

Mystic River Watershed Pre-Steering Meeting
June 23, 2008
JFK Conference Room A

Attendees:

Name	Organization
Caitlyn Hunt	EPA
Lynne Hamjian	EPA
Bill Walsh-Rogalski	EPA
Kwabena Kyei-Aboagye	EPA
Leslie Tomic	EPA
Stephen Kaiser	MyRWA Policy Committee
Mike Celona	MA DPH
Joan Blaustein	MAPC
Ray Gelinas	Chelsea Water and Sewer
Andy DeSantis	Chelsea DPW
Kevin Brander	MA DEP / NERO
Jenny Birnbaum	MA DEP / NERO
Bill Hinkley	Mass Env. Trust
Mary Beth Dechant	MyRWA
E.K. Khalsa	MyRWA
Minka vanBeuzekom	MyRWA
Roger Frymire	
Don Walker	Metcalf & Eddy, Inc
T.J. Hellmann	Chelsea Collaborative
Peter Weiskel	USGS
Ivey St. John	CWC
Cynthia Liebman	CLF
Kerstyn Haram	CLF
John Durant	Tufts University
Corin Parsons	Sen. Jehlen's Office
Rep. Denise Provost	MA House, Somerville

Notes:

Steering Committee Logistics – The concept, role, vision of the committee

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) – This is the EPA Mystic River Initiative, what was EPA's original goal? What is EPA's purpose and vision?

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – Our goal was to sustain working together after the summit. There are several topics that people wanted to discuss at the summit, the 4 groups were determined for the Summit by the planning committee. There was a lot of interest in discussing key issues at the summit and working together. We want to continue working in partnership to improve water quality on the Mystic. By working together with other groups and agencies, we could identify gap areas and amplify/add to the good work that is already ongoing.

Bill Walsh-Rogalski (EPA) – Also wanted to focus on water quality. We needed a watershed-wide community initiative. We created a watershed-based, community-based vision.

Steve Kaiser – He's mainly concerned about flooding. Attended the flooding breakout group but nobody discussed flooding as it related to water quality. Steering committee should help create the dialogue between flooding folks and water quality people. The flooding group created a brainstorming list that should have gone to the tri-community flooding group, but that hasn't happened.

Roger Frymire – Would like to see the steering committee involvement to list the problems worth focusing on – bacteria water quality, nutrient water quality, etc. The steering committee should set up an agenda for the watershed. Once or twice per year could host a conference on a different topic and set the tone for work in the watershed. It would be composed of community politicians that could weigh in on what their constituents would like to see done. Would like to see more communities at the breakout sessions and conference calls. In the Charles, Cambridge and Boston were always there.

Bill Walsh-Rogalski (EPA) – In the Charles sub-committees, all the participants had something to give and something to take away.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) – On the Land Use conference call, they focused on the big picture overview. Nowhere do we have a matrix showing all the ongoing activities. Could have sub-topics such as stormwater, flooding, etc. and show all the current activities in these areas. Would help identify big gaps in current work. Steering committee can also link groups that are working on similar topics.

Kevin Brander (MA DEP) – Steering committee needs to be people that can take the big picture and connect folks to resources. Need to get to the people that can get things moving. Some ideas for sub-committees: water quality, community stormwater idea exchange. We need the communities to be part of it, but not all as part of the steering committee. Need the steering committee to establish priorities, leverage resources, and manage the work of the subcommittees. They are a guiding group. The subcommittees are there to investigate and give recommendations to the steering group. DEP and EPA might consider having upper level management on the steering committee. Also a good idea to have legislators.

Andy DeSantis (Chelsea DPW) – Need the steering committee to create relationships and resources. Communities need resources to help improve and eliminate CSOs.

EK Khalsa (MyRWA) – Comprehensive inventory a good idea. The current group can help create the inventory that should include the groups, their strengths, and their activities. We can use this to gain perspective, identify gaps and then go to the upper management level. We need funding, enforcement, etc. We need to figure out where we are so that we can go to them and say how we need help. We should consider outreach in the communities.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) – Suggests getting current business owners and public developers on the steering committee to get perspective on their values and issues with the river. Need to consider designated port areas (DPAs), which have their own subset of issues. Need to include these uses because they give the committee a reality check.

Ivey St. John (CWC) – The problem with inviting private businesses is identifying which ones to invite. There are 2-3 good developers on the lower Mystic, but up the tributaries and the upper watershed it is hard to identify who might be the right players. We want to be careful not to heavily weigh down the steering committee with businesses.

MyRWA has identified businesses in the watershed and has relationships with them.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – Other committees that she's been a part of include representation from the business community as well as community representation. Will have one to two communities that will bring messages back to the larger group.

Bill Walsh-Rogalski (EPA) – In the Clean Charles Coalition, there were universities, land owners, but it didn't work. There was a lot of self-interest. To create a good group, we need folks to understand why they are there. We also need to keep them focused and involved.

Steve Kaiser – As far as flooding is concerned, businesses don't really offer very much. They want to reduce the floodplain and put pressure on FEMA to change their maps. Is cautious about getting developers involved.

Mary Beth Dechant (MyRWA) – With so many different groups and interests, how would an agenda be set? There would be so many perspectives and ideas. Perhaps it would make sense to have an executive committee to run the meetings, etc. It would depend on the level and size of the group. Would it be director level or commissioner level?

Kevin Brander (MA DEP) – If we want to bring priority to this, we need high profile people at the Commissioner level.

Mike Celona (MA DPH) – Commissioner might not come, but would select a designee. If you reach that level, the priority will trickle down and the initiative becomes a higher priority.

Ivey St. John (CWC) – It's a mistake to get high level involvement before real forward progress is made. In the beginning it's a volunteer effort. High level folks won't commit without some product and strategy. We need more definition.

Minka vanBeuzekom (MyRWA) – We should take 1 month to comment and create a matrix then investigate at a higher level. We need three things: 1, legislative change; 2, enforcement; 3, funding. Everyone should have a role in one of those three. The people on the committee will fall into place.

EK Khalsa (MyRWA) – The information reported out of the summit makes this like a grassroots movement. We need to understand the voice of the river and create a reason for people to take on an interest. The matrix needs to capture attention.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) – This is very similar to the beginning of an MAPC project. We need to be careful not to pin ourselves down initially. It will be apparent when we're ready for a structure. It should remain loose at first and then it will evolve.

Mary Beth Dechant (MyRWA) – The subcommittees should meet first to decide on some tasks, then inform the steering committee on where we should go. The Science subcommittee has a lot of support from the bacteria breakout sessions. We should keep the four groups that we already have.

Ivey St. John (CWC) – We should do this in parallel – set up the steering committee and continue to work as to not waste a lot of time. It will all begin to flush itself out as the subcommittees are where the work is done.

Kevin Brander (MA DEP) – The subcommittees are where the work gets done and the steering committee will be informed of the structure and can make decisions based on the recommendations of the subcommittees. Would the science subcommittee deal with water quality? There should be a stormwater committee for communities.

Bill Walsh-Rogalski (EPA) – It would be good to get all the communities together to talk about new MS-4 permits, the SRF, and flooding.

Minka vanBeuzekom (MyRWA) – MyRWA recently had a stormwater conference for the communities. Nineteen of the twenty-one showed up and all wanted to do it again.

Don Walker (M&E, Inc.) – Should have an outreach committee, perhaps. Need more community involvement.

EK Khalsa (MyRWA) – We had a summit, got a grade. We need to provide more information and increase the level of engagement. Report out in more detail what's happening where the gaps are, 10 days to improve and what we can do to make a difference.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – We want subcommittees, but EPA will need help staffing them. We can't run them all, so we'll need volunteers.

Steve Kaiser – If we're setting up committees, we'll need to set up a problem statement. Why are we in trouble, what should we try to solve.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – Let's discuss how this steering committee can make a difference. Let's look at the vision and problem and think about what we should work on.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) – We need to link to improvements of quality of life and show that all actions affect the river. How can we make this connection for everybody?

Bill Walsh-Rogalski (EPA) – Each workgroup should develop 1-2 projects that can get things going over the next 3 years.

Ivey St. John – In the lower Mystic, there are a few community people involved that are advocating and networking for the river. We need more outreach to engage communities and residents. The vision should bring broad advocacy and involvement to the watershed.

Cynthia Liebman (CLF) – There is a need for something to be brought to the communities and non-professional environmental advocates need to be part of the discussion. We should do some outreach and have discussions while we are making priorities because what we choose might not be what people in the communities would choose to focus on. Many want access to the river. Where do the community members fit into the planning process?

TJ Hellmann (Chelsea Collab) – Wants people to be part of the dialogue, but it's hard to even find the river in Chelsea. How can community members have meaningful input? The find it and fix it program – they've found stuff, but what is being done?

City of Chelsea is so industrialized. People are not connecting with the river. It is a huge problem and more outreach is needed.

Ivey St. John (CWC) – Need to commit ourselves to involve the residential population. They are the strongest advocates for the river.

Mary Beth Dechant (MyRWA) – most of MyRWA's volunteers come from the upper part of the watershed where they can see the river and it's their chance to reconnect to the river. There is not a lot of engagement with the lower watershed since it isn't as obvious what their little piece can do to help.

EK Khalsa (MyRWA) – It seems that Chelsea is working against powerful forces (gas deliveries, salt piles, etc.) since there are a lot of critical industrial activities going on there. The issues are different in character – not just local issues, but there are huge regional forces. They need help working with folks in authority positions.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) – In the lower Mystic there are access issues, DPA issues. Maybe the residents can't get to their riverfront, but do they know where the access points are? Do they know where the best park is for picnics? Is there sufficient bus service so that people can get to

the nearest best park? The parks aren't that far away, but the people need to be able to get there and need to know how to get there. Emphasis in this area might be about the ability to get there.

Steve Kaiser – What can we work with? As for flooding, the biggest problem is that the flooding people and the water quality people don't have open channels of communication.

Should we have an action statement?

Ivey St. John (CWC) – It's too early to define a mission. The process needs to be organic and always changing.

Don Walker (M&E, Inc.) – Dry weather water quality is a problem which we can tackle and that would affect the report card grade.

Jenny Birnbaum (MA DEP) – Dry weather and illicit connections are a big problem due to failing infrastructure. DEP has a regional effort to work with inflow, infiltration, SSOs and wet weather discharges.

Roger Frymire – A large number of NPDES permits, BWSC, Cambridge, MWRA, and the MS-4 are all coming out this year. Please look at these permits in detail and make comments that will help make the permits more reasonable. The Worcester Phase 1 permit is about to be released in draft. Please comment on it as it is a template for other permits coming out in this watershed. Get people behind your comments to make them stronger.

Corin Parsons (Sen. Jehlen's Ofc) – There is a problem finding the “one big problem.” We need to look at how all the problems are related.

EK Khalsa (MyRWA) – We need to look at the tributaries and other named water bodies in this watershed. Need a distinction and definition of the tributaries.

Models that could be used include the Charles River and estuaries programs

NEXT STEPS

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – We need to do some work to look at the work that is currently ongoing. Together we'll identify the gaps and review the work needed. This will be a useful tool for the future. We can look at the summit work, the synopsis of the notes and work together. We can decide as a group what kind of priorities we want to work on together. We'll form the steering committee and also have subcommittees to support the steering committee by doing work on priority issues.

The process should be- more work to find the gaps and priorities to recommend to the steering committee (composed of high profile members) that will work with the established sub-committees in progressing through the program.

Ivey St. John (CWC) – We aren't going to know how to structure it until we are further down to line. We can only define it by doing the work.

Rep. Provost – What is the steering committee steering?

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – It will be steering a set of priorities that will add value (resources, direct action). It will be at the commissioner or director level and will help support the work of priorities.

Kevin Brander (MA DEP) – Steering committee will be tuned into the process and at the end of the day, the priorities need to be established and the steering committee can help with this. Only then can resources be plugged in.

EK Khalsa (MyRWA) – The committee is steering the energy and enthusiasm from the summit. It is potential for forward movement and collaboration. And the sharing of talent and resources. The steering committee might be able to create more enthusiasm and funding opportunities.

Steve Kaiser – The steering committee can allow for networking and for necessary conversations to occur. FEMA needs to be at the table too.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – we could formalize the steering committee with agreements. It would make it more formal and would support who would do what.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) – Already have made progress. Will bring these notes back to MAPC and will give everyone a Mystic lens to look at all projects through. We'll have a focus where there might not have been focus before. We'll get a template of the matrix together and send it around so that folks can help get it filled in.

Ivey St. John (CWC) – Steering Committee should be organic.

Two developers that might be worthwhile bringing in are from Rivers Edge and Forbes Park.

The matrix should be established by making a template to send out via e-mail to gather information.

Minka will work with Caitlyn on the matrix.

Announcements:

FEMA is in the middle of a 90-day comment period until September 10 about new mapping and flooding analysis. The comments go to FEMA, but to file an appeal goes thru your community.

MET has created a grant program for the Mystic as a result of the Summit. Stay tuned to grant websites and COMPASS. It will be about \$500M for public access and recreational projects for the lower Mystic communities including: Boston, E. Boston, Charlestown, Chelsea, Everett, Medford, Malden, Somerville. Need good plans for implementation – not for planning. They

are working closely with DCR and other agencies. Non-profits and municipalities are welcome to apply. Apps will be due in September.

MyRWA will be focusing some bacteria projects this summer on wet weather water quality, cyanobacteria, and Constitution Beach looking at how tides and use affect bacteria levels.

DEP is working on source tracking in Ell (?) Pond and Horn Pond Brook. Doing a stream walk and work with dry weather discharges. They are always open and always encourage people to let them know if they see something. They have an SRF program that solicits to municipalities for water improvement abatement. \$300M - \$400 M at 2% interest. In the past 3-4 years have never turned down a project.

Rep. Provost – The Mystic Legislative Commission disbanded because there was no need.

Breakout Session Updates:

Industrial Contaminants – Bill Walsh-Rogalski (EPA)

At the summit, the group created a list of 10 sites to work on. The sites represent a diversity of use and a diversity of demographics. They want to move the focus to 3 or 4 sites that encompass areas of boating, swimming, public access, wildlife across the watershed. They tried to pull together a call, but didn't have enough availability, so will plan that soon. The goal is to move forward but also create a template out of these 3-4 sites so that the remaining areas can also be worked on. Maybe add a small analysis on the sites (mapping, history, etc.), but still a blank slate as to how to proceed.

Bacteria and Stormwater – Mary Beth Dechant (MyRWA)

On the conference call there were a lot of ideas discussed that weren't discussed at the summit. There was some discussion of some regional LID projects, EPA and DEP enforcement updates. As a follow-up, EPA could work with the steering committee to enhance its report card with other parameters, but we need the data from other groups. Right now it is based solely on bacteria. Everyone on the call agreed that a water quality committee would be critical to getting work done. Some discussion about natural cleansers and their ability to help manage water quality. The three biggest WQ problems defined on the call were: bacteria, nutrient loading, and sediments.

Fish Advisories – Mike Celona (MA DPH)

DEP is sampling all trophic levels of fish in Alewife Brook this year. Looking for metals, pesticides, PCBs. There was an advisory in December, but DPH needed cooperation from DCR to get the word out there and to get signs posted. Are working with DCR very closely now. At the summit, a lot of ideas for posting signs were below the Earhart Dam, where the advisory doesn't apply. DPH only deals with freshwater fish advisories. Below the dam, people are fishing mostly striped bass and blue fish which are marine species. In the fall, Harvard is hosting a symposium on PCBs in fish and what the advice should be. DPH can only issue advice on marine species. DMF only has a few regulations that have to do with fish contaminants and mostly apply to Superfund areas such as New Bedford Harbor. Background contaminants aren't

considered in FDA standards, but the local health departments can issue advice. EPA suggests a standard suite of chemicals and that is what MA uses. PAHs are not considered. There is a lot of cross-over into the industrial contaminants group and EPA should talk to the lab as EPA lab did some work with fish studies in the Charles. USGS also has done PCB work on the Neponset. For future conversations, should fish advisories stay in Land Use or go to Industrial Contaminants or be its own thing? Mike thinks it fits better where it is and might be forgotten if out on its own. Others agreed.

Flooding- There call was not well attended and all that was accomplished was the updated summit notes which will be posted on the web site.

Land Use – Ivey St. John (CWC), Lynne Hamjian (EPA), Joan Blaustein (MAPC)

The group is working to put together an executive summary of the session so that the notes will be easier to interpret. Group also thought a matrix of activities underway would be useful. There is a discussion of reordering /regrouping the priorities noted in the session notes. The group is struggling with how to include the DPA issues – do these issues represent access issues or are they something altogether different? Access in different areas can even be different. What people in Chelsea are struggling with is different than what people in Arlington need. TJ notes that in Chelsea, for a community organization, they need a city work plan to help folks understand how their little bit of help is worthwhile. He needs to be able to tell people what Chelsea can do to support activities in other communities. To get to such-and-such point, they need to complete x # of activities.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – Discussion about the subcommittees being in different places currently. For instance, what to do with fish advisories? Move to industrial? Keep it in Land Use? Make it separate? Ivey is hesitant to cast it off on its own; Joan thinks maybe it is separate? Minka suggests keeping it in land use for now. Mike Celona has no strong opinion, but does offer that at this point, DPH has a good handle on the science and what is needed now is better collaboration and outreach. For these reasons, he thinks it's better to keep it in land use.

Kwabena Kyei-Aboagye (EPA) – Suggests another subcommittee that we don't currently have – applied academic research. We should consider all the academic resources out there – Tufts, Northeastern, MIT, USGS all doing work in the watershed. We need to figure out how to collaborate.

Peter Weiskel (USGS) – Tufts has a lot of contaminants work that would be useful, as well as work with urban watersheds, and rainfall at the UEP Program

Steve Kaiser – Nobody knows what to do with flooding and it needs to be pulled in. The flooding people and the WQ people do not communicate and conversations need to be started. John Reinhardt was in the flooding session and agrees that it is important to keep WQ and flooding together. If we don't think we can deal with this issue, we should cut it out right now. We need people who are knowledgeable about flooding at Alewife and at the same time are willing to talk about it and end the lack of dialogue.

Cynthia Liebman (CLF) – CLF is trying to get folks to understand sustainable hydrology equals better WQ. LID is the way to go. Community members are most likely to get involved. We need to get them to understand the problems and the solutions.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – How do folks feel about the groups continuing to work? If they continue to move forward are there objections? (no objections) Maybe we should create more committees, we can think about that as we move forward. Next meeting, we'll spend a larger chunk of time on the committees. In the mean time, industrial contaminants will have a conference call to limit the sites to 3 or 4.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) - In the future we should think about move face-to-face meeting as they are more productive than lots of conference calls. We can always meet at EPA or JFK

Next meeting date: July 21, 2008 at 9:30am. Location, TBD.