

Mystic River Watershed Initiative Pre-Steering Committee

Meeting Summary
December 3, 2008
Environmental Protection Agency New England
1 Congress St.
Boston, MA 02114

Attendees:

Name	Organization
Caitlyn Hunt	EPA
Lynne Hamjian	EPA
Tom Faber	EPA
Todd Borci	EPA
Kristi Rea	EPA
Lois Adams	EPA
Deborah Brown	EPA
Amy Braz	EPA
Michael Castagna	EPA
Will Congram	EPA
Roger Frymire	
Jenny Birnbaum	MA DEP
Bill Hinkley	MET
Mike Celona	MA DPH
Karen Pelto	MA EOEEA
Catherine Woodbury	City of Cambridge
Andy DeSantis	Chelsea DPW
Joan Blaustein	MAPC
Roseann Bongiovanni	CCAG
Corin Parsons	Sen. Jehlen's Ofc
Steve Kaiser	Assoc. of Cambridge Neighborhoods
Denise Provost	
EK Khalsa	MyRWA
Ivey St. John	CWC

Science Committee Update

Tom Faber (EPA): We have been working on putting together the Mystic Science Committee, and we have a draft proposal. We're proposing to hold the first forum on February 11th. We'll brief everyone on the steering committee, and then go through an explanation of our monitoring activities in the watershed as well as that of other organizations.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC): As a non-science-oriented person, I think it would be important to hear not only findings, but causes and sources of pollution as well.

Tom Faber (EPA): We've had the balance between scientific discussion and accessibility to non-scientists from the beginning of the process. We want to focus primarily on the scientific discussions.

Kristi Rea (EPA): Could you talk about more long term goals/ projects for the science committee? I would encourage you, if you have Tufts there, to identify some research needs so some work can get done over the summer.

Tom Faber (EPA): Ultimately the goal of the science committee forums will be information exchange.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA): If you have further thoughts about this, please send them either to Tom or Caitlyn within the next few weeks. We'll work to get an announcement out to everyone once we've settled on the agenda for the first meeting.

Steering Committee Straw Proposal

The discussion below followed the reading of the proposal to the group.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC): We need to think about having meetings outside Boston so there will truly be equal representation. I question whether the upper regions of the watershed are really being represented. Should we think about using bylaws?

Ivey St.John (CWC): I suggest we wait to write the bylaws until we get things rolling.

Catherine Woodbury (City of Cambridge): The municipalities need to be balanced between urban and rural, city and town, upper and lower watershed. There needs to be a broader range of municipalities than seen at the current meeting.

Andy DeSantis (City of Chelsea): No municipalities besides ourselves [Cambridge and Chelsea] have been attending. A municipal subcommittee could be useful in encouraging

communication between municipalities, which has always been a challenge. Most of the communities in the watershed are MWRA members and on the MWRA advisory board.

EK (MyRWA): We're dealing with 22 communities in the watershed. There is no Mystic River Watershed municipal organization. Although there is not room for all 22 municipalities, there is an interest by all the towns in making improvements in these areas, and communication between them would make things more efficient. We could create an email network list that would identify a representative from each community, their email and numbers, and forward all meeting minutes to keep them informed. We could include a subcommittee if it is needed/wanted.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA): So how many municipalities should be on the committee?

Andy DeSantis (Chelsea): Three.

Roseanne Bonjiovanni (Chelsea Collab): I suggest we have a subcommittee that includes all municipalities and meets regularly.

Roger Frymire: I'd like to see 3 or 4 communities involved if at all possible. I think a subcommittee could be helpful because the communities, especially in times of tight budgets, need to talk to each other more. I see a community as anyone who owns a significant amount of land. So, I think MassHighway should be considered for attending the subcommittee, as well as universities, MassPort and DCR.

Deb Brown (EPA): You should consider what role EOEEA plays because they have a broad role in the watershed. There are a lot of quasi governments and non-profits. Where do these entities fit in? Where is CLF?

Rep. Provost: I'd hesitate to recommend that one municipality could represent the needs of another. They are so different with very different needs and priorities.

Corin Parsons (Sen. Jehlen's Ofc): It is important to keep the municipality number soft until things get going because there may be more than two big issues and four municipalities could have four very different views. There is more to consider here than just upper vs. lower, urban vs. suburban.

Bill Hinkley (MET): We do have MAPC on the steering committee, and their role is to represent the municipalities as is the MA legislature.

Ivey St. John (CWC): Would it be possible to have "stand ins" until a municipality group formed and elected their own representation? Reps. could have a 1-year term and it could rotate?

Joan Blaustein (MAPC): In response to Bill's comment, even with our scope, we can't say that we give full representation. MAPC can serve as a liaison, but couldn't possibly represent all 22 communities. We can help get the word out and make sure that no

municipality feels excluded. There is a good chance that none of the municipalities are going to take notice until there is a vote on an important topic that affects them. MAPC holds sub region meetings, January and December, perhaps EPA could use these meetings as an avenue to get the message out to municipalities.

EK (MyRWA): In agreement with what Rep Provost said, the municipal departments are all very important stakeholders because any decision the Committee makes will probably effect every one of them. We should have an advisory board that will help guide the process. I think the goal is to create a regional Steering Committee.

Catherine Woodbury (Cambridge): We're only a small portion of the watershed. We are a CSO community, so we're regulated in certain ways. Our issues are unique to our municipality, so it would be good to see an umbrella committee step up to connect the municipalities.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA): Sounds like people generally support the idea of creating a municipal subcommittee. Do people feel that it should have an advisory role?

It is agreed that in the interim, the steering committee will proceed with municipal advisors until a subcommittee can be set up and municipalities can elect their own representation. Within three steering committee meetings, the advisors will be replaced with representatives. EPA will get on the agenda for the MAPC sub region meetings and will bring this to the municipalities directly. EPA will go to the meetings accompanied by local community groups.

EPA will send letters to organizations and ask them to participate in the steering committee. Participation will require meetings every other month – but it might be hard to get the highest level of participation with this kind of meeting schedule. It would be better to have a working level steering committee and bring the agency heads together a few times per year for a signing or special event. We'll need a group like the current one to keep things moving forward.

Karen Pelto (EOEEA): If you are sharing information, you will get delegates, if you are making decisions or signing something, you will get agency heads together. The role has to match the level at which an organization is invited to participate.

Amy Braz (EPA): There has been a lot of work on the *how* and *who*, but the *what* is still a question mark for me. What is the charge, what are we trying to accomplish?

EK (MyRWA): This is a steering committee that is being convened by EPA, so you can take a pretty high level approach to this. No one is going to show up if it is not meaningful. My hope is that we'll be able to attract/coerce upper level organizations to take meaningful action. If you had one meeting focused on one issue with an upper level organization I think you could get a lot done.

Steve Kaiser: On the membership structure, I would suggest FEMA and CLF. MassPort could be a technical liaison. DCR should be a voting member.

Roger Frymire: How to citizens fit in? I'd like to be part of the Science Committee

Lynne Hamjian (EPA): That is an important topic, Steve (Kaiser), how do you feel about it?

Steve Kaiser: I'd be fine with being a technical liaison.

Lois Adams (EPA): I did not understand this to be an EPA-owned effort. The way EK just stated it, it is. Does everybody think this is EPA's effort? We would not be here if you weren't here. It is important to have shared responsibility. We have been pushing back a lot to make sure this a collaboration.

EK (MyRWA): My perception is that EPA is a convener.

Ivey Saint John (CWC): We have been waiting for decades for an organization with enforcement authority to get something like this going.

Bill Hinkley (MET): The reality is that people have a massive amount of responsibilities and constraints, and we have to decide whether it is going to be a blue-ribbon panel, or lower-level-inclusive committee.

Ivey Saint John (CWC): The idea was for this to be two-pronged.

Kristi Rea (EPA): Being present is one thing, but making the commitment to taking actions is another. I suggest that folks who would like to continue working on this get together on some calls and further work thru this proposal. We've identified some issues that won't get closure in this meeting.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC): In a year, we may want to totally revisit this. It's still evolving, and the steering committee will eventually resolve this. One of the good things about this group is that it has been in flux. We should keep moving forward and things will firm up as we get further into the process.

Rep. Provost: I would suggest that the municipalities select their own representatives at the beginning of the steering committee process so that they are on equal footing.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC): We may be overestimating the municipalities' interest in this.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA): Do we want to work towards a conference call or further discussion in a meeting? Can we have a meeting in January? Let's decide on a date for the first steering committee meeting.

This group will meet again after the MAPC municipality meetings. Next meeting date, January 28. Will aim for steering committee meeting February 24, 25, 26.

Matrix:

Caitlyn Hunt (EPA): There have been some changes that you'll see in the online matrix. We've eliminated the drop down menus (Municipality name and water body) to comply with EPA's survey rules. The matrix is still available for additions. We are working on a 1-pager that we will distribute that you can forward to your stakeholders to solicit more entries into the matrix. We are specifically looking for priority ongoing projects that are currently funded or have a definite future funding stream.

Announcements:

Bill Hinkley (MET): The RFR we released this summer will be reissued with a refined scope in January. It will be more typical of our MET RFRs.

Mike Celona (MA DPH): DCR has posted fish advisory signs along the river. There is a new acting manager for the Fells. Nick Gove.

Roger Frymire: The MyRWA found a large cyanobacteria outbreak in the main stem of the river on November 13th. The cell count we found was about 25 times the state limit and the sample is being analyzed for species identification.

Todd Borci (EPA): Leah Bove collected over 700 samples in the watershed this past season. The results will be discussed at the first science committee meeting. We know a lot more about what's going on in the watershed this year than they did last year.

Karen Pelto (MA EOEEA): The NRDAP will be releasing a RFR for \$300K in Mill Creek and Chelsea Creek as part of a settlement there. The release will coincide with MET's re-release of the Mystic RFR.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC): MAPC is working on a 6 city mystic river corridor strategy. We're vetting a draft of the strategy document. When it's thoroughly reviewed, we will be sharing it with this group.

Jenny Birnbaum (MA DEP): Mass DEP has issued notice of noncompliance to Melrose for bacteria discharges to Ell Pond.

The Steering Committee Meeting will be on Wednesday 1/28/09 at 9:30 am at EPA New England in rooms 1102 and 1103.