

Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee
Wednesday, May 12 2010, 1:30 pm
US EPA New England, 15th Floor, Mount Washington Room
5 Post Office Square, Boston, MA

Agenda and Discussion Topics

Introduction

The impetus for this meeting originates from interest in improving and expanding access to the Mystic River. There is uncertainty as to whether the water is healthy, and we need to work together to overcome that perception. There is opportunity for the Steering Committee to support specific and broad initiatives to improve water quality in the watershed and this group has been brought together to identify what those opportunities are. Water quality is fundamental to the watershed and should be a priority of the Steering Committee. People want to get out on the water and recreate. It is a critical priority for the lower mystic.

We need to know what the current problems are in the watershed and we need to figure out what we don't yet know. We need to come up with a plan of action to improve water quality in the Mystic River Watershed. The Clean Water Act (CWA) guarantees us that we should be moving toward a fishable and swimmable river and that there is compliance with water quality standards.

The current status is a good baseline starting point. The latest 303(d) impaired waters report is currently out for comment and MassDEP recently issued a 5-year watershed analysis – water quality assessment – on the Mystic, which also lists the impaired water bodies and water bodies that are currently un-assessed. This group should review this document and submit comments to the state.

MyRWA data is used to inform the state's Water Quality Assessment for the Mystic Watershed. MyRWA has commented on the last two iterations of the 303(d) list asking MassDEP to use more baseline data. DEP has added brooks and ponds to the latest lists, but some are still left off. Monitoring should continue and spread further so that we can determine if new water bodies need to be added to future lists.

MassDEP did some sampling in 2009. Those data are there, but are not yet available. The state is currently in the process of QA/QC.

EPA will work with DEP to find out what changes have been made to the list and if they will present the Assessment at the next meeting. We will work on getting the most recent list mapped for future discussions.

How is this group going to intersect with the Science Subcommittee?

The science subcommittee is there to answer questions the Steering Committee might have. The science subcommittee will be able to do conduct studies and weigh in on

questions and priorities. At the most recent science subcommittee water quality workgroup meeting, the discussion was focused on stormwater bacteria sampling for the upcoming season. The group tried to focus on the two segments of the river that have received the worst monitoring data for the season - mostly dry weather data. They discussed cyanobacteria monitoring throughout the watershed and are coordinating where EPA will place a sampling buoy and where MyRWA is sampling. USGS proposed some assistance. The meeting notes will be posted on the website and will include action items and proposed work for the summer. There were discussions about the workgroup's charge and ground rules which included coordination with the Steering Committee.

EPA monitors for bacteria as well as other parameters. There will be buoys deployed that will monitor for cyanobacteria and nutrients. EPA is cognizant of nutrient concerns in the watershed. This group needs to determine priorities going forward. Historically, the science committee has been focused on bacteria. There were other topics discussed at the summit, but those haven't gone further. The first and easiest thing to tackle is dry weather bacteria water quality. There have been discussions about water quality standards and illicit connections. At the most recent science subcommittee meeting, the goal was to coordinate sampling for this summer in a quick and timely manner. This summer, we are talking about mostly bacteria sampling. Other parameters aren't being purposely excluded.

There is interest in nutrients, bacteria, legacy pollutants, and stormwater runoff. There is a fish advisory for MassDEP and it's not listed on the 303(d) list. Sediments and heavy metals has been a really big open question.

Around the Room Brainstorming

The following are ideas that may be taken on by the Steering Committee and were generated during this brainstorming session. This list may not be complete.

- 1) Publicize fish advisories and identify related cultural issues
- 2) Source of pollutants (CSO, SSO, dog waste)
- 3) Cyanobacteria
 - a) phosphorous loading/cycling
 - b) treatment options – sequestration?
- 4) SSOs – work with municipalities on MS4 requirements
 - a) Agree on baseline reporting
 - b) Resources needed
- 5) CSOs – revisit projections with respect to climate change and rainfall changes
 - a) long-term control plan
- 6) Identify other discharges to the watershed
- 7) Create a forum with municipalities for stormwater (created thru municipal subcommittee)
 - a) Resources/leverage
 - b) CWA requirements
 - c) Roundtable discussions

- d) Permit compliance – what are good practices
- e) Cost sharing
- f) Mobilize public support
- g) BMPs for specific watersheds
- 8) Host workshops with municipalities for MS4 (EPA plans to do this)
 - a) Effective BMPs for water quality needs
- 9) Create Public Service Announcements:
 - a) Why water quality matters
 - b) Cost/benefits
 - c) How your actions contribute
- 10) Increase education and outreach within the watershed
- 11) Establish and work with public to announce discrete goals for the watershed
- 12) Point to local success stories to celebrate successes
 - a) Boston harbor
- 13) Cyanobacteria
 - a) Identify risks of and reduce human exposures
 - b) MDPH is developing a pamphlet
- 14) Identify solutions for fecal bacteria pollution
 - a) Human exposure
- 15) Identify solutions for sediment contamination
 - a) Phosphorus and legacy pollutants, are there responsible parties
 - b) Risk assessments for recreational use
- 16) Identify causes of and better publicize fish advisories – legacy pollutants
 - a) Statewide poster can be distributed/outreach
 - b) Translations available for Boards of Health
 - c) Maintenance of signage
- 17) Create a goal of “Fishable/Swimmable” by certain date.
 - a) MyRWA would hold a swim
 - b) Encourage engagement on the river
- 18) Create accountability for nutrient inputs
 - a) Phosphorus loading – sequestration (Assabet study) or harvesting
- 19) Draft and action plan on how to get to fishable/swimmable that identified activities and players.
- 20) Focus on things that people do that they could do differently thru PSAs, stencils, etc. focused to businesses, municipalities, citizens
 - a) What goes down the drain
 - b) Nutrients
 - c) Infiltration and
 - d) Pet waste
- 21) Creation of discrete goals such as:
 - a) TMDLs
- 22) Create a mechanism to share data more easily.
- 23) Engage industry, businesses, and commercial entities.
- 24) Work together to ban phosphorous in fertilizers or push for use of low-P fertilizers.

Discussion/Prioritization

DEP to continue with bacterial source tracking program and SSO enforcement and where there are opportunities to work with 104, 319, 604 programs. DEP will give ideas for SRF program.

EPA is committed to continuing its baseline work, such as its involvement in the Initiative, volunteer equipment loan program, youth education grant opportunity, recent university collaborative/coop position, cyanobacteria buoy, hot spot monitoring support, enforcement efforts (>10,000 Mgal/day sewage removed so far), permit support, MS4 workshops, meetings with MA and MMA to discuss outreach for MS4.

The group should focus on creating action-oriented roadmap.

An MS4 workshop would be helpful. It could be a day that focuses on MS4 and LID.

Right now MyRWA is working with EPA and MWRA to share data in a single location. There needs to be a way for municipal data to be loaded into WQX, by either submitting it to EPA or having them upload it themselves.

The new MS4 Permit will require 5 years of municipalities screening their outfalls, which will create a lot of data that needs to be maintained in one location. Perhaps we ask that it be submitted in a format that requires it be sent to EPA for uploading. This is not currently in the draft permit, but there are comments requesting it.

Phosphorus is an education issue. There is science that states phosphorus levels are very high in the Mystic River valley and therefore is an unnecessary additive to soils. It would be interesting to review these reports.

It might be worth pulling together a “bronze standard” under the permit so that the group can discuss it with the municipal subcommittee in July. We could examine most effective work to be accomplished under the MS4 and where the most impact can be gained for effort.

The group could look into carbon and cost per unit removed by different types of activities. Activities like changing lightbulbs to CFLs will have a cost/ton of carbon removed. There might be a similar metric when thinking about stormwater and MS4 permits and BMPs.

There are hydrologic type models that identify cost effective solutions for parameters of interest for certain sub-watersheds. We don't value everything downstream like we should, and we could gain information from these models.

There will be advocacy for work to be done in some EJ communities. We should take a lot of priority activities and try to focus all of them in a particular area.

When looked at from the enforcement perspective, every outfall is dirty. If we tackled each outfall, it would be tacking the “low-hanging fruit.” We can’t even estimate the background bacteria levels because there are still so many illicit connections.

We should look at some of the areas and where they stand now with respect to the boating/swimming standard and what it would take to get them all to that point.

Draft Mission and 2010 Priorities Revisions

Proposed goal of “Fishable and Swimmable” by a certain date. The development of an action plan will inform that date. The group should learn from accomplishments in the Charles River Watershed when thinking about this. There are a lot of asterisks in the Charles related to swimming and there isn’t a lot to support the “fishable” part. Let’s be realistic. We have seen gains on the boating side of things and we are likely to see gains there first. Highlighting boating might help generate interest in the Initiative. We won’t put people at risk when they boat responsibly.

Next Steps

- EPA will type up the lists and draft the mission.
- EPA will prepare a map of 303(d) impairments for the next meeting for discussion.
- EPA will ask MassDEP to present on the 2008 data and Watershed Assessment at the next meeting.
- The group should select some priorities that can be worked on quickly.
- Before the next meeting the group will sift through electronic materials to help sort priorities.
- This group will meet again on June 14, 2010 from 1:30 – 3:30 pm at EPA to pursue priorities and the concept of an action plan.

**Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee Water Quality Group Sign-in Sheet
May 12, 2010**

Name	Organization	E-mail address
Ekongkar Singh Khalsa	Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA)	ek@mysticriver.org
Patrick Herron	Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA)	Patrick@mysticriver.org
Rafael Mares	Conservation Law Foundation	rmares@clf.org
Eugene Benson	ACE	gene@aceej.org
Lise Marx	Massachusetts Water Resources Authority	Lise.marx@mwra.state.ma.us
Nihar Mohanty	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)	Nihar.mohanty@state.ma.us
Karen Pelto	Massachusetts Office of Energy and the Environment (MA EEA)	karen.pelto@state.ma.us
Michael Celona	Massachusetts Department of Public Health	Mike.celona@state.ma.us
Roger Frymire	Citizen	ramjet@alum.mit.edu
Catherine Woodbury	City of Cambridge	cwoodbury@cambridgema.gov
Bill Hinkley	Massachusetts Environmental Trust	William.hinkley@state.ma.us
Stephen Perkins	US EPA New England	Perkins.stephen@epa.gov
Susan Studlien	US EPA New England	Studlien.susan@epa.gov
Lynne Hamjian	US EPA New England	hamjian.lynne@epa.gov
Caitlyn Whittle	US EPA New England	Whittle.caitlyn@epa.gov
Todd Borci	US EPA New England	Borci.todd@epa.gov
Leah O'Neill	US EPA New England	Oneill.leah@epa.gov
Mark Kennedy	Sen. Provost Office	mark.kennedy@state.ma.us