

Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee

June 4, 2015 | 9:00 - 12:30 pm

5 Post Office Square | Boston, MA 02109 | Court of Appeals, 15th Floor

MEETING SUMMARY

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute

Action Items:

- Distribute booklet on FEMA region one mitigation ideas
- Distribute USFS Urban Forestry information
- Distribute contact information for Chelsea Hazard Mitigation plan: Marilyn Hillard, (marilyn.hillard@fema.dhs.gov)
- Distribute information about the Imagine Your Parks grant program
- Distribute USACE contact for discussion of CAD cell management
- Follow up on discussions of NGOs and partnership in the Mystic River watershed

Decisions and Actions:

The steering committee made the following decisions and actions:

- Approved the April 2015 conference call summary.
- The committee decided to continue discussing potential NGO partnerships in the Mystic River watershed.
- The committee decided to continue the conversation about how federal, national and local NGOs, and municipal partners could collaborate.

Welcome, Introductions, and April 2015 Meeting Summary

EPA's Lynne Hamjian welcomed the committee members, led introductions, and reviewed the agenda. The committee approved the April 2015 conference call minutes without any revisions.

Member Updates and Announcements

Members provided the following updates and announcements:

- The first Public Involvement Plan (PIP) meeting regarding the Wynn Development was held on June 3. Following the June 3 meeting is a 20-day comment period, which was extended by a second 20-day comment period at request of the 10 Everett residents, resulting in 40 days of public comment. The date of the second PIP meeting is not established. Wynn will not issue a request for Letters of Intent from contractors to bid for the remediation job until after the 40-day comment period. Once received, the letters of intent will be reviewed and a second RFP will be issued with a statement of work, followed by the hiring of a contractor. At that point, the Wynn team agreed to hold a public meeting in Charlestown to discuss the contractor's remediation plan.
- EPA's Caitlyn Whittle will go on maternity leave at the end of June; Erick Beck and Elizabeth Glivinski will be the EPA points of contact until she returns.

Sub Group Reports

Committee members reported on the municipal, water quality, and open space subgroups:

Municipal and Water Quality Sub Groups

EPA is planning a joint water quality and municipality subgroup workshop in the fall; they will seek input from the municipality sub group chairs to convene the workshop, which will focus on shared opportunities for MS4 financing, outreach and communication. EPA is also planning a late summer meeting with the federal partners and municipal staff to focus on funding and grant opportunities for municipal open space projects.

EPA is working with Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) to update the water quality report card from last year. The update should be published at the end of the June.

EPA will deploy a buoy near a Blessing of the Bay Boathouse in June. The buoy will transmit data in real-time to the EPA website. The Mystic River Watershed Initiative webpage will also be updated soon.

Open Space Sub Group

The open-space sub group will hold a meeting on June 18. Dan Driscoll of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will present an update to the Mystic River Master Plan. He will comment on recent developments including those at the Alewife Reserve area, and Draw Seven Park and the pathway to route 99. The escrow account for the plan has been activated. Amendments are pending to this years state budget to provide an additional \$250,000 to the DCR to finalize shovel ready plans. This money was received last year but then lost due to budget cuts. Dan Driscoll may also provide an update on the funding situation.

The group briefly discussed Draw Seven Park and the trash and materials left over from its use as a snow dump. The group agreed to ask Dan Driscoll how the DCR would address remaining debris.

A member commented that on the last call the steering committee discussed and confirmed interest in pursuing the development of a comprehensive open space plan to identify both existing and prospective open space parcels (see notes under the Municipal Sub Group report from April 16). Noting the lack of volunteers on the open space committee and the importance of this work as a critical next step in the Mystic, MyRWA considered ramping up capacity to secure grants to complete the effort and build upon the efforts of the municipalities to develop open space plans in their communities. The member added that MyRWA is well positioned to complete this work because of the network they have developed throughout the watershed over many years.

Urban Waters Grant Recipients Progress Presentations

MyRWA and Alternatives for Community and Environment, Inc. (ACE) were the recipients of EPA Urban Waters small grants last year. The grant requires recipients to present progress updates to the urban water partnership. Andy Hrycyna presented on behalf of MyRWA and John Walkey, Staci Rubin, Roseanne Bongiovanni, Magdalena Ayed presented on behalf of ACE.

MyRWA – Green infrastructure and stormwater education project for the Malden River

The focus of this project is education/outreach, technical assistance, and an analysis of existing conditions with a focus on green infrastructure as a stormwater management and phosphorus reduction tool. This focus area for this project is the Malden River sub-basin, which spans three heavily urbanized and industrialized, environmental justice communities: Medford, Malden, and Everett. Much of the sub-basin consists of impervious surface and the river itself is highly channelized, degraded, and not easily accessible. However, some new, visionary developments on the Malden are restoring vegetation along the shoreline and providing opportunities for residents to connect with the river via open space areas.

As part of the education component, MyRWA has been producing brochures and information sheets on stormwater and green infrastructure. In late summer/early fall 2015, MyRWA will display stormwater pollution and green infrastructure at the Malden River Festival and convene a public charrette for locating green infrastructure. In collaboration with a technical consultant, MyRWA developed technical green infrastructure documents for municipalities and convened a multi-municipality green infrastructure conference and tour of local green infrastructure to teach municipal representatives about the use of green infrastructure.

As part of the technical assistance and analysis of existing conditions components, MyRWA analyzed the municipal stormwater codes to identify strategies that would help developers use green infrastructure best practices. They will also complete statistical, modeling, and geographical information systems (GIS)

analyses of phosphorus sources using MWRA and MyRWA nutrient data. Preliminary GIS analysis of the phosphorous loads, which used the loading coefficients from the new MS4 draft permit, indicates that the greatest sources of phosphorus are in the highly developed areas with significant impervious surface area from roads and parking lots. This finding is attributable to the fact that auto exhaust contains phosphorus and impervious surfaces swiftly move phosphorous laden rainwater into the stormwater collection system and river.

MyRWA also conducted a feasibility analysis of infiltration based green infrastructure using GIS. The resulting map illustrates areas where infiltration based green infrastructure could be utilized, and areas with use designations where infiltration techniques are not possible because they could spread pollution. The map provides a broad view of where infiltration techniques could be used but site-specific analysis would still be required.

MyRWA has encountered both challenges and opportunities throughout the project. One of the primary challenges is persuading municipalities to make large-scale public investment in green infrastructure and stormwater management. Part of this challenge is that municipalities are still waiting to see what the MS4 permit will require. On the flipside, MyRWA reports that they have good municipal partners in the effort who are supportive and engaged. Ultimately, these partnerships will lead to a long term conversation to help leverage change.

ACE, Inc. – Implementing the Chelsea Creek Community Improvement Plan

ACE and the Chelsea Creek Action Group (CCAG), a coalition of Chelsea and East Boston residents staffed by the Chelsea Collaborative and the Neighborhood of Affordable Housing, have worked together on various projects. The small grant opportunity enabled the two organizations to focus collaboration on the implementation of the Community Vision plan and fulfillment of four primary goals related to water quality and community development: 1) address local urban water quality issues, 2) engage, educate, and empower residents of Chelsea and East Boston, 3) Identify and support community priorities, and 4) involve environmental justice communities in reducing stormwater. The project focus area extends from the Meridian Street Bridge to the Chelsea Street Bridge.

To improve water quality, the team participated in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit renewal process, reviewed public databases to determine oil terminal compliance with federal and state laws, and engaged terminal operators in discussion of water quality concerns and potential solutions. Their engagement in the NPDES permit renewal process resulted in more protective permits. Terminal operators and community members met on several occasions, including an initial meeting facilitated by EPA alternative dispute resolution professionals to discuss community benefits. Chelsea Creek Business Roundtables have been reestablished. Community-company discussions are markedly improved as demonstrated by some companies engaging CCAG in discussions about proposed upgrades prior to public hearing processes.

The partners also sought to educate, engage, and empower local community members in Chelsea and East Boston. Engagement with Governor Patrick resulted in his signing of an Environmental Justice Executive Order, which also will support work to improve water quality by requiring interagency coordination and prioritization of water resources. Residents and community leaders from Chelsea, East Boston, and Revere convened to review a proposal to transport ethanol by unit train on MBTA tracks. Among other activities, ACE and CCAG also engaged community members in discussion of the proposed Confined Aquatic Disposal (CAD) cell, launched educational boat tours, discussions about the rules and regulations governing Chelsea Creek, engaged the US Fish and Wildlife Service about the North America Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) funds originally allocated for Chelsea Creek wetlands restoration, and organized residents to participate in the Chelsea Creek Designated Port Area boundary review.

ACE and CCAG also identified community priorities in the Vision Plan and sought to involve EJ communities in reducing stormwater runoff. Community priority sites include the former Hess Site, the

Cove, and the MWRA building in East Boston. The community envisions the MWRA as an ecological hub for people to engage and learn about the environment. In Chelsea, the team secured \$220,000 for green infrastructure on Mill Creek and Broadway Hotel recently agreed to contribute an additional \$100,000.

ACE and CCAG also aimed to provide residents with access to the Chelsea Creek. The team launched recreational opportunities combined with historic education sessions about events such as the Battle of Chelsea Creek. ACE and the CCAG would like to continue to engage city and state agencies to organize similar events.

ACE and the CCAG plan to continue to engage the public, businesses, and government agencies to find a balance between community and industry needs. Next steps include working with agencies to establish TMDLs in the Mystic River Watershed, continuing the Chelsea Creek Roundtables, participating in Harbor Planning Processes, increasing green space, wetland restoration, and opportunities for community members to access the creek; and implementing the community vision.

Urban Waters Federal Partnership Program Overview

Caroline Klos, EPA Headquarters, presented an overview of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership Program, which the Mystic River Watershed Initiative joined in 2013. Her presentation is summarized below:

The goal of the partnership is to revitalize open waters in the communities that surround them, and serve as the intersection of where environmental and natural resources meet community and economic development. The goal is achieved by enhancing coordination between the federal agency partners, building upon local efforts by understanding local priorities and facilitating collaboration when possible, leverage local resources to stimulate local economies, and learn from early victories.

The partnership has expanded in terms of locations and the number of federal agencies and nongovernmental organization (NGO) partners involved. The partnership started with seven pilots and expanded to 19 partnerships. There are currently 14 federal agency partners and four additional agencies may soon join the partnership. Twenty-eight national NGOs also recently signed onto the program. The partnership program may not expand to new cities, but the hope is that additional federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) will join the partnership and lessons learned from the 19 partnerships can be applied in any urban area. EPA headquarters is currently drafting a 'how to' handbook that will document the best practices and suggest the following framework for establishing partnerships:

1. Define vision and goals
2. Forge relationships
3. Pursue projects of interest
4. Measure and communicate results
5. Sustain momentum

The partnership model yielded several accomplishments. The partnership in Atlanta, Georgia enabled the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance to significantly expand collaboration with others local groups. In Los Angeles, California, the partners were focused on restoring sections of the Los Angeles River and successfully partnered with the US Army Corps of Engineers, which is now prioritizing the restoration work. The partnership in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania developed a job training program, a portion of which focuses on storm water and green infrastructure. Several partnerships have also successfully embraced technology and social media tools to collect data and communicate information.

In the future, EPA anticipates distributing the Partnership 'How to' Handbook to any interested community, continuing to collaborate with national NGOs and encouraging local NGOs and Mayors to join the partnership, and strengthening the connections of the 14 federal agencies in the partnership.

Steering Committee member discussion after the presentations generally followed these themes:

New partners in the Mystic River Watershed – A member asked whether or not Flatley Company (which owns the Shrafft Center), the MBTA, and MassDCR could be considered a partnership in the program. EPA suggested this would be a good coalition to form but it would not likely be designated as a new partnership like the Mystic River Watershed Initiative Urban Water Partnership as EPA is not creating any new partnerships at this time. If the opportunity to create new partnerships reopens, you could pre-package the coalition and have it ready to present as a partnership for consideration. In the meantime, EPA is glad to share information and best practices about forming partnerships.

NGO role in partnerships – EPA clarified that they hope national NGOs and local NGOs will become more involved in the partnerships. EPA is first seeking to gain NGO support and will then define their role in the partnerships. Ideally the NGOs will commit to specific actions at the national level. The Mystic River Watershed Initiative committee members were encouraged to seek potential partnerships with NGOs that recently signed onto the program.

Greater Philadelphia Area / Delaware River Watershed Urban Waters Federal Partnership

Michael Leff presented on the Greater Philadelphia Area / Delaware River Watershed Urban Waters Federal Partnership. His presentation is summarized below:

Unique natural and social characteristics exist within the area of the watershed partnership. Extending 330 miles from New York State to Delaware Bay, the Delaware River is the longest un-dammed river east of the Mississippi. In addition to agricultural, recreational, commercial, and industrial uses, the watershed provides the drinking water for greater than 15 million people. The partnership involves four cities in three states: Philadelphia, PA; Camden, NJ; Chester, PA, and; Wilmington, DE.

The partnership charted the following path during its development:

1. Coalesce federal partners – The partnership started as a coalition of the willing with in person meetings and conferences calls of the locally based parties.
2. Begin to build full cross-sector partnership – The initial partners invited community groups, academics, and private businesses to join the partnership. They have had limited success at engaging businesses.
3. Form core planning team – The core planning team is mostly federal partners who track next steps and strategize to advance the partnership.
4. Conduct ‘Listening Sessions’ in all four cities – Partners met with community members and representatives to learn about the activities of the municipality, explain the idea of the partnership, and identify needs and potential projects.
5. Content Analysis and additional outreach – After visiting the communities the partners analyzed the notes and input the received during the meetings. Additional outreach and communication continued by sharing email updates about grant opportunities, events, resource webinars, etc. Members forward the email updates to potentially interested parties and each email blast tends to generate new interest. A particularly successful outreach event was the Wilderness Inquiry paddling event that connected urban school children with the river.
6. Identify main areas of interest from the Listening Sessions – Partners identified five areas of interest: Brownfields revitalization; water quality and quantity; climate resilience; trails, parks, and open space; and river protection and restoration. They also identified several cross cutting themes that spanned the interest areas: education and outreach, environmental justice, economic development, and youth engagement.
7. Develop concept of ‘Communities of Practice’ – The communities of practice are groups of individuals who share similar interests. Co-facilitators, one federal partner and one non-federal partner, were established as Communities of Practice focal points for each of the five main interest areas identified during the listening sessions.
8. Convene an All Partners Meeting – All partners were invited to a meeting in April 2014.

9. Launch Communities of Practice – The thriving brownfield redevelopment group holds quarterly meetings in each of the four cities. Although a solid concept, the communities of practice have shifted somewhat in implementation, most likely due to limited resources. To adjust to the change in implementation, the partners still hope to deliver networking opportunities in those areas, but in a synthesized rather than separated fashion.
10. Build website and share resources

The partnership has also faced challenges. For example, the geographic extent of the area and the number of active partners and projects can make face-to-face communication difficult and focused efforts difficult. Additionally, the partnership has faced the challenges maintaining interest and involvement without dedicated funding and competing priorities of other responsibilities. Initially, there were some challenges getting federal partners on board, which was countered by reminding them that it was part of their job and mission. Initially there was some challenge engaging communities too, but the communities became more eager to participate when they learned it was a 'Federal' partnership. Skeptical partners also eventually joined because they recognized the value in belonging to a large network.

Key lessons learned from the partnership include:

- Use a small engaged core team to keep things moving, and be sure to incorporate opportunities for fun and camaraderie
- Listen to partners, be flexible and responsive, make connections, and watch for opportunities
- Don't stretch yourself too thin
- Empower individuals and organizations to provide leadership
- Identify and tap into existing networks and collaborations
- Borrow and share across UWFP locations
- Sometimes all that's needed is to bring people together and let them forge connections and build collaborations.

Progress and Action for the Federal Partnership

Several federal partners described their ongoing projects and potential areas for collaboration:

US Army Corps of Engineers: Adam Burnett briefly introduced the ongoing work of the USACE. The USACE has many partnership authorities. Of particular interest to the Steering Committee may be the aquatic ecosystem restoration program and others that provide matching fund opportunities. An example is the Malden River Restoration project, where the USACE is partnering with the Mystic Valley Development Commission to restore an emergent wetland area. Burnett said there could be many opportunities to partner in the watershed, including potentially the planning of CAD cells.

National Park Service: -- Charles Tracy described a few potential opportunities for collaboration. The NPS is collaborating with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) on the Imagine Your Parks program to engage artists and connect people in different ways to park spaces. The NPS is also working with the Delaware River Watershed Urban Waters Federal Partnership to bring the Canoemobile event to the Mystic and other watersheds. Another potential area to collaborate is the NPS Find Your Park Instagram campaign, where the importance of the Mystic River could be highlighted.

Federal Emergency Management Agency: David Mendelsohn described FEMA's area of focus and potential ways the Steering Committee members could be involved. FEMA's work focuses both on disaster management and on identification of hazards, risks, and vulnerabilities prior to an emergency situation. Flood extent mapping is used to identify hazards and vulnerabilities; however new projects developed along a waterway could impact how flooding occurs. For this reason, it is important for public and private landowners who are developing projects to analyze how it might impact local flooding and then submit that data to FEMA so they can adjust the flood maps accordingly. FEMA also works with individual municipalities on hazard mitigation planning. Stormwater management and drainage issues,

open spaces acquisition, and natural habitat restoration are mitigation actions that could be included in a mitigation plan, but the projects must be in the mitigation plan to be funded after a natural disaster. Hazard mitigation plans are updated every 5 years and many are currently being updated in the Greater Boston Area.

Housing and Urban Development: Ernie Zupancic described HUD funded opportunities. The primary program of HUD is the Community Development Block Grant program. Cities with populations greater than 50,000 residents receive a grant every year; seven entitlement communities are located in the Mystic River Watershed. HUD funding can be spent on nearly anything, which can make it hard for localities to decide how to spend it. However, the funding must benefit low to moderate income community members. The local community development departments determine how to spend the funding and should be engaged for potential collaborative opportunities. If no response is received at the local level, leverage community advocacy to influence funding allocation. If local planners say an idea is not feasible, HUD can assist in a review of project feasibility with the community; however, HUD does not have the final say in how the money will be spent.

United States Forest Service: John Perry provided an overview of USFS programs, many of which they deliver in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. The Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) program provides technical, financial, and program management assistance for activities such as forest inventories and management plans, natural resource assessments, tree ordinances, etc. More broadly and outside of urban areas, the USFS has a forest health and watershed management program that some communities have used to identify brownfield reforestation projects or to inventory properties where reforestation could improve stormwater management and water quality. The Landscape Scale Restoration program could also be a potential option as it includes UCF activities too.

United States Geological Survey: Jeff Barber described the work the USGS can complete and some of the activities they are completing in the watershed. The USGS can provide hydrological monitoring and studies, basin scale hydrology modeling, sediment studies, and water quality data collection and analysis. The USGS is installing three new stream gauges (for a total of six in the basin) on the Malden River in August; all the data will be available online. These gauges will aid in the development of phosphorous loading studies. The USGS may also be able to assist with Storm Water Management Modeling (SWMM), which would also be useful for the phosphorous loading study.

The Steering Committee will resume discussion about collaboration opportunities in the Mystic River Watershed given insufficient time to brainstorm areas of potential collaboration during the meeting. The Steering Committee thanked the federal agency partners for their brief presentations, the efforts they have already made to collaborate, and their willingness to partner in the future.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:30 pm.