

Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee
Wednesday, May 18, 2011, 9:30 am – 11:30 am
MA State House Room B-2, Beacon Street, Boston, MA

Agreement Points

- UMass Boston will serve as Lead Technical Academic Liaison to the Steering Committee
- Mission and Priorities document has been approved and finalized (it will be posted on EPA's Mystic River website: <http://www.epa.gov/mysticriver/>)
 - o On this document, a place marker will be held for an additional priority site (in Chelsea)
- Municipal subcommittee meetings need to be restructured so that attendees get the most out of the meeting
- Next meeting will be on the morning of September 7 at CLF in Boston

Welcome, Review Agenda, Introductions, Approve February Meeting Minutes

- Meeting minutes approved

Mission & Priorities Discussion (all)

- Edits received and made
- Karl Haglund has made a request to add the Wellington Greenway site (in Medford) to the list of priority sites. Many of the sites on the list are at their beginnings. Other sites, such as the Wellington Greenway site, are well underway and only really need support. There has already been a lot of effort between MWRA, Preotle Lane & Associates, and others to make the connection up the Malden on the Medford side so the Open Space subgroup felt it was a good project to support. Having the Steering Committee's support would help out the project. A letter of support has been drafted and will be reviewed and sent out per review by S.C.
- Need to make a change with Jen's name to John's. Factual correction
- Should re-approve the document and remove the draft stamp.
- Fix the updated date on the web.
- Mission and Priorities approved

Open Space Update

- Reviewed the priorities. In addition to the specific sites listed here, we would investigate a systematic review of other sites in the watershed to identify other open space projects in the watershed, particularly in the upper watershed.
- There has been discussion about a number of sites from the Chelsea River area. One of the sites that Melinda Alverado-Vega has discussed with the open space subcommittee is a site that Roseann has used for application for the MET grant and there have been concerns raised from DCR about the project.
 - o Since Dan is with us today we should have an informal discussion about that site or we could defer that conversation to another time. There has been some discussion about using this open space subgroup priority as a way to focus interest and attention for a bridge over Mill Creek to connect pathways in that area. There has been concern expressed about building

infrastructure that the state then has to maintain. So then the funding to develop the site is a first step. Maintenance would be a challenge.

- Site Description: Where Chelsea creek turns into Mill Creek Chelsea Green Space and NOAA have been working hard to create public access on the Chelsea and Revere side of the creek. There is currently a lot of access on the Revere side (canoe launch/skating rink, etc.)
 - The plan is to recreate a footbridge that existed at a housing development in Chelsea over to Revere and continuing it in Revere with foot paths. At that point the creek narrows there is limited availability for a path, so the path would extend up on Route 16 over to the Revere Rink and then over to Chelsea where footpaths have already been created. A walking path “necklace” would be created around Mill Creek.
- Dan Driscoll– relative to the MET grants, in concept everything Roseann describes has support. It makes sense and makes a lot of connections for people who don’t have access to open space.
 - Problem: MET grant wouldn’t have been able to fund the entire project. It is a multi-million dollar endeavor and the budget wouldn’t have been enough.
 - As a concept and an idea, it would be a great project. Need to have a more detailed discussion off line about potential funding sources and how you’d bring something like that to fruition. Might get some concept plans out of there. DCR is behind the concept but it’s a funding issue.
 - It is a good reason to put the project on this priority list so that everyone would get behind it and support.
 - Transfer of bridges to DOT they took \$150M of bridge money and gave back \$30M for pedestrian state bridges. DCR is going to blow through it quite quickly and not touch many of the problems that we have. Selling new pedestrian bridges to DCR is a hard sell right now. We cannot maintain pedestrian bridges and we’re considering closing some of the bridges that already exist.
 - This situation is not very different from the Assembly Square crossing – there just isn’t enough funding.
- EK – we need to not only look to build the footbridge, but also figure out how to endow it and ensure future maintenance and repair.
- Dan – getting it designed is a huge challenge. Once it’s designed, if money shows up, you can make a better case to build now.
- Ruth – It was a bad time around wanting to build a bridge in MA. There was some push back from CZM. There were other issues. May have had to with the DPA.
- Dan – building \$15M of bridges in the Blackstone right now. You can get new bridges built. The Blackstone bridges are on old railroad structures. This is different than creating new bridges where there never have been. The permitting would be extensive and the environmental mitigation there might be extensive.
- Dan would help strategize another meeting to work to see how we can get this done. It would have to be a single span, standard abutments.
- EK – we will put this under the umbrella of the open space group, and have Dan and Roseann be part of the conversation. If there’s a prospect for it, the open space group will likely include this as a site for Chelsea Creek.

- Joan – we should invite in someone from Revere. We don't want to trip things up later, this is in Revere's open space plan.

Water Quality Update

- The subgroup has refined priorities on SSOs and the reporting form, technical assistance to municipalities, reducing phosphorus loading, and legacy pollution and contamination.
- For each area we've tasked out smaller working groups which have not yet been launched
- We will help facilitate getting the mini groups going in June, but hope that they will take the ball and run with it.
- Stephen – Lynne has been involved with people from MA DEP to develop a proposal to bring to the 6 commissioners of NE states. The consensus of the group is to work with major manufacturers in NE and maybe NY to drive toward no P and slow-release N based fertilizers. The big lifting might happen at a higher level. They need to figure out how they are going to do it, but they have already had conversations with Scotts/Miracle Gro and had already announced an intention to move in this direction. We have a Q/A document that Karen Simpson put together with the state of MA. We are hoping that NEIWPC and their non-point working group will be a hub between EPA and the six states. This might help with the lifting in this particular item. They might want to have a technical forum where they will bring experts in. There are about 12 critical questions that come to mind – what you want to do, what kind of formulation and how to get the word out. The state will be looking to watershed groups to help get the word out.
- On fish advisories, we will have Mike on deck to present at the next Steering Committee meeting. Patrick and he have already had a few side conversations.
- We will move forward with the small group meetings and will have a work group meeting in early summer.

DCR Master Plan update and distribution of extra plans (Dan Driscoll)

- How can the Steering Committee support the Master Plan?
- Distribution, generation of interest, encouraging connections through municipal subcommittee?
- The Alewife Master plan is a good model for what we need to do on the Mystic. The model we've been using throughout the urban area to restore urban river corridors to develop a comprehensive master plan and then fight to design money. This has led to millions of dollars for restoration on the Neponset and the Charles. The opportunity is viable to do the same thing on the Mystic.
- A letter that the new commissioner (former mayor of Fall River) supporting the plan sent to state senate, representatives, library, con com to the 6 communities that line the river.
 - Right now, the best thing this group can do to further the advancement of the restoration of the river corridor is to get these reps and senators to keep calling the secretary, undersecretary, and commission to ask why there is no money in the 5-year capital plan in the Mystic.

- There is money to fund advanced development in the Mystic (happened in the Neponset and the Charles and generated millions of dollars).
 - DCR is designing a pathway restoration. The Alewife Greenway is good example of this which is a \$4M project. It was designed and permitted.
 - Need to get sections designed and permitted and 100% construction documents. We are looking at a few \$100k/year for the next few years.
 - At one point the cost was \$700k to design the entire landscape ecology and pathway system including making all the community connections safer.
 - Unlike the Charles and Neponset there aren't many encroachments in the Mystic. DCR already owns most of the land. It is almost "deferred maintenance."
 - Need a design to do the proper maintenance. At the core of the plan is honoring the ecology of the river. We use the transportation \$ to restore ecology.
 - On the Upper Charles it was funded because it was a bike/pedestrian corridor. Every mile that was build of pathway included \$200k of native plantings. Money is in transportation. Link Assembly Sq. back to Alewife T-station.
 - As we restore the connections, we also restore the resources. We are trying to restore the land, landscape, and invasive species. Once you do that and connect thousands of people back to the area, the concern over WQ does increase dramatically. It happened on the Charles and is happening on the Neponset.
 - MWRA and Cambridge broke ground last week on a major CSO separation project. It will take some of the most egregious CSOs and eliminate them. The Master Plan, there are pieces of it happening. The wellington underpass is almost at 100% design and will be bidding it for construction this fall.
 - The Condon Shell area is being redone. There are new pathways. Phase 2 is to replace the shell. It would be a real draw for the communities like the Hatch Shell.
- The Wellington Greenway (MET grant and John Preotle) will have 100% design drawings from Tufts Boathouse under the MBTA overpass
 - Draw 7 park is part of Assembly Square mitigation. Federal Reality Trust is committed to put \$500k into the project. Once the money shows up, they will have a public process. Soccer will go on there, but we need to figure out the right fit and design. It will move forward.
 - Then there is a connection from Draw 7 to Rt 99. But the problems with that wall are still there. (There will be a "Pass at Your Own Risk" sign)
 - Getting an easement behind the MBTA bus yard, the wall is structurally deficient. Repairing the wall is \$8-\$12M, so we can't put in a bike path. There is an alternative – let people walk on it, but not develop it. Still trying to get buy-in. The watershed is getting a lot of good projects happening. But to transform it, we need money in the capital plan.
 - Commissioner wants to support Urban Greenways. He understands the importance of urban open space in places that need more (like Chelsea).

- Secretary Sullivan, Undersecretary Griffiths, Commissioner Lambert. If the Reps request a briefing
- Bike and pedestrian crossing at the Amelia Earhart dam. Brought some copies of the plans. Dan has 5 copies.
 - It was an initiative where they wanted to look at the possibility of crossing the Amelia Earhart dam like they do in the Charles.
 - Ultimate analysis is that it is not a good idea to allow people to cross this dam on foot or on bikes.
 - Would cost \$7-8M to retrofit the dam and fix the tower structure. If we went up river and did another crossing there, for \$8-10 million you could have a structure that is open 100% of the time. It's 12-foot wide and clear and there are no operation issues at the dam.
 - Problem is, if it rains heavily for 4-5 days, the pathway would be closed when the floodwaters come through.
 - Joan – If we can pull together some people who can help advance the cause, would you be willing to come and talk with them?
 - Yes. Dan can come and explain and talk about the plan, but can't lobby. Plan is "hot off the press".
 - Ivey – transportation funds would be a good place to look for more funding sources
 - EK – there is a lot of support for this plan and it is ripe now to launch a campaign to engage the legislative caucus. Many people are familiar with the plan and can serve in Dan's stead to talk about the plan if we needed them to. There is a lot of support and the key is now to launch support and persuade the legislators.
 - Will be finalizing the 5-year capital plan in the next few weeks.
 - Roseann – doing a restoration project on DCR properties in Chelsea and could benefit between \$25-\$50k. Is there leftover money that can be used for this project?
 - Ellen – When you get on the ground, you see things that the larger plan doesn't see. You do need some kind of communication; is getting a meeting together for the community. Agreed to write a set of points so that the Steering Committee can write a letter. Will be having a meeting with the city and Dan over the urban wild.
 - EK – there is an opportunity for the Steering Committee to support community support. We should get the texture of the feedback that we need. We do want to have deep involvement of the communities
 - Dan recommends that the time to worry about trees and wildlife is in the design and permitting, not once they've started construction. At the bikeway, the contractor did what had been in the plan. We need to catch this stuff in the conservation hearings, when they are filing with MEPA, when they are in the public process. Once it's started being built, it isn't very helpful. There may be something wrong, but must be caught early in the process of landscape transformation. The meeting that we are going to have is MWRA, Cambridge and DCR explaining what changes are happening, there won't be a lot of opportunity to comment.
 - Assembly Square is going to have a public meeting in July for the riverfront. Right now, at the public meeting and during permitting process it is the right time to comment on what we'd like to see happen along the river.

- Lynne – want to ask Dan, Karen, and Mike. Given that we have such a long list of priorities and we know we can't do them right away, what is the right timing and would it be helpful to have an agency meeting to meet together around the priorities to identify how we can work together in this budget time. Would it be helpful?
 - Karen – within the next several weeks we'll know a little bit more about the agency's operational capacities. Even under those constraints the conversation is still useful. In a way it's like having a new administration. There is a lot of new leadership in the agencies that we can influence. The window is now. They have been discussing priorities at the higher levels for some time now.
 - Dan – current secretary and current commissioner are former mayors. There are real advocates of mayors in the watershed that all recently received this plan. Unifying the mayors would be helpful.
 - Karen – two staff positions lost were for illicit discharge and elimination program. Kevin and folks continue as they can, but losing two whole people is hard.

Municipal Subcommittee Update (Caitlyn Whittle)

- We'd like to use the water quality sub-group priorities list to focus municipalities on the new MS4, stormwater management and water quality issues.
- We want a sense from the municipalities which topics are of the most interest to them
- Joan –most of the municipal subcommittee meetings, it seems that it is very focused on engineers and stormwater management, but there was no sense of the committee having the same balance as having open space balance and bigger picture. It seems to be going that way and would like to see it be more balanced. There should be some planners and not just engineers and stormwater people involved. Ultimately we come back as a steering committee and see the bigger picture. A little concerned that we are going in that direction. We need to put topics on there that are more open space related so that we are building a municipal ad
- Joan thinks we should have one topic from each side to engage both sets of people.
- We want to get them to learn what the other disciplines do. Makes for better communication and decision making. We need to get them to come across disciplinary view. Takes more planning to conduct a meeting in this way.
- Nick – agree with the philosophy, but doing it will lead us back to a mishmash of people. In some ways we need to figure out what the draw is so that it will be worth their time to come otherwise they won't send the right people. That is the sense from the communities he works in.
- Ivey – make it clear when the topics are planning, we should suggest that they bring the right people.
- Ruth – The Open Space subcommittee is about a topic and the municipal subcommittee is a category of people. This is going to require people to get out of their boxes to implement people.
 - Is there a way for the WQ/OS groups to bring in people from the municipal side of things?

- It is more complex than one solution. Should we get some planners in the open space meetings?
- EK – maybe we can frame for the municipalities our perspective that these things are linked. Maybe we need the technical and focused meetings, but we do need more general meetings to engage municipalities as a whole that water quality can be improved through community involvement and interest. We can then frame break out and more technical sessions.
- Rafael – what if we did a hybrid approach, we had technical meetings, and then invite people to the open space. There might be ones where we would want everyone to be there. At certain points we have larger meetings w/o taxing the municipalities' time. We have a huge hurdle from the get-go.
- Nick – another hurdle is different levels of technical understanding. Maybe need a FAQ sheet so that people are closer
- Winchester – have joint meetings – municipal group meetings with the open space, and WQ group.
 - Town Engineer – interested in open space, but as an engineer, it isn't his expertise and won't really make a difference other than going back to the town and give the planners the information.
 - MS4 permit – it is a place where we can make a big difference. Came to the training session and it is daunting, people aren't ready for it.
 - The committee and watershed association are really able to offer a service to get the communities together to pool resources, education, outreach and other programs.
 - WQ monitoring and IDDE program, a lot of municipalities don't have the expertise to perform the programs. Asking a lot of questions – i.e. who is going to do it?
 - Watershed association and the collaborative having a watershed wide understanding. Know where on the Aberjona they aren't meeting water quality standards. Towns might help each other work together and meet goals.
- EK – have more discussion and craft this somewhat more subtly and see how things go. It is important to engage municipalities in the subgroups. The key is to really respect people's time. We want the meetings to be focused so that the attendees are engaged.
- Ellen – would it help to have the names of the municipalities involved in the effort?
- Provost – suggests a legislative briefing, 1.5 hours max and with some introduction to some topic. It is essential to the work on the statehouse that members get a broad exposure to all kinds of information, some very technical.
- Ivey – the reason it is tilted toward MS4 permit regulations is that is the hot topic. I think we should make the effort to do as Joan suggests.
- Lynne – we will rethink and reframe this and try to have a meeting before summer vacation season is upon us.

Report Card Update (EPA/MyRWA)

- Had the report card event at the MyRWA Herring Run and Paddle at Blessing of the Bay. We put a lot of focus on the presentation after the morning runners were in and before we gave out prizes.

- MyRWA was happy with all the EPA staff and Fred Laskey. Andy DeSantis attended and EPA celebrated Chelsea as a city focused on green infrastructure. It was a great event, from MyRWA's perspective; it was strong enough that in the future we could make the report card an event on its own.
- The Herring Run is a good venue; people were really interested. There was a circle of 25-50 people who were really listening. The grade was a D-, a dramatic change from last year. It represents that the watershed was swimmable 28% of the time and boatable 70% of the time.
- At the EPA website you can see the series of grades that we've received. One factor that did impact this grade is that Alpha Analytical that does all the analysis of marine samples changed their method of analysis. We have a lot of work to do to improve water quality, but there is work ongoing to identify where contamination is occurring and what we need to do to make it better.
- Gene – Curt Spalding says that water quality is because of rain.
- EK – in the freshwater portion there was also more impairment and the methodology didn't change there. EPA and Todd adjusted the results so that we factor out wet/dry weather. You can say that the grade was impacted by analyses in the marine areas and water quality declined overall.
- Ellen has three discs of a flooding forum that took place. It is a good background and education on flooding and pollution coming from major development in the watershed. Please let Ellen know if you want one.
- The grade event is an opportunity to gather regulators and advocacy folks and it's an important event. It is valuable enough and dynamic enough, it could be its own event that incorporates the grade. We need to work really hard to get a better grade.
- The grade does need to move, we are measuring bacteria and we know where the impairments are coming from and we are working really hard to qualify and quantify them.
- Will the Cambridge CSO removal be a big help?
 - It is universally a troubled area so it will be interesting to see what happens.

Meeting Schedule and other logistical updates

Next meeting date and schedule?

Logo/use of letterhead

Role of UMass Boston - Steering Committee member or Lead Technical Liaison?

- Lynne – EPA selected UMass Boston as a lead to coordinate with us on urban waters and the Mystic Initiative. Anamarija wanted to discuss what role UMass should play – lead technical liaison or steering committee member. If a committee member, are they neutral or where do they fall? What role can they play as we prepare to sign the MOU.
- EK – what is the time frame on the MOU?
 - We don't really know. It will be some established time.
- Gene – what expertise they are bringing to the table?

- They bring the EEOS department and offered up the Urban Harbors Institute and another department. Ocean Coastal, watershed management, education and outreach, grassroots.
- If the group asks for expertise to work with MyRWA to identify the sources of bacteria, is that an expertise they have? Just trying to understand what they are bringing to the table?
 - We have certain questions we can ask them to help us with. We hired a co-op and UMass has an interest in working with other institutions in the Boston area. They are already working with BAC to work together on the five sites that group has identified in the OS priorities.
 - They would collaborate with other institutions to go after research institutions. They are willing to do a lot of things, but we need to be mindful of the resources.
- Karen – if there were to be a consortium of academic institutions that would be engaged, it would make sense to have an academic seat. Whether they are on or off we should use them to get other colleges and universities involved. Can we not just look to agencies and municipalities to figure out how to fix it, but have universities bring their expertise to the table, which offers another challenge of expertise? They go for research dollars, we are talking about multi-year projects and we need to be aware that their time scales are different.
 - If they represent many universities, then maybe non-profit side
 - If they are solo, the government side
- EK – there are many universities in the watershed, and they sometimes are in and sometimes are out. UMass have been and remained enthusiastic about the opportunity and enter into this initiative. Right now Tufts and UMass have a grad and undergrad programs for students using the river as a laboratory and drafting papers about the problems that we face. It is not a high level of engagement when you look at what they offer. It is important that we respond to their enthusiasm, they do have the types of programs that apply to the work we are doing, they are well located, but in a way we should use their enthusiasm to encourage other universities to get involved. It is sort of a pilot program to identify what universities can bring to the discussion and work. How can we use UMass and BAC to really build a focus on the mystic through the university?
- Ivey – CD sent over of case studies done by Tufts grad students. Looked at three urban rivers that have successfully enhanced and improved water quality in the rivers. Susquehanna, Detroit, etc. The key in the three rivers was having university involvement. Likes EK's idea that it is the carrot to get other universities involved. We shouldn't overlook community college (Bunker Hill). Tufts, MIT has been working with MyRWA determining interest in prior trial run of lower Mystic coordinating committee. All can play a real role. Some will go to the student's presentations – Draw 7 and Navy Yard. Look at the results of the case studies will strengthen the case. Would like to see the consortium written into the MOU (it is).
 - Hoping to tie a lot of watershed work in the area.
- Rafael – what does UMass want?
 - They would like to see the role beyond just her. She wants to bring it to the Dean and other departments. She sees a recognized role and an MOU

will be useful for her to leverage other departments in the University.
Some kind of recognition would be what she is asking for.

- Nick – what about a non-voting member of the committee? Could put it in the MOU and then revisit it and see how it is working out.
 - EK likes this suggestion – lead technical liaison, but member ex officio.
 - We can be clear in the MOU that this relationship is key and will revisit the relationship with the MOU.
- Ivey would like to have Tony Rodolakis nominated as an interim business subcommittee
 - Will be on the agenda for the next meeting

Announcements, Next Steps

- Karen – thank you to Roseann to set up a meeting for public information for a release for RFR to fund ecological projects from Chelsea and Mill Creek system. \$200K environmental mitigation funds in Mass NRD trust from Global Irving Spill in 2006. Please share with the full mailing list. Until it's on the street can have full discussion with people.
- Nick – event on Saturday – rain date Sunday. Malden River walking trail. 9:00am
- Ivey – meeting tonight with Congressman Capuano who is opposing the Rutherford Avenue/Sullivan Sq. tunnel redesign. Tunnel is a roadblock to the construction of those pathways. Refuses to approve the plan. There is a meeting tonight to resolve, but not feeling optimistic. Meeting is at the Knights of Columbus on West School St at 6pm.
- Roseann – there was an oil spill yesterday at the edge of the Charlestown Navy yard. Right between Boston Autoport and further up. The Coast Guard had cordoned off the area.

Next meeting date – September 7 in the morning. We have a lot of work to do. Muni committee up and running, workgroups up and going. Mike will be presenting on fish advisories. Meeting at CLF.

**Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee Sign-in Sheet
May 18, 2011**

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