



Mystic River Steering Committee

Report from Wednesday, June 6, 2012 Meeting

Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 5, at the Winchester Town Hall

The meeting of the Mystic River Steering Committee at Massachusetts DEP Northeast Regional Office in Wilmington opened with greetings and introductions, and was followed by EK Khalsa's outline of a suggested revision to the regular Steering Committee agendas, formats and administrative duties.

These draft suggestions were developed in response to concerns expressed at the March meeting that the Steering Committee had become over time less focused and was experiencing a fall off in attendance. (The suggested agenda format is attached for your review.) The suggested agenda drove a lively discussion, particularly about the role of sub groups and sub-committees.

To begin the meeting, Stephen Perkins defined the role of the EPA in the overall effort. The role of EPA is to recognize overlaps between groups, act as conveners of different circles, and find common ground. EPA can assist with water quality issues more so than open space issues because water quality is a core task for the agency.

It was proposed that the Steering Committee use the Water Quality and Open Space and Access Committees as vehicles to develop discussion and action around the priorities established by these committees and as a way to engage all stakeholders in the issues these priorities represent. Another point mentioned and received well by the group is to have future participation at Steering Committee meetings based on the topic(s) being discussed at each meeting in order to ensure that the right people are at the table. The group should also start thinking about who else we can invite to the table, and encourage participation from those groups who we haven't seen in a while.

A discussion of sub group/committee activities followed and resulted in a consensus to concentrate Steering Committee focus on the water quality and open space subgroups.

A discussion followed on the role of the municipal and business subgroups in this new initiative. Andy DeSantis indicated the municipal group is waiting for the promulgation by EPA of the substantially revised MS4 Permit regulations and that release of these regulations would generate new interest among municipal officials to meet and discuss the prospective impacts of this

regulation. Tony Rodolakis, the business subgroup representative, concurred and he noted businesses generally respond to specific agency regulatory and permitting initiatives such as restriction on fertilizer use, landscaping requirements, or substantial revisions to existing regulations such as the MS4 permit regulations. Steering Committee members agreed that the Municipal and Business subgroups should continue to meet periodically. The Municipal and Business sub-groups also agreed to engage their respective members by focusing on specific issues that overlap with the Steering Committee's priority objectives. Possible opportunities could involve Water Quality and Open Space goals, and inviting members to present at Steering Committee meetings.

Andy DeSantis spoke about the subject of Primacy for stormwater permitting. Primacy for stormwater permitting consists of states regulatory authorities being the issuing authority rather than the EPA. Most states have primacy for stormwater permitting, Massachusetts does not. Karen Pelto informed those present that there is currently an active discussion between MassDEP and affected public agencies regarding this subject. Andy DeSantis expressed that he does not have an issue with EPA as permitting authority and wouldn't have an issue with MassDEP being the permitting authority although he is of the opinion that if this would occur, the affected MS4 communities would likely end up with an additional cost from MassDEP as it presently done with Drinking Water permitting for which MassDEP currently has primacy. The EPA does not charge MS4s for their permitting activities. Nihar Mohanty from DEP voiced that DEP-NERO does not currently have sufficient staff to undertake this effort and additional funding of staff positions would be necessary.

To insure that the Committee provided sufficient leadership for the Water Quality and Open Space Subgroups, EK Khalsa agreed to lead future open space committee meetings and to remain in that position for the near term and confirmed that Dr. Patrick Herron and Caitlyn Whittle will continue to serve as Chair of the Water Quality subgroup. Lynne Hamjian affirmed EPA's particular interest in and support for the Water Quality Subgroup. Karen Pelto suggested the Open Space Subgroup invite Melissa Cryan of EEA's Division of Conservation Services which oversees the Commonwealth's land grant program to its meeting. Stephen Perkins recommended that The Trust for Public Land be included as well. Both of these sub-groups could benefit substantially from increased participation.

Gene Benson indicated he was particularly interested to have regular updates on the agenda from MA DEP and US EPA on the key Mystic issues upon which these two important agencies were focused. EPA's Stephen Perkins indicated that his preference was that reports on all the multiple Massachusetts DEP/US EPA activities that fall within the Steering Committee's interest be part of regular committee work and reporting. Stephen further offered that the Water Quality Committee was a good vehicle for one of US EPA's primary concerns and focus. Despite Stephen's concern, a consensus was reached that Massachusetts DEP and US EPA would report on activities germane to the Mystic Watershed at the Steering Committee's next meeting as a test to see whether this ought to be included as a regular feature of Steering Committee updates.

EPA confirmed that they will continue to facilitate meetings, but the Steering Committee members must take ownership of the agenda and work ahead.

It was noted by other committee members that there are overlaps between work that happens at the Steering Committee (SC) and in sub-groups and activities and initiatives that are undertaken by these same participants through other venues and institutions. For this reason it was important that the Steering Committee add impact to this work and provide some unique benefit to this collective effort. Certainly all agreed that the Steering Committee could be the vehicle for reporting on and networking the various activities of all the Steering Committee members and their organizations.

Anamarija Frankić led a brief discussion on the importance of being creative in finding sustainable sources of funding. In order to do this, individuals and groups can work together to apply for available funding, look to developers for help, find areas to leverage resources and use time and resources as powerfully as possible to get things done.

There was a discussion of the value of case study presentations and it was agreed to add the following to the list of possible case studies already identified on the June 6th agenda.

- 1) A report about all the projects that were funded by the Massachusetts Environmental Trust under the \$500,000 Mystic River grant round and through the \$1 million Exxon-Mobil penalty directed by the Federal Court to be spent on Mystic River projects that was also granted through MET
- 2) A report on the Woburn Bikeway/Greenway and Tri-Community Bikeway,
- 3) An update on the Groundwork Somerville Draw 7 Park Charettes underway and
- 4) Progress on redevelopment at the former GE site in Everett on the Malden River.

Anamarija Frankic reported the MOU between EPA and UMASS/Boston is signed, and that she and her colleagues are developing plans for an educational workshop in the fall focused on the Mystic, Charles and Neponset watersheds in order to gather and review all local research and education initiatives among area colleges and universities in support of more collaborative projects.

EK Khalsa reported that Ivey St John will serve as Steering Committee Clerk and will take minutes for the SC meetings and Karen Pelto will survey SC members to develop future SC agendas. Stephen Perkins thanked these two SC volunteers for their willingness to serve and for the relief this service will provide to EPA.

In order to increase communication to the group, a couple of ideas were proposed to spread the word in addition to the annual fact sheet and e-mail correspondence. One of these ideas was to develop a newsletter in order to get the news out – both bad and good. A second idea that was mentioned is to create a blog to share information for local communication on relevant issues.

Finally, meeting attendees heard some encouraging announcements:

Chelsea City Hall will be the site on June 21st for bidders to receive information about a SEP grant to restore wetlands and marshes along Chelsea and the Mill Creeks.

The IndustriPlex site in Woburn produced a natural resources damages settlement of \$4.25 million to restore the Aberjona River. This settlement resulted from the long-

committed efforts of our own Karen Pelto, among others and Karen was applauded for her excellent work.

See <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2012/May/12-enrd-603.html>.

Ellen Maas announced a hearing at Cambridge City Hall on June 26 at 5:00 PM regarding the Open Space/Silver Forest site on the Arlington line.

EK reported 200 volunteers over a 60 day period counted 21,000 herring in the Mystic. Based upon this count the Mystic River Watershed Association has estimated that more than 200,000 river herring reached desirable spawning habitat in the upper Mystic Lake for the first time since the Civil War.

EPA announced an educational demonstration project of porous pavement near the Mill Brook in Arlington.

Action Items/Person Responsible:

Next meeting on 9/5: reports by DEP and EPA on their activities which are germane to the Mystic Watershed: responsibility - EPA & EK

Add MET grant and Woburn Bike Path projects, and progress on the GE site to the case study list: responsibility - Karen

Convene Open Space group, and invite EOEEA's Land Grant and Trust for Public Land leaders to join: responsibility - EK

Respectfully submitted,

Ivey St John

Meeting Attendance

Name	Organization
Anamarija Frankić	UMass Boston
Andrew DeSantis	Chelsea DPW
EK Khalsa	MyRWA
Eugene Benson	ACE
Ellen Mass	Friends of Alewife
Ivey St. John	CWC
Jan Dolan	Friends of Upper Mystic Lakes
Karen Pelto	MassDEP
Karen Simpson	EPA
Lynne Hamjian	EPA
Martin Pillsbury	MAPC

Matt Shuman	Winchester
Michael Celona	DPH
Nihar Mohanty	MassDEP
Stephen Perkins	EPA
Todd Borci	EPA
Lise Marx	MWRA
Tony Rodolakis	AMEC

DRAFT