

Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee
Draft Meeting Notes
November 18, 2009

Ground Rules:

- Everyone is encouraged to speak
- Please raise your hand to speak
- All ideas should be treated with respect
- One person should speak at a time
- Try not to use acronyms or abbreviations
- Ideas should be written as the speaker intends
- Audience member should state their name and affiliation before they speak

Agreement Points:

- Meeting minutes (edits are posted online) from September 16, 2009 were approved.
- Meeting dates for 2010 are finalized. Please contact Caitlyn Whittle to volunteer to host a meeting in your community for one of the following dates:
 - January 20
 - March 3
 - May 19
 - July 21
 - September 15
 - November 17
- The Committee approved the following mission statement:

In total these actions will help to restore and protect water quality and wildlife habitat, increase open space and public access to and sustainable recreational use of the river and its tributaries.
- The Committee reached consensus on priority #3 (public access and open space) with strong features of environmental justice and community education/outreach.

Presentation of watershed Plans

Summary of MyRWA Watershed Assessment & Action Plan (EK Khalsa)

- This document was finalized in 2006 and was a collaboration between MyRWA, MA EEA, and Tufts University. The Assessment and Action Plan looks at environmental conditions in the watershed and lists some priority recommendations.
- The report is posted at the MyRWA website and includes many tables and charts that Steering Committee members are welcome to review.
- MyRWA is currently working on an online “environmental atlas” with MAPC that shows water quality data and environmental conditions that is up to date and goes back 10 years. This will be demonstrated at another Steering Committee meeting. The map will show transportation corridors, CSOs, SSOs, facilities, bike paths, town boundaries, impaired waters, nutrient, bacteria and legacy pollutant data.
- MyRWA is working to reiterate the concept of watershed since it is something that a lot of people don’t understand.

- The Mystic River Watershed is an area encompassing 76 sq. miles north of Boston. It is made up of both fresh water and salt water, which was separated by the Amelia Earhart dam built in 1966.
- The assessment look at 9 subwatersheds – Horn Pond, Mystic Lake, Mill Creek, Mystic River 1 (Lakes → Dam), Alewife Brook, Malden River, Mystic River 2 (Dam → Harbor), Chelsea Creek.
- Water quality throughout the watershed is impaired with nutrients, bacteria, and legacy industrial pollution.
- In the next presentation, we can discuss more on water quality priorities, water quantity, flooding, and impairments in detail.
- The document suggests 64 recommended actions in 6 areas. Less than 30% have been completed since the publication of the report. In the next presentation by MyRWA, we can learn about the recommendations and which have been satisfied.
- Currently there is no process for updating the plan. They are tracking improvements, but writing another report is a rigorous and expensive process. There is no plan for an update at this point. MyRWA would prefer to display the information and keep that up to date.
- In 2010, MyRWA's goals are to bring people to the water to enhance a feeling of ownership, which will increase interest and action in the watershed.
- MyRWA will also informally report out on what actions are complete at a future meeting.

Summary of DCR Master Plan (Dan Driscoll)

- The Mystic Master Plan (the plan) is the third plan where DCR has been working to restore metropolitan rivers. DCR has spent millions of dollars on the restoration of the Charles and Neponset Rivers.
- The plan will be printed within 2 weeks of this meeting and Dan will provide copies for all Steering Committee members.
- The plan covers the Mystic River watershed from Alewife Brook down to the Route 99 Bridge and is extremely comprehensive. It looks at everything from pathways, boat access and the ecological health of the watershed. There is an extensive series of maps that evaluate and plan for restoring public access and pathways as well as how we can reconnect the public with the waterway thru safe pedestrian crossings.
- Full implementation of the master plan pathways system will cost \$12M. Some projects are:
 - Alewife Brook Greenway – to reconnect Alewife T Station to the Minuteman Bikeway. Work has been done at Dilboy Field in Somerville to include nature trails on the Arlington side with 10' widths. This project costs \$3.6M and will be advertising in January. Work will be started by spring 2010. This is a critical missing link.
 - Watertown Bikeway is currently out to bid. This will connect Watertown to the Charles and off roads to the Minuteman and the Mystic. This is a \$1.3M project. Phase 2 includes \$1M in acquisition funds and \$2M to build.
 - MBTA bus yard in Charlestown is coming to DCR in an easement. This is a critical missing segment that has been acquired thru a SEP. The wall at the bus yard is in despair and will be an \$8M restoration. DCR plans to phase the project so that the first half is not on the wall. The path will be fenced off so that people can walk thru. Over time the wall will be fixed.

- Condon Shell restoration. Phase I is to knock it down as it is not currently built to ADA standards. It will include a full restoration of the pathways, river edge, and parking lot. City of Medford has funded \$600K of the project. There will be many good practices and BMPs for stormwater controls in this project, but permeable pavement because there have been issues with it – cost and benefit.
- Underpass at Wellington Bridge by Assembly Sq. IKEA has negotiated design and funding for a pedestrian pathway underneath the Wellington T Bridge. This will link communities to nearby amenities such as a movie theater and restaurants. This is at 75% design and will be out to bid within a year.
- MET recently funded \$500K worth of projects in the lower Mystic from the license plate program:
 - Wellington Greenway, to connect the Tufts Boathouse to pathways under bridges to Wellington T station and public transportation.
 - New Dock at Blessing of the Bay Boathouse
 - Canoe launches in Everett
 - Interpretive signage
 - Creation of a Recreation Guide by MyRWA
- There is no current funding for work at Mary O'Malley Park, but DCR is aware of the project. DCR is still looking into partnering with Revere to do work near the new rink.
- Chelsea is not included in the plan because DCR cannot add areas that aren't owned or under easement by DCR. There are a lot of bike path projects in East Boston, and to partner with DCR, the agency will need an easement, then will be able to spend funds in those areas and partner.
- DCR can help consult and prepare plans, but requires an easement before state resources can be spent in an area.
- Porous pavement is being tested in the watershed but there are still a lot of concerns.

Business and Municipal Subcommittees:

Municipal:

- EPA New England sent a letter to all chief elected officials in watershed communities asking them to formally appoint someone from their municipality to sit on the Municipal Subcommittee. EPA is planning to convene a meeting or conference call some time in December/January to brief the appointees about the Steering Committee and will schedule time with the mayors at the Annual Massachusetts Municipal Assn. conference in January. The MMA conference is January 22-23, and the message coming from the Steering Committee needs to be brief and on target.
- Mel Kleckner has received a lot of calls from his colleagues looking for additional information about the Initiative, which he's shared.
- Attending the MMA conference is a very important step in engaging leadership in the communities.
- MAPC has offered to help coordinate and facilitate a meeting or call before the MMA conference.
- The municipal meeting/call will be advertised to all Steering Committee members.
- EPA will make phone calls to the communities to ensure they make appointments ASAP.

- The meeting prior to the MMA conference will be during the day and Jay Ash of Chelsea, and Mel Kleckner of Winchester will work on securing a location.
- It is clear that participation in this Initiative will not offer private entities immunity from current, ongoing, or future enforcement action by any regulatory agency.

Business:

- The formation of the Business Subcommittee has been a little stalled. Ivey St. John has been in touch with the Chelsea Chamber of Commerce and learned that their volunteer leadership is currently in flux. They will be back in touch in January to talk about a presentation/discussion at an upcoming meeting.
- EPA New England has compiled a list of NPDES permittees in the watershed and plans to draft a letter inviting them to attend the first subcommittee meeting, once that has been planned.
- All Steering Committee members should forward commercial and industrial organizations to Ivey St. John for follow-up on interest in the subcommittee. Please include ideas from the upper watershed.
- Tony Rodolakis will assist Ivey in recruiting business members to the subcommittee and with setting up the first meeting. He will maintain significant involvement in the subcommittee.
- There are several major businesses and leaders that are still very involved and eager to participate in this subcommittee once it is formed. Art Powers of Exxon Mobil recently joined MyRWA's Board of Directors.

Selection of top priorities for action:

Mission Statement

This mission statement was drafted prior to the November meeting and edited in during the meeting:

In total these actions will help to restore and protect water quality and wildlife habitat, increase open space and public access to and sustainable recreational use of the river and its tributaries.

Discussion followed that covered the following topics:

- The mission statement mentions planned development having a positive cumulative impact on the watershed, but any development will have a negative net effect. This watershed needs a land acquisition program.
- There isn't a lot of space for development, so this discussion is really about redevelopment. We need to hold on to the current green space, but look at opportunities for redevelopment and brownfield restoration where we can develop in our own footprint.
- Development and redevelopment is going to happen, so we should continue to try to influence it to be as green as possible.
- There is already a lot of dialogue with developers. Discussions with developers belong in the actions under the mission statement, not in the statement itself.

Priorities for Action

Five priorities for action were developed prior to the meeting and presented for consideration:

1. Establish and select priorities for next three years to improve water quality and environmental conditions in the Mystic River, lakes, and streams in the watershed. Create metrics and measurements to track progress and determine success.
 - Improve coordination of planning and development activities in the Mystic River watershed and look at cumulative impact of development decisions.
 - Create a comprehensive plan for the Mystic River watershed by analyzing existing watershed plans and identifying gaps and coordinating activities.
2. Increase level of environmental compliance in the Mystic River watershed with measurable results
 - Establish TMDLs for nutrients and other pollutants of concern (e.g. phosphorus)
 - Reduce frequency of SSO and CSO events
 - Increase level of EPA and state enforcement activity in the Mystic River watershed
3. Increase access to the river and its tributaries through safe public pathways and access points (walkways, bikeways, trails)
4. Increase public awareness, understanding and access to information about the Mystic River watershed
 - Create a newsletter that captures the work of the Steering Committee and communicates the priorities in a highly visible way.
 - Increase media attention on the Mystic.
 - Create a clearinghouse/central location for past and present research and projects throughout the watershed
 - Create opportunities to listen to community needs and concerns (e.g. listening sessions)
5. Identify and secure resources including funding for needed activities/projects in the watershed

Discussion followed:

- This group should focus on maximizing open space.
- Youth should be involved in whatever action that is selected.
- When looking at the priorities, the Steering Committee is already acting on #1, which is planning, etc., so the choice is really between 2, 3, and 4. The group should be looking to pick one of these priorities and put all of its collaborative force behind it to get some work done.
- Any priority that is selected will need metrics added to it so that the group can measure success against the set metrics.
- Any work to add public access needs to be targeted to environmental justice areas.

- Priority #1 and #3 are covered in the DCR Master Plan. In past watersheds, the release of the master plan (Neponset, Charles) led to funds being spent in the watersheds. The committee needs to focus on trails and access at all possible links and pathways. Once the permits and drawings are paid for, these pathways will be built. The committee should focus on getting these plans prepared.
- Priority #3 is very tied to MyRWA's goal for 2010 as well as in the DCR Master Plan. The real estate market is primed right now for acquisition, this could be a unique moment to lay out a vision for the watershed.
- The watershed needs to create open space where people live and go. Acquisition of space and production of access points are very important.

The group reached consensus with Priority #3 with the following comments:

- There is a lack of funding for enforcement work (priority #2)
- Regardless of the committee converging on priority #3, EPA and other regulatory agencies will continue to enforce within the watershed and elsewhere in the region. This will have no basis on EPA's base program work.
- Priority #3 follows nicely with MAPC's 6-community strategy that focuses on smart growth and LID.
- A lot of communities in this watershed are already under enforcement orders with MassDEP and EPA. We should continue to consider a TMDL for the watershed and DEP is willing to assist on such a project.
- The committee should strongly consider adding language that focuses attention on redevelopment management and addressing brownfield sites.
- Priority #3 should contain a lot of public outreach, which is described in priority #4.
- Priority #3 needs to contain language regarding environmental justice as well as general public awareness and education of youth.
- Transportation currently has a lot of funding and this committee can use pathway development to help preserve the watershed. Oftentimes ecological designs can be considered as pathways are constructed.
- The committee needs to keep water quality in mind while working on public space and access.
- Committee should use all tools available to educate the public including up and coming web resources.
- There are other important issues, like congestion and air quality that folks are interested in. By supporting open space, air quality will also be improved.
- The committee should also be thinking about the current focus on climate change and how efforts can be adapted to fit the current focus.
- Charles River Watershed Association is working on initiatives that look at water quality and open space with interpretive signage. It is practical and this committee should be considering similar ideas.
- The committee still needs to figure out how to utilize the science subcommittee, whether it is thru a quarterly lecture series on science-based topics, or otherwise. The science subcommittee needs to advertise the series to get the public interested and involved.
- Enforcement needs to remain a very important priority.

EPA will draft a proposal that focuses on priority #3 with elements of #4 and the ideas brought up during the meeting. Language will be included to outline that all involved agencies will continue to maintain base program work with targeted efforts to support the actions laid out in the proposed plan.

Announcements:

- A Science Subcommittee meeting will be held on January 7th at EPA New England's *new* office at Post Office Square. This meeting will give updates on the work done this past summer and look for ideas for 2010 monitoring. Prior to the meeting, we will re-circulate the notes from last year's meeting that focused on cyanobacteria, stormwater, and bacteria monitoring. We'll be sending out an email for all to save the date as well as solicit ideas for the agenda.
- The MET \$1M RFR was opened on October 16th and closed on December 4th. Potential applicants submitted 2-page pre-proposals for water quality and wetland restoration projects.
- The MAPC online map is posted at their website.
- MyRWA is on facebook and you can now become a fan of the organization!
- The 2010 EPA EJ small grant RFP is open and proposals are due January 8th.
- EPA Environmental Education grant opportunities will be opening soon.
- MET has awarded \$500K worth of grants in the Mystic River Watershed. Press releases were circulated via email and you can find info about the projects on MET's website.

Follow up Actions:

- EPA will work with a small group to draft a proposal that focuses on priority #3 with elements of #4 and the ideas brought up during the meeting. Language will be included to outline that all involved agencies will continue to maintain base program work with targeted efforts to support the actions laid out in the proposed plan.
- EPA will send out the Matrix will also bring printed copies to the next meeting.
- Steering Committee members should submit their ideas for additional business entities to include in an outreach effort. Please include ideas from the upper watershed.
- MyRWA will report on the recommendations in the 2006 Assessment & Action Plan as well as details of water quality and environmental impairments in the watershed.
- DCR will provide printed copies of the Master Plan to all Steering Committee members.
- EPA New England will draft a letter to NPDES permittees asking them to participate in the first Business Subcommittee meeting.
- EPA New England will work with municipal representatives and appointees to plan the first subcommittee meeting. EPA NE will work with the Mass Municipal Association to schedule time at the MA Municipal Assn meeting in January.
- EPA NE will draft a one-page handout that succinctly outlines the Initiative and relevant information (phone numbers, website, members).
- The Steering Committee will continue to have briefings and/or distribute materials on state and federal water quality standards and regulations (CWA, TMDLs, etc.)

- EPA will continue to gather and distribute existing Mystic River Watershed plans from DCR, MyRWA, MAPC, and Chelsea Creek and look at how they relate to the list above.
- The next Meeting will be on January 20, 2010 in Boston. Specific location TBD

**Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee Sign-in Sheet
November 18, 2009**

Name	Organization	E-mail address
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Bob Conway	Town of Winchester/Stoneham ConCom	bconway@winchester.us
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Jan Dolan	Friends of Upper Mystic Lake	dolanjanice@aol.com
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