

Mystic River Watershed Initiative Steering Committee

December 11, 2014

9:30 to 11:45 AM

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

Draft Meeting Summary

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute

Action Items

USFS

- John Perry to send last year's RFP and URL for the urban forestry manuals.

EPA

- Mel Cote to request the USACOE attend the meeting with MassPort
- Mel Cote to find and distribute information on the location of the planned CAD cell.
- Lynne Hamjian to follow up with Rosanne Bongiovanni regarding opportunity to enhance efforts to improve water quality through the NPDES permit update process.
- Distribute the draft updated mission and priorities to the Steering Committee members for review and comment.
- Compile and distribute an updated Steering Committee participants contact information sheet. Sheet should include name, phone, email address, and subcommittee membership, if applicable.
- Circulate Report Card Grade press-release to Steering Committee members
- Circulate update on the status of the NAWCA funding for saltwater marsh restoration.
- Announce date of the Science Forum
- Poll Steering Committee members and select dates for quarterly meetings in 2015
- Synthesize and distribute follow up actions from the first Federal Partnership meeting to help formulate agenda for the next Federal Partnership meeting
- Draft Steering Committee meeting agenda topic schedule for 2015, giving special consideration to the timing of the Federal Partnership meeting, which must be done by September.

Steering Committee Members

- EK to send notice of meeting date with MassPort to the Steering Committee; those who wish to participate in the meeting are welcome to join.

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 June 2014 meeting minutes without any revisions.

Announcements from Members

Members made the following announcements:

- CSO2 outfall in Chelsea was recently closed.
- The MassDEP NRD program is seeking grant applications for restoration projects in the Upper Mystic River as part of its settlement with an oil spill originating from a J.P. Noonan site in Arlington. Estimated value of the grant is \$55,000. Applications are due on February 27, 2015.
- Funding for Mystic River efforts were part of the 9C funding cuts made by the Governor Patrick. Efforts to restore the funding are ongoing; contact EkOngKar Singh Khalsa if you can or would like to help.
- The 2013 Mystic River Water Quality Report Card will be released in the coming weeks.

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation: Greening the Gateway Cities

Mr. Mat Cahill, of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, presented the tree-planting efforts of the Greening the Gateway Cities two-part program conducted in partnership with city governments and community organizations.¹ Highlights from his presentation are below.

The Greening the Gateway Cities program is designed to reduce home heating and cooling energy use and costs by increasing tree canopy coverage in specific neighborhoods in Gateway Cities. Gateway Cities are medium sized cities, often with lower income levels, that typically have old housing stock with poor insulation. Chelsea, Fall River, and Holyoke were selected to participate in the program's pilot phase due to their low tree canopy cover, high levels of wind, and poorly insulated housing stock. Although the program is new, the concepts have been employed for a long time—essentially using shade trees to provide cooling in the summer and to reduce heat transfer caused by winter winds.

To reduce energy use and costs, tree canopy will need to increase by approximately 10% in specific neighborhoods. Approximately 15,000 trees will be planted between the communities of Chelsea, Fall River, and Holyoke to achieve the 10% increase in tree canopy goal. Most of the tree planting will occur on private property in coordination with the property owner, who will work with community organization partners to select

¹ Mr. Cahill's presentation slides are available on [MyRWA's website](#)

trees appropriate for their property. However some larger tree species will be planted on city properties. Community members who plant trees on their property will be required to water the trees for two years. The DCR will also conduct follow up visits to answer tree maintenance questions or address issues that may arise. In response to a steering committee member question, Mr. Cahill explained that rain barrels were also being offered to the property owners instead of rain gators since the gators are expensive and the barrels capture rainwater, which reduces tree maintenance costs and promotes a water conservation ethic.

Although energy use and cost reduction are the primary goals, the program has many ancillary benefits. For example, trees can help to reduce stormwater runoff, demand for combined sewer overflows (CSO), or CSO fees that some homeowners must pay—in Fall Creek, the program is organized so that homeowners who plant trees pay a reduced CSO fee. Trees also reduce the urban heat island effect, intercept airborne pollutants, and increase property values over the long term. Tree planting and maintenance jobs are another positive benefit.

Mr. Cahill described a recent example of the influence of shade on energy use and costs. Between 2007 and 2010, many trees in Worchester had to be removed due to the Asian Longhorned Beetle infestation and others were removed for development. After all the trees were removed, the DCR documented a 40% increase in summer electricity usage.

Committee members noted that Lexington has a tree protection ordinance that is strictly enforced, and New York City has a tree replacement formula (greater than 1-1) that must be met if trees are cut down. The DCR has sample tree ordinances available on the EEA website.

The group discussed the return on investment of tree planting and potential conflicts with other energy programs. Mr. Cahill explained that they will be collecting ROI data to show the impact; but at this point the ROI is calculated using a model. Once trees are established, then more work will be done to calculate ROI using actual data from the communities participating in the program. Ma. Cahill also noted that tree plantings and solar programs can coexist so long as the optimal locations for both trees and solar panels are carefully selected.

Mr. John Perry of the United States Forest Service (USFS) described the Urban Forestry program and how it might help increase tree canopy in the Mystic Watershed. The goal of the program is to create forest canopy where people live and the USFS achieves this by providing technical assistance to communities. For example, they provided aerial photography to assess canopy cover in Boston. They then provided training and education materials, including an urban watershed forestry manual, to help build capacity to use urban forestry practices for watershed protection. The USFS also provides grants for landscape restoration and urban forestry initiatives. Municipalities must work with the USFS state coordinator to submit the grant applications.

MassPort Dredging and CAD Cell Update

Steering Committee member EkOngKar Singh Khalsa reminded the group of concerns raised at the June meeting that MassPort had not contacted or engaged the Steering Committee or Mystic River advocacy groups during the planning or decision making process that resulted in the decision to transfer dredged material from the Boston Harbor to CAD cells in the Mystic River and Chelsea Creek. He also noted the concern that the communities of the Chelsea Creek and Mystic River are making a large contribution by having the dredge materials deposited in their waterways but they are not directly receiving any benefit for that action. Additionally, he commented on the incongruence of dredge material disposal requirements and cited as an example the requirement that communities disposed of dredge material in a landfill in New Hampshire when they dredged Salt Marsh Creek but MassPort was able to dispose of materials in CAD cells. Mr. Singh Khalsa will be organizing a meeting in the coming weeks with MassPort to further discuss these concerns. Any Steering Committee member is welcome to attend. Some committee members suggested the Steering Committee submit a letter outlining the concerns and requesting recognition and engagement with the Steering Committee on matters that could impact water quality.

Mel Coté, EPA, provided additional background on the CAD cells. He said the CAD cells were constructed in the 1990s and the Mystic CAD cell was filled and capped in 2009; one CAD cell remains open for use in Chelsea Creek. But, Mr. Coté noted it seems possible that the cell will not be utilized because many operators in Chelsea Creek do not want to pay the cost share and because a new CAD cell may be constructed in Boston Harbor in the inner-confluence area (the area where the main channel splits into the Mystic and Chelsea river channels). He added that most of the material being proposed to be dredged as part of the Boston Harbor improvement dredging project is Boston Blue Clay, which is being proposed for beneficial use as cap for areas of the old Industrial Waste Site that was created in the 1940s-60s prior to stricter environmental regulations and that lie adjacent to the Massachusetts Bay Dredged Material Disposal Site. However, if contaminated material is dredged, it is unclear whether that material will go into the Chelsea Creek CAD cell or in the CAD cell tentatively planned for construction in the inner confluence. He suggested the US Army Corp of Engineers be involved with the meeting between MassPort, EPA, and members of the Steering Committee or other representatives of environmental organizations.

Sub Group Reports/Discussion

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

Water Quality Subgroup: The group updated the water quality goal of the 2010 mission and priorities document, focusing in particular on priorities one, three, and four under the first bullet (beginning with “To make the waters of the Mystic River Watershed

fishable, boatable, and swimmable...”). The group also developed a progress-tracking sheet to track progress and guide the groups work together.

Updates were made to priorities one and three, including increasing the focus on legacy contamination and drawing greater attention to risk associated with river use. Priority two will be updated after collecting input from the municipal subcommittee on the creation of a Municipal Technical Assistance Program related to MS4 permit compliance.

Steering Committee members briefly discussed the updates, which they generally seemed to support, and the Water Quality Subcommittee meetings. Steering Committee members suggested the revised mission and priorities document be distributed after all updates are completed. A member also suggested that Subcommittee meeting minutes be distributed and posted on the EPA website.

The group briefly discussed the potential to impact water quality through the NPDES permits and how to amplify the reach and impact of the Steering Committee’s efforts (part of priority two). A member commented that an opportunity to significantly impact water quality was missed when the NPDES permits for several terminals were recently updated. She said this group should have suggested revisions to the NPDES permits since they are updated infrequently and that the group would benefit from strategic thinking about methods to improve water quality beyond the use of permits. Another member said the priorities do not explicitly state the goal of improving water quality through the facility permit review processes and suggested it might be worthwhile to think about how the terminal stakeholders could be more actively engaged in water quality improvement. Some members noted that the NPDES permits could have a sizable impact on water quality and that the Steering Committee should seek ways to discuss permit revisions in the future. A member said that the permits require the updating of the stormwater management plan a yearly basis and this could provide an opportunity for the Steering Committee to provide input, but it would have to be done through engagement with the NPDES permit staff since there is no formal input process.

The group briefly discussed the fish tissue study. It was noted that a lot of effort had resulted in few fish. Additional efforts will be made in 2015. The EPA offered to help connect Steering Committee members to experts that might be able to help collect the fish tissue.

Municipal Subgroup: The Municipal Subcommittee met with the EPA in November to discuss MS4 permits and created a list of potential priorities for the creation of a Municipal Technical Assistance Program related to MS4 permit compliance. Municipal Subcommittee members said the November meeting was useful and helped to recognize the need for collaboration to comply with the MS4 requirements. Potential priorities focused on how to share information and best practices, identification of funding opportunities, and technical assistance. Some conversation during the November meeting also focused on how to get more municipalities involved in the

Municipal Subcommittee. An EPA representative said they would like to talk with the municipality group about agency grant programs in the coming year.

Open Space Subgroup: The Open Space Subcommittee is tabling work due to low member participation and retaining aspiration for going forward. A member proposed moving the Open Space Subcommittee discussions and work on Draw 7 Park into the Steering Committee meetings for the time-being due to the lack of a committee chair and member ability to commit to work. Once another committee chair is identified and members can dedicate more time to the committee, then the subcommittee would resume work outside of the Steering Committee. An EPA representative said contractor support may be available for the Draw 7 work.

Science Committee: The Science committee is planning to organize a Science Forum in February.² More details will be forthcoming in weeks ahead.

Next Meeting Dates

Steering Committee meeting dates for 2015 will be announced shortly.³ Members suggested the group discuss 2015 meetings and potential sequence of agenda topics at the next Steering Committee meeting. Member suggested the following agenda topics: presentation on other federal urban water partnerships to understand what they are doing, how or where they received funding, etc. to identify opportunities for deeper engagement with federal agencies. One agenda topic is already set: as a requirement of two urban waters grants issued last year, the recipients will provide a project report to federal partners during a Steering Committee meeting. The presentation to federal partners must happen before September. Members suggested maintaining quarterly meetings in 2015.

New Business

A member suggested a new contact list be created for the Steering Committee. The EPA committed to producing and distributing the list.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:45 am.

² The date of the Science Forum has since been set for April 9.

³ Steering Committee meetings dates were subsequently set for April 16, June 18, September 10, and December 10, 2015.