

Mystic River Watershed Initiative Pre-Steering Committee

Meeting Summary
January 28, 2009
Environmental Protection Agency New England
1 Congress St.
Boston, MA 02114

Attendees:

Name	Organization
Caitlyn Hunt	EPA
Lynne Hamjian	EPA
Kristi Rea	EPA
Lois Adams	EPA
Amy Braz	EPA
Leah Bowe	EPA
Chris Boelke	EPA
Michael Castagna	EPA
Roger Frymire	
Jenny Birnbaum	MA DEP
Catherine Woodbury	City of Cambridge
Andy DeSantis	Chelsea DPW
Joan Blaustein	MAPC
Corin Parsons	Sen. Jehlen's Ofc
EK Khalsa	MyRWA
Ivey St. John	CWC
Nancy Free	Friends of Middlesex Fells
Judith Dyer	Chelsea Greenspace and Con Comm
Christine Ellersick	Roots and Shoots

Science Committee Update

Leah Bowe (EPA) – There are a good number of RSVPs. It is going to be a science and technical meeting to discuss current and future projects. MyRWA, MWRA, EPA, and Mass DEP will be presenting their studies. The finalized agenda will be distributed and posted on line soon.

Kristi Rea (EPA) – The agenda looks good. There seems to be a lot in the final 30 minute section, maybe you'll need more time seeing as this discussion is a critical part of the agenda.

Leah Bowe (EPA) – Hopefully we will have an hour for that section. This version is still currently draft. If folks have ideas or thoughts on the agenda, please feel free to email Leah, Tom Faber, or Mary Beth Dechant. The introduction/kick-off will most likely be the Acting Deputy Regional Administrator. Please let us know if you have thoughts about how the science committee should interact with the Steering Committee.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) – It is important to make sure that how the bottom line affects people who are not scientists is well explained in the meeting. Perhaps a wrap up where the scientists tie up what they are trying to change so lay people can understand.

Ivey St. John (CWC) – We would like to be able to know what issues the Steering Committee can support and which issues require further advocacy.

EK Khalsa (MyRWA) – There is data that has been developed by scientists and needs to find application, but we need to let the scientists have time and space at this meeting to discuss science in a scientific way. There are issues with scientific questions and until those questions are resolved and the science is established, advocacy will be challenging.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – Thank you, this is good dialogue. We will make sure that we do a good job summarizing the meeting with issues that can be brought back to the Steering Committee and understood. The meeting is open and we've told folks that even if they are not scientists, they are welcome to come and listen. All of our meetings will be open so that folks can listen and follow-up afterwards.

Steering Committee Purpose & Structure

Cathering Woodbury (Cambridge) – Shouldn't the Steering Committee be providing an avenue for public outreach and dissemination of information.

Christine Ellersick (Roots and Shoots) – Education should include youth and schools.

Kristi Rea (EPA) – We should adjust the numbers to represent the correct range of Steering Committee numbers.

Catherine Woodbury (Cambridge) – Regarding municipalities, we should contact the Mass Municipal Association who has a voice for the many types of municipalities.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) – The MMA is more involved in muni finances and it would be worth contacting them.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – We have reached out to MMA and they may participate. We'll get to the municipality section in a moment, let's save this topic for when we get there.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) – Under the “how” section we need the Steering Committee to set a regular commitment to meet outside Boston. Perhaps we should add in “every other meeting.”

Lois Adams (EPA) – The Steering Committee will have to set their calendar, so it would be stronger for them to make this decision once they are up and running.

EK Khalsa (MyRWA) - There are plenty of places in the upper watershed that can hold 20+ people and I would be glad to help find meeting spaces when the time comes.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – We will put this issue on the first agenda for the Steering Committee to decide.

Caitlyn Hunt (EPA) – We met with two of MAPC's subregions and heard very strongly that the municipalities need a lot of outreach to become engaged. They would like us to send a letter to every Chief Elected Official and have them appoint a point person in each community that will receive notifications and stay engaged on this Initiative. Also, the municipalities would like to create some kind of organization and in the future elect representation to the Steering Committee. Representation should be from the upper and lower watersheds. They would like to receive emails regarding issues the Steering Committee is dealing with and they would like to have a direct link to the Committee thru email correspondence.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – The MMA is interested in helping us reach out to municipalities and we are hoping to work with both MAPC and the MMA to do outreach and figure out our next steps.

Catherine Woodbury (Cambridge) – This is a good starting place to move from. It is good to have the municipalities engaged and we definitely need a lot of coordination between the Steering Committee and the municipalities.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) – Don't be alarmed if the municipalities don't jump on this right away. Until there is a vote or a decision to be made, they may not be interested. The most important thing is to keep them involved and informed on the key issues, so when the time comes, they have the background to understand what is going on. We are hoping the two representative towns will bring the municipality perspective.

Christine Ellersick (Roots and Shoots) – Do all the municipalities work in the environment? Would each town have a different titled person?

Any DeSantis (Chelsea) – It's a big deal when a municipality received an Administrative Consent Order, that gets the Mayor's attention. I'm a DPW, but I'm also on Mass Water's Advisory Board. It's usually DPW's that get this kind of job.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) – MassHighway is a big deal in the upper watershed and we might want to consider adding them to the mix. There are a lot of issues up there like salting, sanding, and highways. They may not respond, but they are major players.

Could also add as membership – Friends of the Arlington Great Meadows and Roots and Shoots.

Invitation Letter

Some ideas –

If an organization isn't interested in the Steering Committee, we should stress that there are other ways to participate.

MA Division of Marine Fisheries would be a good technical liaison.

MyRWA will help searching a database to find contacts for non-profits

Mystic Valley Development Corp, has a lot of land in Medford, Everett, and Malden. They could be a good addition.

Stations Landing Condo Assn's.

Private Industry will be a topic for the Steering Committee to discuss.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – Do folks feel comfortable sending out the letter as an initial invitation?

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) – it is a good idea, we need to keep moving forward. It might be a good idea to make phone calls as a follow-up.

Kristi Rea (EPA) – Don't we want the member's calendars to dictate the date of the first meeting?

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) – we might want to have an informational meeting first. We want to schedule something or it's not going to happen.

Amy Braz (EPA) – We would have an informational conference call to describe what it means and the time commitment. Follow-up calls are a good idea.

Joan Blaustein (MAPC) – We should add who on their staff has been participating and cc the folks who have been participating thus far. We should ask for an official letter from the organization on their letter head. I've never conducted business with a reply card. Should also add language in letter stating that there are many ways to participate even if an organization chooses not to be on the Steering Committee and that all meetings are open.

Catherine Woodbury (Cambridge) – We should include who has been attending and include the link to the EPA web site. We could suggest that they include the information on the reply card on a letter, or just to fill out the card.

Kristi Rea (EPA) – This might be a good time to pause and get support from a new RA appointee when he/she is brought on.

Ivey St. John (CWC) – That is a good idea, but the first meeting is just a “get to know you” meeting and we can create a splash later on perhaps around the report card.

Catherine Woodbury (Cambridge) – It is going to be towards the end of February that we are going to get the Steering Committee identified and so the new RA could welcome the committee and kick off the meeting.

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – Even though we are in transition, Ira is acting RA and we could be without an appointed RA for a week, or for a year. Do we really want to wait? Ivey's idea of a dual track is good. We can make progress and weave in opportunities to include the new RA. Stephen (Acting DRA) is coming to the science committee meeting and we could do a report card event with the new RA, should we have one by then.

Andy DeSantis (Chelsea) – The dual track is important, but we should move forward.

EK Khalsa – It is important to engage the new administration, but do we want a report card event this year? There is no harm in continuing this work and I'd defer to EPA since they know how this is going to affect us. We are not going to be thrown off track and early March is on track.

Chris Boelke (EPA) – We could do a report card event and signing event to show the progress being made.

Dates in the first week of March – March 2, 9, 11 ok. We will retool the letter and get back to you all on a preferred date.

On the Steering Committee agenda:

- Get to know each other
- Chair/co-chair/rotating chair
- Membership
- Quorum

Ivey St. John (CWC) – Report card/summit, matrix, and science committee report out.

EK Khalsa (MyRWA) – It would be valuable to discuss priority items going forward.

For the Report Card and other important topics it may be helpful to solicit volunteers to work in between meetings.

Would this meeting be 2 hours or more? Yes, group agreed to a 3-hour meeting for the initial meeting – 9:30-12:30.

Roger Frymire – We should shoot for three hours for the first meeting. All others will be 2.

Ivey St John (CWC) – We will draft an agenda and host a conference call for those would like to help plan the agenda.

We will be in communication on the agenda, etc. via email and will have a call on **February 23 at 11am.**

Announcements

Lynne Hamjian (EPA) – Exxon Mobile is in settlement right now and will have \$5.6M to restore wetlands in MA. We need to work to ensure there are good wetland projects in the Mystic watershed put forward. We'll try to get more information on when/how the money will be competed. The money is for all of Massachusetts but it would be good to get good proposals from within the Mystic.

Caitlyn Hunt (EPA) – The MET RFR has been issued and is available on the state's COMPASS website.

Nancy Free (Friends of the Midd. Fells) – It would be good to get a Mystic clean up boat, similar to what we had in the Charles. It went in and youth would remove trash and debris.

Ivey St. John (CWC) – We should invite USFWS to the first meeting.

Christine Ellersick (Roots and Shoots) – There is a National Campaign Roots and Shoots on March 21. They are inviting youth groups for water conservation and cleanliness.