



**Southeast New England Program
Steering Committee Meeting
04/20/2022 13:00-16:00**

Introduction and Roll Call

- Cape Cod Commission – Erin Perry
- Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection – Andrew Osei; Padmini Das
- Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve – Caitlin Chafee
- Association to Preserve Cape Cod – Andrew Gottlieb
- The Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head Aquinnah – Bret Stearns
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Larry Oliver
- U.S. Geological Survey – Jeffrey Barbaro
- Restore America’s Estuaries - Daniel Hayden
- EPA Office of Research and Development – Tim Gleason
- Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council – Leah Feldman
- New England Environmental Finance Center/ University of Southern Maine – Martha Shiels; Phaeng Southisombath
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Audrey Mayer; Suzanne Paton
- Narragansett Bay National Estuary Program – Mike Gerel
- Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management – Adrienne Pappal
- EPA New England – Mel Cote; MaryJo Feuerbach; Margherita Pryor; Adam Reilly; Shasten Sherwell (ORISE); Ian Dombroski





SNEP Fiscal Year 2023 Budget

Committee Feedback:

- With respect to SNEP funds to increase regional capacity, some members expressed the following:
 - o The Network has identified limitations with the amount of technical assistance that they can provide due to funding limitations. SNEP is hoping to work with the Network to increase technical assistance capabilities in the region.
 - o The Network will be working with organizations with existing contacts in communities with existing environmental Justice (EF) concerns.
 - o Communities have a list of needs – it’s just a matter of accessing those lists. Many areas/groups throughout the region are not aware of the SNEP Program. [STEW Map](#) program could be key to reaching some of these communities that our Program has not yet worked with.

SNEP Funding Strategy for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

Committee Feedback:

- Some members felt that community capacity-building is a serious need throughout the SNEP region. SNEP should focus on increasing community capacity in addition to funding implementation projects. Whether that’s through continuing support for existing organizations by targeting most at-need communities or creating a separate entity.
- EPA asked: would a community need assessments be helpful as a first step to getting more funding and assistance to disadvantaged communities?
 - o Some members felt it might be more beneficial to get the money on the ground than spending it in a needs assessment in some areas.
 - o US FWS did a needs assessment for salt marsh restoration.
 - o Some members felt SNEP could focus on smaller projects and planning work to help communities prepare for larger pots of grant funding.
- Some members expressed that there is a need for basic research, for example in salt marsh restoration.
 - o SNEP will likely be unable to use BIL funding for academic research. Applied research associated with an implementation project (ex. use of runnels to build resiliency and evaluate their effectiveness) may be doable, also research could be funded by future base appropriations.
- Members expressed that municipalities do not have the capacity for the maintenance of green infrastructure
 - o The Providence Stormwater Innovation Center has existing resources/trainings on green infrastructure (GI) and nature-based solutions, including a webinar on GI maintenance





- A member proposed that SNEP might want to look into funding a regional entity that could provide GI maintenance training and assistance.
- Some members felt that there is a general need for more operators (e.g., wastewater, operations and maintenance for stormwater control measures)
- EPA asked: Is there a topic or two to focus on with BIL funding? What do you recommend for future Requests for Assistance (RFA)?
 - Some members stated that stormwater retrofits are a topic that covers many of the problems meant to be addressed by BIL (water quality, resilience, etc.). Improving stormwater infrastructure is also much needed in disadvantaged communities.
 - Some members felt that SNEP should support communities in holistically looking at and planning for their areas of concern.
 - Some members expressed that SNEP needs to find a sustainable way to increase regional capacity. Communities cannot conduct projects if they cannot, or don't know how to, access funding.
 - Some members felt the creation of a separate (new) entity to increase capacity is going to take a long time to implement. Would a better route be to increase Network funding when possible to specifically work on providing additional capacity for regional entities?
 - Some members suggested that SNEP should identify organizations that need capacity and then provide circuit riders to identify partnering organizations to sustain them.
 - Perhaps working with an established, well-funded, organization to empower the communities they already work with to increase capacity.
 - Some members felt that in future implementation-based grant initiatives, designating a portion of the funding to capacity building efforts could help accomplish both implementation and capacity needs.
 - Some members expressed that there is a concern for how grantees maintain their capacity (and hired positions) after their 5-to-7-year funding period. Some grantees know how to do this. We should take their examples and share it widely so others will know how to retain capacity post-grant.
 - EPA asked: Would something similar to the Long Island Sound model for capacity-building work? (i.e. finding an organization that has strong roots in working with disadvantaged communities across the region, and running a small grants program through them)





- Members felt that if such an organization existed in our region, we'd know about it. More realistically we'll need to find multiple organizations, each with their own operating area.
- Some members thought that this model might not work in communities that do not have grant-writing capacity. Such a model should include assistance in grant writing.
- Some members felt that using a request for information (RFI) rather than a formal RFA, might help. i.e. a community could tell SNEP what they need, and then a SNEP-funded entity could assist them in grant writing to fund their needs.
- Some members felt that it would be best to rotate areas of emphasis for any sub-awards program (i.e. stormwater one year, salt marsh another, etc.)
- Some members felt that funding of wastewater and stormwater operators along the Cape and the Islands would be a valuable focus.
 - SNEP might provide funding or mentorship programs to create a jobs pipeline between technical high schools and wastewater/stormwater operators/outreach.
 - The Environmental Finance Center Network has an ongoing training project for wastewater systems; includes training on work force development. Increase of State Revolving Fund funding might be a useful funding source for this type of work.
- Some members asked if there is a way to combine BIL funding from multiple agencies.
- Members stated some of the following possible foci for SNEP's BIL funding FY23-26:
 - Stormwater/green infrastructure retrofits
 - Land use planning and land acquisition
 - Septic system/wastewater
 - Salt marsh
 - Capacity building in disadvantaged communities
- Some members felt that including a grant requirement for grantees to work with the Network to figure out sustainable financing beyond the life of the grant could be beneficial.
- How do we retain whatever capacity that we build beyond the five-year BIL funding term? Help municipalities think through how they can retain the capacity that they build. Work with towns to circulate/share knowledge-gained – what is working for them? What isn't?

Future of the SNEP Steering Committee:
Committee Feedback:



- Many members felt more engaged when presented with specific questions for their input, rather than just general presentations from SNEP.
 - o How can EPA use the collective knowledge of the Committee so it can be most helpful? Through specific questions about programmatic direction.
- Some members felt confused about the current role of the Committee. They felt they provide input during meetings, but EPA ultimately makes final decisions that don't seem to reflect their priorities, so it feels like Committee input is not being valued.
- Some members felt a specific charge (perhaps a one-page document on the role of the Committee) would be helpful for the Committee. The charge would lay out the types of decisions where Committee input/recommendation is needed vs. those that should just be provided to the Committee as a "for your information".
- Some members felt that long virtual meetings are not as productive as shorter ones.
- Some members felt that the Committee should meet more (3-4 times per year), but meetings should be shorter.
 - o Committee members are often stretched thin, so attending long meetings can be a burden.
- Some members felt SNEP could get more community involvement if we could provide travel funding or compensation for less-well-funded organizations and communities to attend meetings.
- Some members felt that future Committee meetings should focus on a single topic. SNEP can host informational webinars throughout the year to describe programmatic accomplishments etc. This would decrease the amount of time needed for Committee meetings and those who are interested in specific programmatic topics can attend webinars if they desire.
- Some members felt that virtual meetings increase their ability to attend.
- Some members suggested a mix of 2 shorter virtual meetings and 2 longer in-person meetings that include things like RAE/Network updates, technology project updates.
- EPA conducted an informal poll to gather Committee input on whether future meetings should be in-person, virtual, or hybrid, and also on meeting frequency.

Informal Poll results:





In Person with Virtual Option	11% (2)
Half in-person Half Virtual	64% (11)
All in-person	0% (0)
All virtual	23% (4)
17 responses	

- EPA will follow up with Committee members to solicit more formal feedback on future Committee meetings, Committee structure, and BIL priorities.

Adjourn

