

Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee

January 13, 2022 | 10 AM – 12 PM

Meeting Summary

Theme: 2022-2024 Mission and Priorities

Meeting in Brief

On January 13, 2022, the Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee met online via Zoom to celebrate the achievements of the 2018-2022 joint mission and priorities and review the draft 2022-2024 joint mission and priorities. Slides from the presentation can be found at <https://mysticriver.org/epa-steering-committee>.

A list of meeting participants can be found at the end of this document. For more information about the steering committee and current efforts to restore the Mystic River watershed, please visit www.epa.gov/mysticriver.org

Welcome and Introduction *Patrick Herron – Mystic River Watershed Association*

Patrick Herron welcomed everyone and provided background on the Mystic River steering committee's mission and priorities and the revision process.

Moving towards 2018-2022 Achievements:

Presentation on 2018-2022 achievements of the Mystic Steering Committee

Sushant Bajracharya (Urban Waters Ambassador) gave a presentation on the achievements of 2018-2022. Sushant highlighted that 1) partnerships and collaboration, 2) using science, and 3) socio-economic and ecological impacts were the major achievements of the year. He noted that all of these achievements were possible only because of collaboration and partnerships between the federal, state, local municipalities, communities, non-profits, and private agencies in the Mystic River Watershed.

Participants shared additional successes:

- Effective in bringing together all the municipalities, building community practice, and creating positive development in the area.
- More water quality testing was done by the municipalities than in prior years.
- Collaboration and information sharing between the RMC and communities increased resource sharing and funding over the last few years.
- Webinars on phosphorous control and trash reduction through the stormwater collaborative were engaging.

- Developed an educational program on Phosphorus removal in collaboration with a professor from UMass Lowell, installed 22 small-scale phosphorus removal BNP's in collaboration with MyRWA and the Town of Arlington.
- The City of Medford appreciated the collaborative effort of the Malden River Trash trap project and expressed the excitement about the open space and Clippership connection.

Participants suggested that we should explicitly keep track of the main accomplishments of the Steering Committee while also pointing out the accomplishments are not limited to the people who come to these meetings or the mission and priorities. The Steering Committee is a hub for sharing ideas, leveraging resources, peer learning, and initiating conversations. This creates a multiplier effect (and also makes it impossible to track particular successes by individual municipalities or regional collaborations back to particular discrete activities).

It was also noted that the committee was able to incorporate additional work during these last few years that were not in initial mission and priorities (e.g. developing regional trash reduction concepts).

Draft Mission and Priorities presentation

Caitlyn Whittle (EPA Region 1) provided a description on how the mission and priorities were drafted. The Steering Committee first developed a Mission and Priorities document to articulate priority areas of shared interest in 20. Since then, they have been updated several times. In developing this draft, the team removed tasks that had been completed from the previous version and made some adjustments and regroupings within the Water Quality section to better organize like activities. The draft priorities are listed as six priorities for Clean Water and two for Open Space.

Clean Water

1. Support water quality monitoring and research and share data and other information with environmental decision-makers, stakeholders, and the public.
2. Engage stakeholders and the public in “hands-on” opportunities to restore and protect water quality.
3. Improve stormwater management to reduce pollutant loading and mitigate floodin
4. Reduce or eliminate discharges of sanitary sewage to surface waters within the watershed.
5. Increase knowledge of legacy sediment contamination, identify impacts on designated uses, educate the public, and identify priorities and opportunities for restoration.
6. Serve as a clearinghouse of information on how climate change may impact water quality and environmental justice population in the watershed. Work with municipal and state partners to identify funding opportunities and address issues.

Open Space

1. Increase public awareness and focus on selected sites in the lower watershed that have been investigated by the open space subgroup and which will be supported by the Steering Committee.
2. Continue a systemic investigation of other segments of the river system to identify other properties or projects which may provide for the development of public Open Space and Access.

Caitlyn noted that the initial draft was a collaborative effort of the Urban Waters Ambassador and the Steering Committee Coordination Team as well as, Green Roots, and CBI. She also highlights the new mission and priorities will give the highest priority in incorporating environmental justice and climate language. One of the topics of discussion was whether to make Environmental Justice its own topic or to incorporate it in each of the priorities.

Discussion: Draft Mission and Priorities

The members of the Steering Committee were invited to give their opinions on the mission and priorities through an online jam board activity. The major discussion was whether to make Environmental Justice its own priority or incorporate it in each of the priorities both in Clean Water and Open Space. Here are some of the main talking points of the meeting.

- Share webinars on topics of general interest open to the public across the watershed (benefit of virtual meetings)
- Engage stakeholders and the public in a hands-on volunteer opportunity that supports volunteer water quality and fish migration.
- how can we do the work most efficiently for municipalities across municipal boundaries? If municipalities have the goal of doing the first five percent in the first two years, what should they do? What is the full plan to get to 60% between structural and non-structural BMPs? How can we do it?
- Create an interactive map of completed and ongoing projects in the watershed for public outreach similar to the Esri map under the "explore" tab for recreational areas.
- Add Trash-free Mystic initiatives as an activity category The main idea is seeing water-borne trash as a stormwater pollution issue. Multiple tools are being deployed and investigated, from structural trash-capture devices to non-structural (street sweeping) to public education (Adopt-a-Storm Drain, etc.)
- Develop education and outreach materials in multiple languages and engage EJ communities.

Announcements, Updates, and Funding Opportunities

Participants shared the following updates:

- Use the Steering Committee's Mission and Priorities to support grant applicants, especially from federal grants where it can be hard for EPA to sign on in support of projects.

- The sewage notifications regulation was published and promulgated. Unfortunately, there was an error in the publication. The statute that was signed last year is going to be implemented shortly. Numerous training sessions are scheduled for January 14th and January 18th on Sewage notification.
- MyRWA received the Environmental Education grant from EPA to implement adopt a storm drain project in 12 participating municipalities.
- Conservation Law Foundation took notice to intend to sue against Schnitzer Steel on the Mystic River, alleging water quality violations.
- The Boston Harbor cleanup case that MWRA is in and has guided the long-term control plan has pro intent and purposes been extended for three years.
- 16 combined Sewer Overflow sites are the subject of interest and priorities. MWRA is still determining how to achieve the goals of the long-term control plan for those sites.
- Work under the Mystic pedestrian bridge that goes from Everett to Somerville has stated. The project is a priority for DCR and is still moving forward toward issuing a contract for the final design.
- A new path at the MBTA shoreline to the east of Draw Seven Park is still in control of MBTA and has not been transferred over to DCR yet. The path would connect from Draw Seven to near Sullivan Square which still has a fence blocking the access. The path is to be open soon and needs an easement awarded to DCR for final steps.
- Constructions for the Clippership connector project in Medford won't start until spring 2023. The project connects downtown Medford to the orange line in Somerville.
- Updates on Municipal Assistance Grants – funds are made available to continue outreach and engagement activities, 10 social media posts such as Twitter and Facebook will be translated into the 6 most common languages spoken in Massachusetts.
- Merrimack Valley Planning Commission will review the local code for 29 participating municipalities. The local code influences impervious area creation and encourages the use of lower-impact development.
- Charles River recently received a grant to continue the use of the phosphorous control plan template. Numerous workshops will be conducted for their municipalities and lakes and ponds municipalities to understand how to use the templates that were developed last year.
- Massachusetts Maritime Academy that funds to continue their illicit discharge protection trailer and train, not just municipal staff start but also shares the information outside of the collaborative.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

EPA, MyRWA and the coordinating team will revise and finalize the M&P for 2022-2024.

Participant List:

Abbott Kathy	
Bajracharya Sushant	MyRWA
Barrett Matt	Woburn, MA
Borci Todd	US EPA
Borci Todd	US EPA
Butler David	MassDEP Northeast Region Waste water
Cote Mel	EPA Region 1
Ferguson Ona	CBI
Flores Elsa	The Harborkeepers
Gregory Rona	Friends of Alewife
Herron Patrick	MyRWA
Hrycyna Andrew	MyRWA
Hunt Alicia	Medford Dir of Planning Development and Sustainability
Kilborn John	EPA
Letourneau Jennifer	Cambridge:
Liggiero Marissa	Lexington Engineering
Livsey John	
McGivern Timothy	
McGovern Theresa	
Monahan Hillary	MWRA
Mullins Karen	Lexington Conseration
O'Keefe Michael	
Peale Sloan Caitlin	CLF
Perkins Stephen	MyRWA Vol
Rodolakis Wood Tony	
Rozycki Alex	Reading
Schifman Laura	MassDEP
Scott Jessie	USDA Forest Service
Spaetzel Alana	USGS
Walkey John	GreenRoots
Whittle Caitlyn	EPA
Wu David	MWRA

Appendix

Clean Water

Priority #1: Support water quality monitoring and research and share data and other information with environmental decision-makers, stakeholders, and the public.

- Develop a conceptual framework on 'first-moves' by municipalities on long-term plans to reduce phosphorus by 60%
- Assess the efficacy of ongoing or long-term monitoring efforts
- Interesting that there is nothing regarding monitoring herring or improving habitat and fish passage for herring or other species. But maybe that's not part of this Committee.
- Moving ahead with this project to construct effective fish passage in Horn Pond and federal money through the NAWCA program and NRD program over the next several years

Priority #2: Engage stakeholders and the public in “hands-on” opportunities to restore and protect water quality.

- Should adopt-a-storm drain be added to this since it's funded?
- Present practice-oriented programs from one community to others. (Trash Booms, Adopt a Drain). How to guide
- Make webinars on topics of general interest open to the public across the watershed (benefit of virtual meetings)
- Create platforms where municipalities can come together and work on an issue.
- Engage stakeholders and the public in a hands-on volunteer opportunity that supports volunteer water quality and fish migration.
- how can we do the work most efficiently for municipalities across municipal boundaries? If municipalities have the goal of doing the first five percent in the first two years, what should they do? What is the full plan to get to 60% between structural and non-structural BMPs? How can we do it?
- Have short presentations on hands-on opportunities of adopting a storm drain or trash Boom to EJ communities?

Priority #3: Improve stormwater management to reduce pollutant loading and mitigate flooding

- Consider sediment removal
- Add Trash-free Mystic initiatives as an activity category here or elsewhere. The main idea is seeing water-borne trash as a stormwater pollution issue. Multiple tools are being deployed and investigated, from structural trash-capture devices to non-structural (street sweeping) to public education (Adopt-a-Storm Drain, etc.).
- Creating an interactive map of completed/ projects in the works to improve water quality/quantity on the website as we begin more projects"

Priority #4: Reduce or eliminate discharges of sanitary sewage to surface waters within the watershed.

- Consider being specific about engagement in the upcoming planning for a Long-Term Control Plan for CSO discharges in the variance waters. e.g. regulators encourage participation, others engage

Priority #5: Increase knowledge of legacy sediment contamination, identify impacts on designated uses, educate the public, and identify priorities and opportunities for restoration.

- Important, yes, but should this be a priority? If this was a priority, wouldn't one of our organizations have this in our workplans? Acute issues of pollutants in stormwater seem to be a higher priority.

Priority #6: Serve as a clearinghouse of information on how climate change may impact water quality and environmental justice population in the watershed. Work with municipal and state partners to identify funding opportunities and address issues.

- Not sure this group is the right place for action A (resilient Mystic Collaborative might be better), and B don't feel appropriate unless tied to water quality.
- Consider making this a separate item. It feels a bit marginalized by being at the end of a list under Clean Water. It's bigger/more than a clean water issue
- disconnect between the Priority and the actions. The priority might be climate EJ and water, the action might be a clearinghouse of data.
- there are a lot of climate data clearinghouses already. What does it make sense for this group in particular to do?
- Resilience should be the keyword here
- instead of clearinghouse of climate data develop a clearinghouse of funding opportunities that match some needs and categorize funding opportunities by tags to ensure these opportunities can meet needs. Steering Committee can help collect all these opportunities more formally
- re-focus the actions on water quality; general climate actions might belong at the RMC

Open Space

Priority #1: Increase public awareness and focus on selected sites in the lower watershed that have been investigated by the open space subgroup and which will be supported by the Steering Committee.

- The list of sites seems stale. Needs forward orientation. e.g., park along Little Mystic Channel.
- Let's reach out to DCR to check this list and their input
- Identify barriers to EJ communities to using existing open spaces (so that these barriers can be addressed) and use that insight to better inform the design of future spaces.

- Reflect work and sites in cities like Everett, Malden, and Chelsea.

Priority #2: Continue a systemic investigation of other segments of the river system to identify other properties or projects which may provide for the development of public Open Space and Access.

Other Comments

- DCR and Somerville are meeting to identify and investigate DCR/inter-municipal drainage connections and share IDDE stormwater sampling information.
- The Steering Committee's role as a source of science & research (principally by Federal agencies & academics) becomes critical as we start dealing with climate change effects. I would like to flag groundwater impacts as a critical research area - especially in terms of buried infrastructure.
- I think it would be good for public outreach if we had an interactive map of completed/ projects in the works to improve water quality/quantity on the website as we begin more projects. similar to the Esri map under the "explore" tab for recreational areas

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