

**Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee**  
**Draft Meeting Notes**  
**July 21, 2010**

Ground Rules:

- Everyone is encouraged to speak
- Please raise your hand to speak
- All ideas should be treated with respect
- One person should speak at a time
- Try not to use acronyms or abbreviations
- Ideas should be written as the speaker intends
- Audience member should state their name and affiliation before they speak

Agreement Points:

- Next meeting will be September 15<sup>th</sup> at Delta Dental in Charlestown
- Please contact Caitlyn Whittle if you're interested in hosting the November 17<sup>th</sup> meeting
- Steering Committee supports the water quality subgroup continuing to meet.
- Steering Committee supports the open space group continuing to meet.
- Tri-CAP is added to the Steering Committee as a member.

**Steering Committee Group Reports and Priorities Statement**

Water Quality Subgroup Report Out

In June, MassDEP gave a presentation to the water quality subgroup on the Mystic River Watershed Assessment. This assessment is updated every 5 years. For the assessment, DEP looks at each segment of the river for water quality and other issues, like fish. The assessment is focused and narrowed down WQ parameters to look at nutrients – phosphorus, bacteria, legacy pollutants, and cyanobacteria.

The subgroup will focus their attention on a summary that EPA has put together and is in the process of coming up with mission statement and long-term goals. Some goals that have been discussed are:

- Fishable and swimmable by certain date? What parameters are realistic?
- What is the date and what uses can be reached by that date? Will the goal be for the entire watershed?

The group will come up with a list and work to tackle several over the next few years. Items to be covered in the long-term will be held on to in a parking lot.

The Charles has had a similar goal and it has been a work in progress. The group was unable to come to a consensus. Subgroup members are going to bring ideas back to their constituencies for suggestions on what an appropriate arching goal should be. For the Charles Initiative, the goal defined their mission. The subgroup is interested in the Steering Committee's thoughts.

The subgroup discussed how ideas might be prioritized over the next few years and how they might prioritize by segments or tributaries to focus attention on things that are easy to get at or might have a lot of benefit.

The group would like to come up with priorities by looking at various strategies. Right now the list is not final. The group is looking into things that were missed and if there are tweaks to the language that would make activities more clear and on the same level. Questions being asked are:

- Which items should be worked on as a group, or as an individual entity?
- How can the list be used to prioritize and put some ordering on things?
- Does the Steering Committee agree that the subgroup should continue to meet?

The current draft strategy list is very thorough and it does lay out a lot of information in compact form. There are a lot of the right categories. Most of the miscellaneous category describes activities that are outreach/PR which can be applied to each category.

We should look to local success stories – Boston Harbor and the Charles River as models for solving problems.

Members would like to share the draft strategy with their constituents and EPA will forward the chart to the Steering Committee. We will ask for comments two weeks prior to next group meeting which is scheduled for September 29.

EK will share the strategy with the MyRWA policy committee.

The source of cyanobacteria is not filled in. We need to do more research to find sources. Maybe the strategy is to control nutrients. We should be thinking about strategies needed to control the problems.

It might be wise for the committee to choose to control something that has broad inputs like cyanobacteria. Everything would be part of that – control of CSOs, SSOs, bacteria, nutrients, etc. etc.

The subgroup needs to address the goal issue. Once the goal is defined, the group can clarify the target. The group needs to identify what can be shared publicly as a goal.

Swimming, boating, and fishing as a goal may have to be split up because boating will come before swimming and fish eating. MyRWA had set a swimmable/fishable goal for 2010 and they are a long way away from attaining it, but not impossibly far. While it is compelling to set a date, if you don't hit it or you are not persuasive that you are going to make it then it can fall flat.

To meet fishable/swimmable 100% of the year may not be reasonable. CSO and SSO removal is going to take a long time. Communities are not thinking about getting rid of the CSOs. Chelsea has 4 CSOs and 3 actively overflow. MWRA's CSOs overflow often due to conditions and their infrastructure. The solution to some of the CSO issues may be deep tunnel storage and MWRA should be added to the strategy list.

MWRA has been working on the CSOs and SSOs. There doesn't seem to be a plan that is going to affect storage. But if the committee picked a goal of 15 years, then we can say, deep tunnel storage is the solution, let's get out a schedule to get that done within 15 years.

There may be temporary storage being built at Assembly at Mystic for storms. Including temporary storage is a solution that might come with redevelopment.

In South Boston, the beaches were the reason to build underground overflow tunnels. The tunnel can take stormwater up to 25-year storm until the storm subsides. This might be a model to consider for other parts of the system.

The group needs a plan and a goal, but it should be feasible and realistic. Setting any sort of goal means that we are committing to multi-billion dollar projects in the Mystic. The problem is that this work is going to require massive amounts of funding.

Let's pick a date – maybe it's 2025 – and say, everyone has a role to play and everyone has to come to the table as to how they are going to do their part to get it there. But once the date is picked, we need a list of activities so that it is believable even though it's ambitious, then it's more likely that people are going to jump in and do their part.

The water quality group can work together to flesh out what the date means and what would have to happen to get everyone to work together. These steps could be outlined before the September meeting so that the Committee can have a rational discussion about what date makes sense.

To identify these steps, we should look at capital plans and to find out what things are actually going to happen. This may be an iterative process. MWRA recently met with MyRWA to look at tributaries and SSOs to try to minimize frequency of these overflows.

Does it make sense to look at these issues by municipality? It seems that municipal water and sewer plans are part of this. It is a mix of watershed-wide and municipal issues.

Are there are other solutions we can think of in terms of LID and small scale?

It is wise to separate swimming & boating from just swimming. It also might be a long time before we can get a metric on fishing.

**(Corrections by Lise Marx, MWRA)**

**There is currently a Variance in place for CSO discharges to the Lower Charles and Charles River Basin which authorizes limited CSO discharges while CSO controls identified in the Long-Term CSO Control Plan are completed.** In Cambridge and Chelsea there is a lot of old infrastructure and it takes a while to figure it out and deal with it. **Along the Alewife**, Cambridge sewer separation should be completed by 2015 and those areas should be meeting water quality standards 98% of the time. Even without the CSOs, you still have to deal with controlling stormwater and urban runoff.

There is a small storage facility that stores flow that used to discharge into little mystic channel and discharges to MWRA when there is room. Lise will check to see if it filled up and if it overflowed recently.

If the water quality group is trying to develop what it might take to accomplish these goals it might be worthwhile to have with municipal representatives and MWRA participate since they have sense of the numbers. With their assistance, the group could make progress on evaluating these goals and feasibility.

It might be hard to identify what it would take to accomplish these goals in 25 years if municipalities haven't done a system review, etc. Seeing the date might drive the towns to think about what needs to be done.

If the date is set, the group could identify what we need to learn about the systems in order to get there. Where are the gaps and how do we get there?

A lot of communities do have plans and do have schedules with EPA and DEP that we could review to ground truth the date. This plan is going to involve assumptions and estimates. The goal would have to be ambitious. We can't expect to know everything up front.

Even if the water quality improves, there are still sedimentation issues. If we're talking 100% boatable and swimmable then legacy contamination needs to be considered. Perhaps, we should be looking at certain segments. We can identify water quality needs, but also what might need to be done about legacy pollutants.

Everyone will go back to their constituencies to discuss the goal and look at the priority list in more detail to figure out if we want to make recommendations back to you on an ordering or prioritization.

For future consideration, we may want to think about when a public meeting might be appropriate. We may need to host a meeting a different time or venue to include the public.

#### Open Space Subgroup Report Out

Open Space subgroup presented Google maps and GIS project that is in process. The group has been walking trails in the Somerville/Charlestown area to identify where trails are, the conditions of those trails, look-out areas, and other items to note.

During a walk in the Everett/Somerville area, the group identified a property on Chemical Lane that may be the Modern Continental Property.

The group chose the Somerville/Charlestown area because there is a lot happening in this particular segment of the river, there is ongoing work that has been funded by MET, there are potential boat ramps being made by MVDC, and MyRWA is developing an urban trail map and guide. By further investigating this area, we could amplify some of the work and resources already being put here.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority has a complete GIS layer of the entire harbor. They are looking at connecting the lower Malden and Mystic to the Charles River, Esplanade, Memorial Drive, Harbor Walk, etc.

This would get back to the goal of bringing more people to the river to encourage citizen interest and accomplishing water quality goals. Public participation is important to get the attention that we need.

In the next 10 years there will be a lot of connectivity between the lower Malden, Mystic, tributaries, and urban Boston tributaries.

The open space subgroup has met twice. In the first meeting the group planned to pilot one area for walking trails and looked into the idea of brownfields as future opportunities for open space, recreation, and access points. The group would like to look across the watershed to find brownfield opportunities.

In the second meeting, the group presented interactive GIS maps and EPA had someone from the brownfields team with an interactive presentation. The group is excited to work across municipalities to advance the idea of open space, access points, community gardens, etc.

There are large undeveloped brownfields on the waterfront that might be unique opportunities to look at for acquisition and open space/access throughout the watershed. Groundwork Lawrence has had great success with brownfield properties on the Merrimack River and have in some cases, converted them to community gardens.

This investigation is two-pronged:

- Where are there obvious opportunities to create connectivity?
- Where are there opportunities to acquire or improve brownfield sites for public access?

Medford's River's Edge park serves as good example of what can be done by private/public partnerships. There is good potential for private funding. How can the collaborative pull together variety of sources of funding? Brownfield sites seem to be low-hanging fruit.

The group's goal is to come up with a way to establish priorities. Using the maps this group has worked on and brownfield knowledge, you can overlay them to find opportunities. The group will work on the two goals at the same time:

- increase access to existing open space
- increase open space.

Is it realistic to identify a location and water quality project so that in the end there would be a place where people might be able to go swimming?

The group is working to download the map into either the MAPC lower mystic map and/or the MyRWA environmental atlas so that all the data is in one location. At the Chemical Lane property water quality is generally good. The maps will allow the committee to identify where there are coincidental environmental and water quality conditions at a single location.

How can we leverage this information to raise awareness at municipal and organization levels? Steering Committee members can help with collaboration and assisting in identifying potential grant partners.

We need to discuss outreach and education. There may be funds available from a foundation for the outreach and education.

At Parcel 5 in the Navy Yard huge beams that had been buried in mud have recently been pulled out. The beams were sent down to Mystic Seaport to work on boats there. Huge pieces of granite are being stored on the site now. Presumably that granite will be used to rebuild the wall at the end of the navy yard and there will be 100-ft. of harbor walk and landscaping at the back of Spalding and Building #114. This project will bring major green space to the area. Parcel 5 has always been seen as opportunity for public use – sailing/marina, etc. It is another site we'd like to get on the inventory list for brownfield redevelopment.

EPA's groundwater protection office in headquarters has made connections with the national parks service for rivers trails and conservation program. There is a grant program with an August 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. The application is only 2 pages, so some groups may be able to submit in time.

Does it make sense for the open space group to continue at this level of investigation in other areas, or if the committee should develop a list of priorities, the group could remain in the pilot area and look further for redevelopment priorities there? Should the group keep going and work solely in the pilot area or continue on mapping the whole watershed?

- It might be worth bringing people from communities for walks in their areas. The group wants this to be replicable and by involving people on the ground we can tap their institutional knowledge.
- The group can continue to work in the pilot area, but also reach further into the watershed to start mapping projects in other towns. Teams of people can go to each area with locals to spearhead learning more information about each zone.
- This might be a good project to get the youth groups involved in.

Based on how long it took to pull these maps together (not very long), the group could feasibly work segment by segment and follow both tracks at once. The group will have to look into how resources are deployed and use the pilot area as a template to investigate further where it is needed.

We may be able to access brownfield funds to get a youth group to research an area.

It might be wise to check with assessors offices in each town to find out who owns the properties of interest. Acquisition is always going to be the big issue, but there might be opportunity to pick up some easy property if we can find out where there are liens.

Does the Steering Committee approve of this group continuing to meet and move forward? Yes.

## **Update Mission & Priorities based on group reports and priorities**

Top two paragraphs have had no change. EPA has tweaked the two headings so that they show equal weight for water quality and open space. There is room left underneath for priorities as they emerge from the working groups. There is room to attach matrices so that the parking lots are not lost. We could use parking lots to earmark a few things to work on in the next few years.

This document can be very compelling if there are grants or funds out there and there are 22 organizations signed on to a set of priorities. The current version is draft and is up for comment.

### Comments:

- Make language parallel (see handout)
- Members can look at the document and word-smith before sending back to EPA.
- Public awareness and understanding appear under only one priority. It should be in a paragraph that applied to both.
- Goal should align with fishable, swimmable, boatable and should be the top statement as a lone paragraph that cascades into the next two paragraphs.

## **Committee Chairmanship and Membership**

### Membership discussion

There are no new updates on WREN. There has been no additional participation from WREN.

There is no participation from Middlesex Fells – they have been consumed by the redevelopment of the old hospital. Ivey St. John has spoken to their Executive Director and recommends putting them on the back-burner.

There has been minimal participation from La Comunidad. They are preparing for a summer river event in two weeks, so may not have been able to attend the meeting.

Kim Foltz is taking over for Brenda at NOAH. EPA will follow-up with her.

Does it make sense to add another community group given all these changes. There is potential to nominate Tri-CAP which serves Malden, Medford and Everett. The group does community organizing around river issues and held a festival in June that brought 1,000 people to river. Currently, two youth are working on a video about Malden River. Tri-CAP is nominated, motion seconded. They are part of the committee.

### Nominations for chairs/co-chairs

EPA will continue to chair these meetings, but if there are other nominations or another agency wants to do it besides EPA we'd like to open a dialogue. EPA would like to have one agency co-chair and one nonprofit co-chair

It is valuable to have EPA act as the convener. The resources are valuable. EPA's participation is making this happen. MyRWA encourages EPA's participation from the maximum extent possible.

MyRWA is an obvious candidate as the nonprofit co-chair. MyRWA is nominated, seconded, and voted upon.

EK is willing to serve as a co-chair once the idea is reviewed by his executive committee to make sure they are comfortable with the addition in time. The committee agrees to allow him to check in with his executive committee and will do formal vote at the next meeting.

The EPA will stay invested in this Initiative. The dialogue is very rich and the agency is trying to foster acknowledgement of the leadership everyone brings to the table. There is a lot of effort and group work on the smaller groups.

### Announcements

- The business subcommittee will hold its first meeting on September 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Century Bank in Medford. The meeting will be held at noon and lunch will be served. The businesses attending are mostly from the lower watershed, but there are some as far north as Woburn. Pfizer is a big contributor to this meeting. The agenda will include a presentation on the open space maps, MS4 draft permit, and the water quality group report-out. The group would like to have discussion about the feedback on the draft version of the permit.
  - If members have ideas for additional business to invite, please direct them to Ivey St. John
  - The subcommittee is going to discuss their role in redevelopment along the river's banks.
  - EPA will update the drafted guidance with the language that was developed with CLF and EPA.
  - EPA may facilitate the meeting.
- Chelsea is holding its annual River Revel on August 24<sup>th</sup>. Right now, there is no coordination between organizations on community events, so next year the group will try to work together for better coordination.
- La Comunidad is hosting its river festival at Mellon Park on August 7<sup>th</sup>
- On August 8<sup>th</sup>, the City of Chelsea is putting in tree pits on Chester Avenue, which were funded by MET thru CRWA. There is an additional grant for rain gardens.
- EPA New England recently put out a notice that it would like to form an alliance with a university in the Boston area. The goal was to find a primary university to collaborate with EPA on urban rivers and revitalization work. Five Boston institutions replied to the RFP. We have selected a primary university, UMASS Boston and we've hired Karen Simpson as a coop student.
- EPA New England has five universities that would like to form a relationship with the agency on urban water and Mystic River work. The agency would like the Steering Committee to help plan an academic community meeting. If there are other academic relationships you may have please let us know. Boston Architectural College is very interested in LID and river restoration and design. They have offered to help with designing projects.
  - MIT has relationship with USGS. There is a graduate program that did a stakeholder assessment on the river with MyRWA many years ago. There may be many graduate students interested in thesis work around urban rivers.

- The next meeting will be held on September 15 in Charlestown at Delta Dental.
  - There may not be updates from the working subgroups in mid-September. So the agenda may include a presentation by DCR on the master plan.

Follow up Actions:

- Steering Committee members will forward additional businesses to Ivey St. John.
- EPA will update the drafted business guidance with the language that was developed with CLF and EPA.
- Steering Committee members will forward additional academic information to EPA.
- EPA will update the mission statement and send it around for review before the September meeting.
- Steering Committee members will discuss the goal and priority list with their constituencies for discussion in September.
- EPA will forward the water quality strategy chart to the Steering Committee. Please submit comments by September 15th.
- The Committee will discuss the opportunity for a public meeting when appropriate.
- EPA will follow up with Kim Foltz at NOAH about their interest in continuing involvement.
- EK will check in with his executive team regarding his serving as a co-chair to the Committee. There will be a formal vote at the meeting in September.
  
- Joan Blaustein will assist with planning an agenda or help clarify for the April meeting.
- EPA will work with Steering Committee members to schedule private meetings with each elected official in the watershed towns.
- EPA New England will circulate the matrix to municipalities and ask them to fill it out. EPA will also send the latest version of the matrix to Steering Committee members.
- EPA New England has compiled a list of NPDES permittees in the watershed and plans to draft a letter inviting them to attend the first subcommittee meeting, once it has been planned.
- Ivey, EK, Caitlyn and Lynne will work on making language for adding and disengaging groups from the Steering Committee.
- EPA will work with DCR to provide printed copies of the Master Plan to all Steering Committee members.
- The Steering Committee will continue to have briefings and/or distribute materials on state and federal water quality standards and regulations (CWA, TMDLs, etc.)
- EPA will continue to gather and distribute existing Mystic River Watershed plans from DCR, MyRWA, MAPC, and Chelsea Creek and look at how they relate to the list above.
- The next Meeting will be on September 15, 2010 at Delta Dental in Charlestown.

**Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee Sign-in Sheet**  
**July 21, 2010**

Name	Organization	Email
------	--------------	-------

Gene Benson	ACE	gene@ace-ej.org
Andrew DeSantis	City of Chelsea	adesantis@chelseama.gov
Rafael Mares	CLF	rmares@clf.org
Ivey St. John	CWC	Gran.nie@comcast.net
Caitlyn Whittle	EPA	Whittle.caitlyn@epa.gov
Stephen Perkins	EPA	Perkins.stephen@epa.gov
Lynne Hamjian	EPA	Hamjian.lynne@epa.gov
Karen Simpson	EPA	Simpson.karen@epa.gov
Andrew Fitzgerald	EPA	Fitzgerald.andrew@epa.gov
Jan Dolan	Friends of Upper Mystic Lake	dolanjanice@aol.com
Jennifer Lawrence	GW Somerville	jllawrence@groundworksomerville.org
Nihar Mohanty	MassDEP	Nihar.mohanty@state.ma.us
Joan Blaustein	MAPC	jblaustein@mapc.org
Michael Celona	MDPH	Michael.celona@state.ma.us
Lise Marx	MRWA	Lise.marx@mwra.state.ma.us
Ekongkar Singh Khalsa	MyRWA	ek@mysticriver.org
Nick Cohen	Tri-CAP	ncohen@tri-cap.org
Bob Conway	Stoneham Con-Com	Rconway676@verizon.net
Tony Rodolakis	AMEC	Tony.rodolakis@amec.com
Dana Spang	City of Somerville	dspang@somervillema.gov
Kim Roth	MyRWA	Kim.roth@mysticriver.org