

Mystic River Watershed Initiative Pre-Steering Meeting, Part 2
 July 21, 2008
 EPA New England, Training Room

Attendees:

Name	Organization
Caitlyn Hunt	EPA
Roger Frymire	
Mary Beth Dechant	MyRWA
Cynthia Liebman	CLF
Kerstyn Haram	CLF
Joan Blaustein	MAPC
Michael Celona	Mass DPH
Steve Kaiser	MyRWA – Policy
David Mendelsohn	FEMA
Andrew DeSantis	Chelsea DPW
Ivey St. John	CWC
Nancy Hammett	
Bill Hinkley	MET
Dew Bottaro	Winchester Planning Board
T.J. Hellman	Chelsea Collaborative
Kwabena Kyei-Aboagye	EPA
Bob Fitzpatrick	Sen. Jehlen’s Office
Corin Parsons	Sen. Jehlen’s Office
Mike Castagna	EPA
Kristi Rea	EPA
Lois Adams	EPA
Karen Pelto	MA EEA
Will Congram	EPA
Kevin Brander	Mass DEP
Ekongkar Singh Khalsa	MyRWA
Meredith Reeves	Rep. Provost’s Office
Lynne Hamjian	EPA
Bill Walsh-Rogalski	EPA

Notes:

The Matrix

Draft matrix was distributed and open for comments. The goal is to capture major ongoing activities in the watershed. The matrix will allow users to identify gaps where work should be happening.

Comments:

- add web links, if they are developed
- should consider priorities and goals
- hypertext could allow another layer of information
- actions needed should demonstrate need for data, \$, and action
- follow-up might point to the need for additional research
- should be able to see the goals of the project, help identify what folks are after. Can then combine similar and synergistic goals – identify the common goal
- need to define the areas of the watershed – upper/middle/lower.
- Just use specific water bodies/municipalities for search-ability

Suggestions:

- Be careful making it too complex, it'll never get finished
- Try sending it out with a few examples – perhaps from MAPC's version
- Have layers – first layer is a quick glance, deeper using hypertext could add background information

EPA will work up another draft and distribute it by the end of July. We'll give 1 month to fill it out and will distribute a version half-way thru filling it out to gain additional response to its effectiveness.

Each group will highlight their priorities and will begin to work on it as soon as possible. EPA will send a form as cut/paste. ****UPDATE** EPA is developing a web format for this matrix and will be in touch once it is complete and up and running. Folks can then input their information directly online. This should be ready the week of August 11.****

Aren't we interested in what's NOT being done?

Perhaps we can use this information and plug it into a map to see where activities are ongoing, then we can look at areas not receiving enough attention. Perhaps we could add a problem column.

If things aren't being done, then they aren't identified with a goal. If you don't know the goals, how do you know what isn't being done?

The matrix will help us with identifying goals. We'll finish the matrix and then look at the next steps needed. And where we need to beef up the work being done.

There is no end to this process and it is suggested that we not try to get a total inventory, which could take years. We should look at the big picture issues and get going without cataloguing every problem in the watershed.

If we look at ongoing work we can find gaps. We should also identify work that was started, but unable to continue due to a lack of resources. These are historical projects.

We can add in the science work that has stopped that is now a gap.

We'll come to find policy gaps, information gaps, and technical gaps among others.

How do we get info from all the municipalities? Who else do we need to send this to, besides the pre-steering committee?

The caucus of legislators can send it to communities.

Once it's in the right format, we can have a working meeting to get it all in the right format. We can focus on priorities, since we can't catalogue every activity.

Steering Committee Logistics

The steering committee will have higher level agency representation. We're hoping to have a steering committee meeting in the fall to discuss goals, priorities, and subcommittees. We need a few more meetings to get to the goals, priorities to pose to the steering committee.

Mendelsohn (FEMA) – it makes sense for the goals and priorities to link to the subcommittees.

Kaiser – Not sure why we need to go up the hierarchy.

Brander (DEP) – People who know the most about the watershed are here, but we need upper level to hear you. They have resources and authority and add power to the initiative. We need their interest in the Mystic.

EK (MyRWA) – this is a lot of work. The initiative was started by EPA, an agency with power and authority. It is powerful to set the table and do the work. This is a great objective to get people with authority to join the effort.

Hamjian (EPA) – The executive committee could meet monthly and the figure heads could come together a few times per year to make decisions.

St. John (CWC) – In support of Kevin Brander and EK. There have been problems getting the state level interested and involved. We don't have a commitment from the state. This is the working group and we can establish a level of credibility.

EK (MyRWA) – We can use this information as power to create momentum. With this responsibility and authority we can make a lot of change.

Blaustein (MAPC) – We need to invite the top people and someone may or may not end up a designee, but at least this work is on the radar screen. We need to aim to getting the higher level presence.

Lois Adams (EPA) – Seems there are competing priorities. We need to keep the senior folks engaged. It will influence how the decisions are made and we want to get them vested before batons are passed.

Hamjian (EPA) – Usually the way the agenda is written will attract certain figures. If there are decisions to be made, senior people will attend meetings. The trick is to get organized and to have them help with the structure. These are things this group should be influencing.

Subcommittees

Hamjian (EPA) – there are still groups working and ideas on the table. There is an evident need/push for a science/monitoring committee. Roger and Mary Beth will discuss.

Frymire – The Charles River didn't form a steering committee, they had a lot of money out of 104(b)(3) dollars. They went straight to a science committee. They had a meeting every 6 months to a year. They did research and used the meetings to present analyses and findings. They are still going on – Peter Weiskel and Kathy Baskin have quarterly science review meetings. We should get a group started in the near future and should hold meetings every 6 months. Who should come and what format should we use?

Hammett – Nancy attended these meetings and they had one to three people presenting each time. MyRWA and Tufts are trying to do an annual research conference. This might be a great thing to add since it doesn't require much funding. It is a good way to keep people informed at a very low cost.

Frymire – The group would take direction from the steering committee and would have good ideas as to where to go next. The Charles had just this one group which evolved into a science direction group.

St. John (CWC) (CWC) – Did something similar in Charlestown with the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

Kristi Rea (EPA) – Concerns about timing, how the steering committee grows after the matrix, then set the goals. The subcommittee structure set on the goals and objectives. Should we start now or wait a month or two once the matrix is established.

Frymire – Need the scientists to get together and inform the steering committee. Every 6 months a few presentations could take place.

Rea (EPA) – The presentations seem cart before the horse. You're creating structure before your goals are set.

Hammett – The science meetings wouldn't be goal oriented. They are feeding information to all the committees. Any goals that come out of the steering committee can benefit from a science group.

Adams (EPA) – We should start getting them all together to ensure we have data from studies that happened historically.

EK (MyRWA) – The science committee is an all around good, like the matrix. Scientists will be talking and doing peer reviews.

Hammett – this group could take on the science inventory.

Frymire – There is a lot of work that is done over the summer, so the late fall is a good time to hold a meeting.

John Durant (Tufts) – how does this fit in with the MyRWA Water Quality Committee?

Mary Beth Dechant (MyRWA) – It is a challenge. The folks who volunteer at MyRWA have jobs, so we might want to think about having the science conferences at night. This would complement the work currently being done at MyRWA since the WQ Committee only focuses on the work being done at MyRWA.

Hammett – Those committees inform MyRWA specifically. This committee would inform the whole group.

Dechant (MyRWA) – AS we discussed in the industrial contaminants group, we might need groups working at a finer scale. The science committee can be a place for the groups to report out. Bacteria/stormwater and Industrial Contaminants should remain separate.

Hamjian (EPA) – At the last meeting, we didn't decide on groups, but blessed groups that are working to keep going. A lot of different committees were suggested, but if some want to continue to meet, then it will be ok for them to continue their work.

Blaustein (MAPC) – What level should we attack problems on? What has to happen to make the water cleaning and lead to recreation? This is a good lens to look at the matrix thru. MAPC has people doing work in stormwater, land use, and flooding. If we have too many groups, we might be too splintered.

Kaiser – Science committee should be problem oriented. Maybe we should have flooding as a subgroup.

The groups that exist now grew out of the summit, but don't have to stay that way:

Bacteria/stormwater

Industrial contaminants

Flooding

Land Use

They are all at different stages, but are not yet official standing committees. We also have the fish advisory piece, which Mike will report to us on.

St. John (CWC) – It is hard to define the subcommittees so soon. We'll see thru the matrix where the gaps are. We might need smaller groups to move toward decision-making.

Brander (DEP) – Good work is ready to break out of the box and we want to forge ahead, it's not going to be perfect from the get-go.

Cynthia Liebman (CLF) – We need to think about the subcommittees and involve the municipalities in a meaningful way. We need to get more municipalities in our process and help them communicate back. More defined committee will get them more involved. We need more outreach.

Blaustein (MAPC) – Municipalities are MAPC's constituents. MAPC's role is bringing information back to municipalities and helping them become more focused. The process is still evolving and needs to unfold. The next meeting after the matrix is developed we can all react to the matrix and break down into groups to drill down a little deeper and get closer to the needed subcommittees. We need small group discussion.

Andy DeSantis (Chelsea) – City managers don't come to meetings unless you are going to talk about funding or enforcement. Otherwise they aren't interested. Managers want to know how much and when.

Bob Fitzpatrick (Jehlen's Ofc) – Municipalities tend to be interested in things that have to do with them. We need a way to reach out to municipalities since we are not going to get mayors to these meetings. They are interested and we need to figure out what their interests are. It is up to us to steer their efforts.

Dechant (MyRWA) – EPA held a monitoring meeting for the new MS4 permit and MyRWA held a stormwater BMP workshop for municipalities. If the events are issue specific and address things in their interests, they will come. We need to identify projects and events where we want their involvement and do the appropriate outreach.

Hammett – What is the group sponsored and event for municipalities after the issuing of the new MS4 permit? We could ask them what help they need? It will get their attention and might be useful. MAPC, MyRWA, regulators could all be there.

EK (MyRWA) – We need to figure out when to engage the subcommittees and what we need to know about the subcommittees for the steering committee. We need to identify stakeholders – who isn't here? We need to make connections. There is no harm in the groups pursuing what they're pursuing now. We don't need to identify all the committees right now.

Mendelsohn (FEMA) – The steering committee won't work if it is steered by 32 people.

Hamjian (EPA) – So we've gotten the nod for a science committee. The rest of the subcommittees will be formulated after we have the matrix developed. We need a few folks to help create the agenda for the next meeting.

St. John (CWC) – we can send in comments about the matrix once it's done. The common themes will come out of it and help us identify where we need to go next.

Hamjian (EPA) – We could ask for specific proposals for subcommittees to get the work done. Are there volunteers?

St. John (CWC) – We could suggest an area or issues that need support.

Blaustein (MAPC) – We should give bullet points on initial reaction to the matrix. Then we can see if we share concerns and issues. If it seems appropriate, we can discuss this at the next meeting by breaking into small groups.

Hamjian (EPA) – For right now we can table the subcommittees, with the exception of the science committee, which we've agreed upon. We won't stop any that are ongoing, but will not make any new ones (except Science)

Updates/Announcements

Bill Hinkley (MET) – Announcing the MET RFR for construction, final drawings, restoration of acquisition of parcels to connect to the river. Other ideas could be parks, trails, riverfront parcels, access points, small boat launches, connections to transit hubs along the river. The funding is for cities and non-profits to get more people to the river. The announcements will be made in late October.

Will Congram (EPA) – Update on the industrial contaminants group. He's been researching four potential sites for this group to start working. The sites will serve as examples for the remaining 6 sites identified at the summit. The four sites are: Mill Creek in Chelsea, Sandy Beach in Winchester, Spy Pond in Arlington, and the Tufts Boathouse area in Malden (across from the GE superfund site). Water quality and sediments are a problem in these sites. He will send around information on the selection of these sites to the group. These sites all have industrial contaminants issues that need to be addressed, and the goal is to restore these areas. There are some additional sites, up from the Aberjona in Winchester that have a lot of contaminants and need to be addressed as well.

Mike Celona (MDPH) – DPH and DCR have been communicating to get fish advisory signs posted in the areas served by the advisory. He's inviting people to let him know other areas where signs will be useful. Remember, this advisory is for upstream of the Earhart Dam only. He's supplied the towns with signs, Malden has a sign up. Draw 7 park upstream of the dam is also a good location.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – EPA might be able to be helpful with outreach on this issue. We can get this on the agenda for our next meeting.

Stephen Kaiser – The FEMA flood maps are open for public comment. Should be filed by September 9. The plans slow the level of waters for flood insurance rates. There are seven appeals in Alewife Brook area, six of them are citizens, municipalities, and developers who are trying to get the rates lowered. One is from S. Kaiser saying that the levels are too low.

EK (MyRWA) – MOS event – film screening on the Mystic directed and shot by Emerson College students.