other continuing oversight needs is typically not successful.
- Ensure that proposed solutions are responsive to community needs by asking for their priorities.
- Streamline reporting requirements under grants to encourage municipalities to apply or access assistance from the experts.

- Provide monitoring support to address gaps in data to understand and track changes in nutrient contributions/conditions and aim to ensure sufficient data across the SNEP region to make comparisons.
- Consider possibilities of sustaining assistance through a fee-for-service arrangement.
- Consider launching a stormwater sensor challenge similar to the nutrient sensor challenge underway for septic systems.

The second group priority-setting exercise asked for participants to choose their top four suggestions among the EPA and committee member's ideas. Summarized for the vote, these suggestions received the most votes (listed in descending order with the first suggestion receiving the greatest number of votes):

- Central clearinghouse to provide communities and local organizations with financial and technical assistance**
- Local grants to enhance municipal partnerships and to install or evaluate new approaches and technologies
- Stormwater center to help address MS4/BMPs
- Support to address critical monitoring gaps
- Development of a holistic monitoring approach
- Stormwater sensor challenge
- Identify needs in priority communities, including paying for equipment in towns

**by far the highest number of votes

A meeting with the Steering Committee will be scheduled for mid-January to present the follow-up from these discussions.