

Mystic River Watershed Water Quality Subgroup Meeting

Monday, April 11, 2011, 9:30am-11:00am

EPA New England, 5 Post Office Square, Boston, MA

Workgroup Attendees:

Gene Benson (ACE), Patrick Herron (MyRWA), Lise Marx (MWRA), Roger Frymire, Rafael Mares (CLF), Bill Hinkley (MET), Lynne Hamjian (EPA), Karen Simpson (EPA), Caitlyn Whittle (EPA), Leslie Tomic (EPA)

Priority #1 – Reduce and Eliminate Overflows related to SSOs

Working Group: Todd, Patrick, Nihar/Kevin B., MWRA, municipality

Goals: Group will work to improve SSO reporting form and notification.

- The SSO reporting form has been changed, but it needs more work.
 - In the new form, there is a block to check off who has been notified instead of in the past it was just a blank line.
 - MyRWA has been working on a webform that would allow municipalities or citizens to alert MyRWA to an overflow.
 - There is currently no communication between MyRWA and MWRA when there are overflows happening.
 - MWRA is working on a scope of services.. The goal of this project is to look at analyze the MWRA Chelsea Creek wastewater tributary area and develop recommendations for system optimization and SSO impact reduction as it relates to various areas of discharge. Currently DEP does not forward the reporting forms, and the group would like to see them. Will ask Nihar about getting the forms.
 - Some entities have a hard time estimating the flows and could use assistance with that.

Additional Discussion:

- State Senator Eldridge has sponsored a Water Infrastructure Finance Commission. Bill Hinkley will share the information with everyone.
 - They are looking for a way that water infrastructure can be financed going forward. They are looking at supply, waste water, stormwater, everything.
 - There will be a report made to the legislature and there are proceedings on Senator Eldridge's website
 - Martin Pillsbury (MAPC) has been attending the meetings.
 - There is a lot of interest in LID BMPs, and structural BMPs.

MWRA has been working to compile information on past SSO discharges and is currently developing a scope of services for a broader consultant study of the Chelsea Creek tributary area. The study will rely on use of MWRA's hydraulic model and is intended to identify potential system operational or physical modifications or optimization opportunities to eliminate, reduce or modify (relocate or consolidate) SSOs and improve wet weather flow conveyance. Three levels of alternatives will include MWRA system optimization measures, inflow and infiltration data for the MWRA system and major MWRA system modifications and/or new facilities.

Priority #2 - Create Municipal Technical Assistance Program related to MS4 permit compliance (potential topics listed below; municipal subcommittee will need to weigh in on prioritization of these topics)

Working Group: EPA and MyRWA

Goals: EPA and MyRWA will pull together a municipal subcommittee meeting to discuss prioritizing the items under Priority #2 and #3.

- We need to coordinate with the municipal subcommittee to set up the next meeting and identify items they'd like to discuss. There seems to be strong interest in focusing on the upcoming MS4 permit and identifying areas for cost savings and efficiencies.
- Could we offer the munis assistance with stormwater management plans?
- There often isn't a lot of public input on these plans and with the permit still up in the air, there might be time to work on this beforehand.
- EPA is hosting MS4 clinics – one in the Mystic on April 27th, it is all day. In the morning there will be a full overview of the draft permit and in the afternoon there is going to be a working session with information on stormwater utilities, ordinance writing and LID.
 - The Mystic clinic should have a lot of overlap with the municipal subcommittee
 - It is being hosted by EPA and EPA contractors
 - Since the clinic will be based on the draft permit, the contractor will flag places where EPA has received a lot of comments so that it is clear where things might change.
 - It is going to be at the MWRA facility in Chelsea from 8:30 – 4:30 and is currently very full, there is a waiting list.
- We might have a better idea of how we can help the municipal subcommittee after this clinic takes place.
- Martin Pillsbury (MAPC) has some very good presentations on this priority and Priority #3, we could ask him to do a presentation on how municipalities can share equipment and find efficiencies. (Martin is scheduled to be on the next agenda for the municipal subcommittee since the last meeting was cancelled.)

Priority #3 – Reduce Phosphorus loading in the watershed.

Working Group: EPA and MyRWA through the Municipal Subcommittee

Goals: EPA and MyRWA will pull together a municipal subcommittee meeting to discuss prioritizing the items under Priority #2 and #3.

- Martin Pillsbury could work with the municipal subcommittee to share information on this topic.
- Cambridge currently uses low- and no-P fertilizers on their playing fields and other town properties.
- CRWA is hosting some workshops in Franklin that focus on no- and low-P regimes at ballparks.
- EPA is looking into pursuing a nutrient initiative. We have been talking to manufacturers, but could potentially reach out to retailers as well.
- Gene has worked on this topic in the past and finds that there are a lot of barriers we'll need to consider:

- In towns where homeowners or the municipality use a lawn service, it can be hard to convince them to try something new.
- We should try to get some retailers to stock low- and no-P fertilizers.
- Municipalities seem to be low-hanging fruit, if we can get them to put it into their contracts and lawn servicers see that it works, we could have more influence on private property.
- It might be helpful to have some communities that have been successful with this to come and present to the municipal subcommittee. If there is an issue where nobody is succeeding, we could potentially have a facilitated discussion.
- Municipalities could work together to joint purchase fertilizers, equipment, and services.

Priority #4 – Increase knowledge and action about legacy pollution

Working Group: Nick Cohen, Gene Benson, Patrick, Raphael, DEP, DPH, EPA

Goals: The working group will meet to review current reports and identify needs going forward.

- Mike Celona has offered to do a presentation for the Steering Committee so they can better understand the fish advisories currently in effect.
- Gene would like to tie any work done on this priority back to the Malden River. Is there a way to influence MDPH to do a fish assay in the Malden? Is the % toxicity in the Malden highest in the whole watershed? Patrick will talk to Mike about this.
- The Army Corps is doing some dredging work and excavating in the Malden, they will have to test the sediments.
- Gene and Nick Cohen have been working together on the Malden R. and Gene has a law intern coming this summer to pull together reports from the Malden River and its adjacent properties. If there is a way for EPA and the state to coordinate, it would be helpful for someone from EPA's CERCLA group to sit in. They are interested in:
 - Looking at all the existing data on the Malden;
 - Finding out what else should we want to know (EPA, DEP, and MDPH can inform on this);
 - Identifying where we are and what further should be done.
- Nick is currently looking at historic (industrial) uses of the water and wants to understand why the sediments are so bad. Gene will find out when Nick has a final drafted report.
- It is a huge challenge to digest all these reports since there is a lot out there. There are many old 21E sites, but there is at least one that is active and recently filed. There are a lot of high levels of toxic substances. CERCLA can help advise on what the group should be focused on and what they should be looking for.
- There is confusion over the safety of sediments for recreational uses. The Tufts crew team uses the river daily, while when Everett wanted to put in canoe launches, they were told it was not safe for recreation. There needs to be clarity on whether it is safe or not.

Meeting wrap-up

Follow-Up Actions

- Bill Hinkley will share information from Senator Eldridge's Commission with the group.
- Todd, Patrick, and others will work on the SSO reporting form. Group will ask DEP to forward all SSO reporting forms.
- Patrick will talk to Mike about doing a fish assay in the Malden River.
- EPA will talk with CERCLA folks to identify someone to work with Gene on the Malden River Priority #4 issue.
- Patrick will help sponsor municipal subcommittee meetings.
- Working groups will report back to the whole group via email.
- This group will meet again on Tuesday, June 7th at 1:30.