

Southeast New England Coastal Watershed Restoration Partnership
Draft Meeting Summary
6th Work Group Meeting
June 6, 2013 at Save the Bay

“Think regionally, act locally.”

The meeting objectives for the 6th Work Group meeting were to work on finalizing the draft criteria/framework document, discuss an organizational structure that makes sense for the Partnership, and to determine the role of the Work Group in this bi-state restoration effort (with and without funding).

Lynne Hamjian, Surface Water Branch Chief at EPA - Region 1, set the stage for the meeting by emphasizing that the draft criteria document is for discussion only. The funding mechanism for this Partnership effort and the authorities that are used may change as we move forward but the foundation for these criteria is important. Currently, there is a separate line item in the President’s Budget for FY2014 and it is clear that this effort is important to EPA regionally and nationally. The criteria are to generate a discussion which includes Work Group members’ knowledge and expertise in order to bring in individual priorities and operationalize this effort under different funding scenarios. Although the outcome is uncertain in terms of funding, it is important that we set ourselves up for success by integrating rather than duplicating our individual efforts.

Ellie Tonkin kicked off the criteria discussion by addressing several questions regarding the details of the evaluation process and asking for any additional questions to consider. These questions include:

- *Are there examples of good policy/planning projects?*
- *How does the partnership allow for a balance between innovation and failure?*
- *Does there need to be a rubric for scoring each project?*
- *How should we measure return on investment and/or significance of projects?*
- *Recommendation for distributing funds among projects?*
- *Should there be funding caps on project categories?*
- *Should we require match and should we award points for match?*
- *Should there be a requirement for monitoring project success?*
- *How do you target different focus areas (regional versus local)?*

Elizabeth Selbst emphasized that the intention for this document is to outline a framework for implementation and the primary focus areas that come out of it may depend on different phases of funding. It is not necessarily what the public would see when applying for project funding. The group then discussed some concerns and additional points to consider when moving forward with the Partnership’s framework. Therefore, the point assignments are flexible and may change based on funding details (i.e. availability and authority). Though each individual question was not specifically addressed in order by the group, the discussion that followed touched on most of the major points and provided some insight and suggestions to EPA for revising the criteria document. These suggestions include:

- Consider risk associated with projects and how it will be assessed
 - o A criterion labeled “external factors” would help to determine risks associated with projects and would be something that a technical committee would address
 - o Applicants should consider elements that could go wrong for all types of projects
- Consider how an assessment document (such as an inventory of biological condition) could be included because these projects lead to other projects by identifying priority areas. This document would help to identify the likelihood of implementation (or failure) or a particular project.
 - o Keep in mind that people engaged in the project have sufficient responsibility or authority for what gets done after the planning, and that the municipalities need to be on board.
 - o Planning projects should outline the vision for how the plan will be implemented and where additional resources will come from
 - There is a need for having a connection between planning and a realistic ability to implement
- Focus on the “mechanics” of proposals as a way of really clarifying what is being sought and how proposals will be evaluated.
- Specify ineligible activities.

Several members of the workgroup provided suggestions for moving forward with Partnership in regards to what their role is. These include:

- Align ourselves with and be aware of other grant programs, bring in additional partners in order to do this
- Consider what the public facing document would look like and change the criteria document so it doesn't read like an RFP since we are not at that point yet.
- Use the money strategically to fund projects that have significance in more than one watershed. Stress regional transferability (replicable, transferable, regional implications, cumulative impacts, etc.).
- Layer in the work that the NEPs are already implementing with the work that the Partnership does
- Consider a public-private collaboration to engage the private sector and see progress
- Articulate a regional goal to serve as a metric to evaluate proposals
- Emphasize the priorities of nutrients and stormwater.
- Look at TMDLs and impaired watersheds to get priority focus areas.
- Provide opportunity for innovation in the region.
- Need to require some type of match.

The group discussed how small-scale projects with local impacts could have regional significance in addressing stormwater and nutrient issues in coastal areas. Eric Boettger suggested using a “think regionally, act locally” approach where the project would have an element that makes it useful to others in different watersheds. A local project with results that are transferable, and lessons learned that are applicable to other geographic areas would have increased regional significance.

In addition, clustering several small projects together could heighten regional impact. In terms of transferring results of small projects to other areas, often there is not enough money to take the results beyond the initial project. By bundling projects together and encouraging people to apply together collaboratively, there would be a larger impact. Highlighting projects that can be combined with or linked to other projects would have more of an impact than if they are done independently of one another.

In addition to or separate from the funding of projects, there was some discussion about what the work group could do if funding was not available. The primary suggestion was to fulfill a coordination and communication role to exchange information, pick-up nationwide projects as examples and connect local projects with one another. Another suggestion was to have the Work Group play a role in fostering collaboration among the two septic system technologies testing facilities at URI and on Cape Cod. There was some discussion of convening a technical meeting or forum to exchange other ideas. This would be an excellent way to address critical issues relating to nutrients and stormwater and invite folks with expertise and experience with innovative solutions regarding those issues.

During the discussion of organizational structure of the Partnership, the group embraced the idea of keeping it simple and pulling together subcommittees or a panel of experts on an as-needed basis because this offers more flexibility. The potential role of the Workgroup and Council was discussed but not defined. It is possible that the Partnership's role in "matchmaking" could be a way of increasing impact and leveraging resources. Without defining the exact role of the Partnership or workgroup, the elements that are needed to implement action currently represented on the workgroup, so there may not even be a need to put together a separate subcommittee. The group also discussed pulling in additional members to be involved as the Partnership evolves. Several workgroup members agree that the current work group currently includes representation from environmental planners, citizens groups, engineers, scientists, and regulatory agencies. The possibilities of pulling additional members in will depend on the priority issues, need for specific expertise and funding. Conflict of interest procedures need to be developed. Structure should mesh with two existing NEPs. NOAA should be at the table.

The date for the next meeting has not yet been determined, but is tentatively planned for September. EPA is planning to host at least one conference call between now and then in order to update the group on their progress with the criteria, finalize organizational structure, determine role of the workgroup (and council if necessary), and to discuss the possibility of hosting a forum for interested stakeholders. This call will be scheduled for mid- to late-July.

Meeting Attendance

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Margherita Pryor	EPA Region 1
Tim Gleason	EPA ORD
Walter Berry	EPA ORD
Ed Dewitt	Association to Preserve Cape Cod
Erin Jackson	Cape Cod Commission
Caitlin Chaffee	RI CRMC
Joe Costa	Buzzards Bay NEP/CZM
Dave Delorenzo	MassDEP
Lynne Hamjian	EPA Region 1
Johanna Hunter	EPA Region 1
Ann Rodney	EPA Region 1
Terry Sullivan	TNC – RI
Eric Boettger	NRCS – RI
Jane Austin	Save the Bay (NBEP)
Sue Kiernan	RIDEM
Topher Hamblett	Save the Bay
Liz Selbst	EPA Region 1
Wenley Ferguson	Save the Bay
Karen Simpson	EPA Region 1
Hunt Durey	Mass Division of Ecological Restoration
Ellie Tonkin	EPA Region 1 (Facilitator)