

Southeast New England Program Policy Committee Meeting

06/09/2021

9:30-11:30AM

Agenda

- 9:30 Introductions and Roll Call
- 9:40 SNEP General Update
 - Response to Priority Watershed RFA
 - New Stormwater Grant Program: Allocations, Eligibilities
 - EPA Highlights from Proposed FY22 Budget
- 9:50 Discussion on Priority Topic (See Topic and Prompts Below)
- 10:50 Update Round Robin (3-5 Minutes per Organization)
 - Supplemented with Written Updates (if You'd like to Provide Them)
- 11:30 Adjourn

Roll Call

Joe Costa: Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program

Kristy Senatori: Cape Cod Commission

Mike Gerel: Narragansett Bay Estuary Program

Alison Bowden: The Nature Conservancy

Susan Sullivan: NEIWPC

Tim Gleason: EPA Office of Research and Development

MaryJo Feuerbach, Margherita Pryor, Adam Reilly, Ian Dombroski, Shasten Sherwell (ORISE), David Morgan (ORISE):
EPA Region 1

Adam Turner: Martha's Vineyard Commission

Bill Napolitano: Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District

SNEP General Update

Pilot Watershed RFA

- Nine Proposals Received
- All Major SNEP Sub-Areas Represented
- Review Process has Begun
- Selections to be Made by End of July
- Questions:
 - Will a similar opportunity be available in the future?
 - We'll need to gage the success of this first round of Pilot Watersheds but if results are favorable there is a possibility that a similar opportunity may be available in future years.

Pass-Through SNEP Watershed Implementation Grant RFA

- Applications due June 13th
 - SNEP will update the Committee on results at a future meeting or in a future announcement.

Technical assistance to develop Local Food System Development – EPA and USDA program

- 13 communities were selected nationwide. These communities work with federal, state, and regional experts on agricultural, food access, and equity issues to revitalize the community through the creation of local food systems.
 - New Bedford is one of the communities selected. The Marion Institute's Southcoast Food Policy Council and local partners, Old Bedford Village and Coastal Foodshed, are focusing on the "south central Bedford Village" neighborhood to improve health outcomes by identifying vacant spaces and brownfield sites to develop urban gardens. They also hope to create a fixed or mobile farmers market stand and increase participation in school gardens during the summer to improve local food access.

New Grant Opportunity - Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grants Program

- Developed under Clean Water Act (CWA) s.221 & s.603
- \$67M Nationally; Allocated 2.6% to MA; 0.9% to RI

- States receive these funds and then distribute to eligible sub-applicants (in this case mainly municipalities)
- 20% set aside for Green Infrastructure Projects
- 20% state match
- Grants will be to municipalities for planning, design, and construction of
 - Treatment works to intercept, transport, control, treat, or reuse municipal combined sewer overflows, sanitary sewer overflows or stormwater; and
 - Any other measures to manage, reduce, treat, or recapture stormwater or subsurface drainage water eligible for assistance under section 603c
- Of particular interest to the Policy Committee, the funds:
 - Can be used on the implementation of CWA s.319 Best Management Practices (BMPs)
 - Can be used on the implementation and development of Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (CCMPs)
 - Can be used for the construction, upgrade and replacement of septic systems

FY22 President's Proposed Budget Highlights

- \$11.2 Billion for EPA (\$2B increase)
- ~1000 FTE increase
- \$6,252,000 for SNEP (\$752,000 increase; ~13.7%)
- \$31,960,000 for NEPs (\$141,000 increase)
 - LIS budget increase from \$30 to \$40 million
 - Lake Champlain's budget increase from \$15 to \$20 million
 - With a potential influx of money coming into our geographic programs are there key issues that both SNEP and the LIS share? The Committee should think about how to strategically leverage funding to solve problems of shared concern
- \$180,000,000 for CWA s.319 (1.7% increase)

FY22 President's Proposed Budget Highlights

- Rebuilding Infrastructure and Creating Jobs
 - Increase to Superfund and Brownfield funds
 - Funding for Water Infrastructure Finance Innovation Act to rebuild water infrastructure. Funds to prepare water systems against hacking threats as well.
- Protecting Public Health
 - Funding for toxicity studies and research on per-and poly fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)
- Tackling the Climate Crisis with the Urgency Science Demands
 - Relaunch EPA's climate change indicator website
 - Budget devotes funding to climate programs
- Advancing Environmental Justice and Civil Rights
 - Propose 900 million dollars for environmental justice work
- Supporting States, Tribes, and Regional Offices
- Prioritizing Science and Enhancing the Workforce

Priority Topic Discussion

How is your group working with tribes, municipalities and environmental justice (EJ) communities?

- The Policy Committee discussed their current work with these groups

How should SNEP work with the tribes, municipalities, and EJ communities?

- Funding of staff positions to increase capacity, not just funding of projects. Often members of these groups are volunteers so paying for participation in surveys, meetings, workshops, travel etc. could go a long way.
- These groups have limited time to engage with us. We should attempt to schedule one meeting where all parties are present to cut down on the number of meetings these groups are asked to attend.
- A small grants program could help smaller or more local groups.
- Targeted Request for Proposals could help level the playing-field vs. larger, professional grant writing organizations.

Should SNEP make funding to tribes, EJ communities, or municipalities with limited capacity a priority?

- It was generally expressed that, yes, SNEP should make funding these groups a priority.
- It will be important to understand who is impacted by projects, not just project location.
- It was expressed that reserving a percentage of SNEP funds for these communities could be a viable method. Perhaps through a small grants program.
 - There are groups across the US that run small grants and EJ grants programs. SNEP should try to make contact.
- It was expressed that there is still a need to combine “striking while the iron is hot” in areas where success is most viable while making progress in areas where there hasn’t been much work.
- Since many of these communities don’t have access to professional grant writers, either grant writing assistance, or ensuring that similar applicants are scored against each other, might be a way to level the playing field.
- The SNEP Network is available to help communities with writing stronger grant applications.

Round Robin Updates

BBNEP:

- The Stormwater Collaborative is a recent primary focus. Working to bring more towns into the collaborative. The Collaborative is a cost-effective program for the most expensive parts of any type of program – mapping and monitoring. Everyone is buying in to the importance of the program but buy-in takes time and COVID has proven a significant challenge.
- Will be starting climate vulnerability assessment soon

TNC:

- Will be rolling out “global goals” for the first time. Relevant to SNEP: 100 million people benefiting from nature-based solutions by 2030. Global risk and resilience team is working on the strategy and rollout. A major focus is obtaining large scale funding to get to large scale implementation toward climate change and water quality.
- FEMA B.R.I.C – Nature based solutions now easier to fund. Last Fall was the first RFP, this Fall funding increased to \$2 billion.
- Impact investing is another focus in concert with public funding. Case team is working toward an investable deal that is focused on I/A (innovative/alternative) septic systems. Members of that team might be reaching out to EPA and partners soon. Working to get I/A systems towards general use approval.

EPA ORD:

- Moving forward with Barnstable Clean Water Coalition and the Town of Barnstable to install “layer cake systems” (nitrogen reducing septic systems) around Shubael pond.
- Worked with U.S Geological Survey to install monitoring wells to measure influent, effluent monthly and periodic ground water nitrogen monitoring as well.
- Additionally, bioreactor projects in cranberry bogs are being monitored to capture change in load from restoration efforts.
- Downstream efforts looking at the reuse of dredging products to promote eelgrass restoration.
- I/A workshop with SNEP (June 2, 3, & 10) is ongoing and has been promising in developing increased interest in IA systems.

Martha’s Vineyard Commission:

- Tisbury project that looked at natural stormwater dispersion techniques resulted in a decision to bring MADOT into the conversation and now phase 1 is being funded by MADOT and is expected to be completed by 2023. Two drainage pipes will be replaced with updated pipes.
- Tisbury Permeable Reactive Barrier is working well and showing zero.
- Edgartown is the only wastewater treatment plant big enough to handle septage and they can’t do it anymore so there isn’t another place on island to resolve that problem.
- Working with the Wampanoag of Gayhead Aquinnah to get their lab state certified

Narragansett Bay Estuary Program:

- 6 SNEP projects have been completed, 4 are ongoing.
- Putting out a larger than usual RFP for new projects fairly soon.

SRPDD:

- Completed comprehensive bylaw reviews for several towns in the Taunton to protect and incorporate green infrastructure (GI), preservation, carbon critical soils, nature-based solutions.
- Compiled interviews with all of the towns and put together a GIS-based summary of projects in the Taunton river basin. Some of the proposed projects also include a review of the MVP plans in their district. Pinned to federal-aid eligible roads to get funding tied to MassDOT.
- Able to provide additional assistance with towns to provide MVP grant writing help.
- Working with one of the towns on a state grant for remediation in a lower estuary stream.