

Mystic River Watershed Initiative Steering Committee

June 19, 2014

9:30 to 11:45 AM

EPA Region 1, Court of Appeals, 15th Floor
5 Post Office Square, Boston, MA

Revised Meeting Summary

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute

Action Items

- Invite BRA to discuss NAWCA funding and progress with salt marsh restoration, and or MA DCR to provide an update on the escrow fund.
- Municipal sub group and open space sub group to meet and define town priorities for open space. Then convene larger meeting with the two aforementioned subgroups, the USFS, HUD, and other groups such as conservation commissions and town planners.
- Invite USGS to participate in July water quality meeting if phosphorous would be discussed.
- Identify a new Open Space sub group leader and a non-profit representative. Joan to help identify these individuals. If contract is renewed, CBI could also assist.
- Issue a call for topics for the Science Forum in the fall, then plan science forum in early 2015.
- Patrick Herron (MyRWA) to distribute link to fish consumption advisory survey; all members requested to distribute the link to their contacts.

Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review, and March 2014 Meeting Minutes

EPA's Lynne Hamjian welcomed the committee members, led a round of introductions, and reviewed the agenda. The committee approved the March 2014 meeting minutes without any revisions.

Announcements from Members

Members made the following announcements:

- The BRA plans to move horse carriages to an area of impervious surface near the Mystic River. This could present water quality issues. Carriage owners may also have issue with the relocation since the horses may be spooked when crossing grates to access the area.
- The Chelsea Creek River Revel was held on June 16.
- An Environmental Art and Film Festival will be held June 19-22 to celebrate the Mystic River. The Medford Arts Center Inc. and four environmental groups organized the festival. Some movies about the Mystic River will be shown at the Hyatt Place Hotel in Medford.

- The Friends of Alewife Reservation (FAR) will hold a Rally and Parade to Save the Silver Maple Forest on Saturday June 28 from 10:00 am to Noon at the Alewife MBTA station in Cambridge.

Dredging Mystic and Chelsea River Presentation

Stewart Dalzell, Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport) Deputy Director of Environmental Planning and Permitting, presented information about Massport's planned dredge operations. Key points from his presentation and the group discussion are summarized below.

Massport's vision for the Port is to increase waterborne commerce to stimulate the influx of capital and decrease overland traffic on interstate 95. Approximately 1.5 million metric tons of cargo pass through Massport's Conley Terminal in any given year. Larger ships with deeper drafts, some of which are already arriving, are expected to call on the terminal with more frequency after the Panama Canal expansion is complete. To accommodate the larger ships and achieve Massport's mission, together with the US Army Corps of Engineers, Massport is planning for the dredging of several key port facilities, including the Conley Terminal, entrances to the ports, and deepen segments of both the Mystic and Chelsea rivers.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review processes are finished and the final design phase is about to commence. The design work will include harbor studies to refine the EIS/EIR estimates of how much rock and Boston blue clay will be dredged. Once the project begins, it will take 2-3 years to complete.

Two types of dredging are recognized in the design - maintenance dredging and improvement dredging, and each has different disposal requirements. Improvement dredging is the removal of materials below current authorized depths and generally involves removal of native/parent materials. Maintenance dredging involves removing surface sediment that accumulates over time. Any dredge materials determined to be unsuitable for ocean disposal require special handling and are often required to be disposed of in specialized upland waste disposal sites. The deeper materials removed for improvement dredging usually are suitable for ocean disposal. The maintenance materials from Boston Harbor are typically unsuitable for ocean disposal. Recently, much of the maintenance materials have been deposited into Combined Aquatic Disposal (CAD) cells, several of which were approved in both the Mystic and Chelsea rivers in the 1990s. The cell depth varies pending the depth of the bedrock but could be as deep as 80 to 100 feet below the harbor bottom. The Cells are only filled to a depth below any future dredge depths to avoid disturbing previously dredged materials.

One CAD cell in the Chelsea River will be used to store the small volume of dredge materials from maintenance dredging at the Massport Conley terminal later this summer. Environmental impacts are not anticipated from the deposition of dredge

materials into the CAD cells, which is only done during slack tide conditions. Generally, a three to five foot cap is placed on top of deposited material; but some research has shown that capping may not be necessary as the deposited materials settle into the depths of the cell and natural sedimentation provides a sufficient cap.

Beneficial uses for the larger improvements dredging project, including development of new hard-bottom habitat are also being considered. A potential beneficial use of the dredge material could be the capping of a barrel field of potential hazardous, radioactive and industrial waste located in Massachusetts Bay, approximately 12 miles outside Boston Harbor. There are also ideas to create hard rock bottom habitat that may be appealing to lobsters; however, the sand bottom also provides habitat and it is unclear if creation of rock habitat would require additional mitigation for the loss of sand bottom habitat.

The group discussed the environmental and economic tradeoffs that may result as part of this project. Several participants noted that the communities along the Chelsea and Mystic Rivers will receive the dredged material but not see the economic benefit in their communities because the benefit would be concentrated on the south side of Boston Harbor. They asked what mitigation might be given to the communities of Chelsea Creek and the Mystic River for accepting the dredged material. They noted that large portions of the Mystic River are already contaminated from industry and if the communities were to execute plans to clean up those areas, they would need a place to deposit the dredge materials; but space in the CAD cells may not remain since it is filled with material from the Boston Harbor. Disposal of the dredge material would then put additional burden on these communities, according to some participants. In response to a member question, Mr. Dalzell said most of the CAD cells are located in the Chelsea and Mystic Rivers because it was recognized that channel deepening for deep draft vessel passage would not be needed in this area since the Ted Williams Tunnel limits the depth to which a channel could be deepened. He also commented that when the CAD cells were approved in the 1990s they were viewed as the best approach to managing dredging material and envisioned as providing greater benefit to the region as a whole. Some committee members said the communities should be involved in discussions about mitigation efforts. [Note: As a follow-up to this discussion, Mr. Dalzell later confirmed that construction of the existing CAD cells had already removed some of the unsuitable materials from the Mystic and Chelsea Rivers.]

Group members conversed about opportunities for communities to be involved in the decision making process, noting that it seems the project is already approved yet these communities had not be consulted. One person noted that a Chelsea Public Planner participated in the planning of the CAD cells in the 1990s. Mr. Dalzell said that since the EIS, NEPA, and MEPA processes have concluded, the remaining public comment opportunities may be associated with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permits issuance processes. Another person commented that the MA DEP Water Quality Certification process would also be an opportunity for community involvement. Some committee

members commented that communities from Chelsea Creek and the Mystic River and the Mystic River Watershed Association should be included on the project's decision-making committee. Mr. Dalzell agreed to take this suggestion back to Massport.

Group members discussed Massport/project funding models. One participant suggested the Massport include a mitigation fee that would fund environmental and sustainability work in the Mystic River and Chelsea Creek. A participant noted that this would provide a more tangible benefit to the Mystic River and Chelsea Creek communities for growth seen by Massport. Another member noted that increasing cargo load sizes may increase the quantity of diesel trucks passing through communities as they bring goods to port or move goods inland, which would result in negative environmental impacts. There was some discussion that more ship traffic would result in less trucks up I-95.

Sub Group Reports/Discussion

Committee members reported on the water quality, open space, municipal, and science subgroups:

Water Quality Subgroup: The water quality subcommittee plans to update the priorities and actions. A meeting is scheduled for July 15, 2014. A committee member noted that a joint meeting with the municipal sub group would be useful after the EPA issues the revised MS4 permits.

Group members suggested the U.S. Geological Survey should participate in the water quality meeting in July, especially if phosphorus would be discussed.

Open Space Subgroup: A committee leader versed in open space needs and a non profit representative are needed for the open space group. It was suggested the Consensus Building Institute may be able to help identify potential candidates and push some of this work forward in the interim. Committee members decided the open space sub group and the municipal sub group should meet to define town priorities for open space. Then, after the meeting with the municipal group and open space group, a larger meeting should be convened with representatives from the municipal sub group, municipal open space/planning divisions, conservation committees, the United States Forest Service, and Housing and Urban Development to discuss potential synergies between USFS restoration activities, HUD grant cycles, and clearly defined municipal open space interests.

A committee member suggested inviting BRA to discuss the NAWCA funds and the progress they are making on salt marsh restoration. Another participant suggested inviting the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (MA DCR) to talk about the \$500,000 they have in escrow for completing park design to implement the Mystic River Master Plan.

A participant suggested contacting Hubway to discuss plans for connecting Hubway to the communities in the Mystic River.

Science Subgroup: While there was not one held last year, science forums in prior years have had good participation and attendance, and municipal officials and communities like them because they provide opportunities to learn about the rivers, the issues to address and actions being taken, and to showcase the work completed by the municipalities. The group decided to put the call out for science forum topics in the fall, then hold the forum in early 2015. It was suggested that the Consensus Building Institute could also help this group convene the forum.

Next Meeting Dates

The next Steering Committee meeting dates were set for September 18 and December 11.

New Business

A committee member noted ongoing efforts to earmark \$250,000 in the environmental bond bill for preparation of Mystic River plans to be shovel ready. The preference is for the funds to be earmarked in the operating budget.

A participant said the Chelsea Creek Action Group/Collaborative and CFL are conducting fish consumption advisory surveys with fishermen in the Lower Mystic and requested group members distribute the survey link to their contacts.