

Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee
Wednesday, December 7, 2011, 9:30 am – 11:45 am
EPA Region 1, RA's Conference Room (First Floor)
5 Post Office Square, Boston, MA

Agreement Points

- Tony Rodolakis will serve as the Interim Business Subcommittee Representative and will recruit local businesses to get them more involved.
- The next Steering Committee Meeting will be held on the morning of March 7 at Pfizer in Cambridge.
- The group has decided on a logo to use on Mystic River Watershed Initiative Steering Committee stationary.

Environmental Roundtable with EPA Regional Administrator, Curt Spalding

- Nick - What priorities would jump to the top of the list? Leveraging from sources would be a prime strategy
- EK - EPA can help shape the attitudes of Boston area leaders and policy makers with regard to the Mystic and what the Mystic is. What seems to have happened is that there is a long-sustained fight to demonstrate and promote the waterbodies in the Mystic River watershed.
- There is a need to identify existing conditions, unwind where the impairments arise and figure out how we can improve them. There is currently broad engagement with community groups but it is important that we have an ally in Boston where we are taking about the working port and variances with regard to CSOs.
- MyRWA and EPA and MWRA have done extensive testing and the conclusion is that the river can be cleaned up, and EPA needs to support that notion nationally and in Boston would be helpful to advocates on the ground.
- We need to let Curt know if the message isn't coming through – that is the way we talk about it.
- Ivey – when the cuts come, are they across the board, or will the region be able to pick and choose?
 - We don't know.
- Roseann – Global Oil is proposing to bring billions of gallons of ethanol by rail through many EJ communities on the lower Mystic. There are comments that are being submitted to DEP. EPA's help in stopping the proposal or changing the proposal would make a significant difference on the lower Mystic. If there were a freight accident, the communities could be devastated and a spill into Chelsea Creek could further damage the Chelsea Creek.
- This needs to flow through NEPA and EIS. There is no lever that we have other than that.
- Gene – we talk about work we do together and work that we do in little groups outside the table, it might help us if EPA will help by sitting down on proposals and go through them to help understand if EPA has leverage and how things might get done. We would like to bring EPA in to talk about concerns. There are people who work thru NEPA issues. It seems to be within our reach.

- Roseann – The message isn't getting across to other big players that aren't part of the group – big business players just don't see that the Mystic is an environmental priority. A message of disapproval from EPA would be helpful.
 - EPA cannot comment or disapprove without going thru the appropriate processes. It doesn't solve the risk problem as you're well aware.
- Ivey – what is an appropriate forum for this committee
 - Lynne – it is a separate issue. If there are specific questions on where EPA has jurisdiction. It might be air, or spill and prevention.
- Ivey – one thing we might suggest is if EPA holds a meeting on those issues and then the others could piggy back on the meeting.
- Ruth – MA just released climate adaptation report – how this work is in context of that frame. How is EPA thinking about it? Federal government has mandates around it with their planning. In terms of leveraging private dollars to work on the Mystic, we think it's a place to look. What is EPA's messaging around it?
 - This region is ahead of the curve on adaptation. We have done a number of pilots where we've looked at flooding issues to link with stormwater management. When we talk about flooding and rain events and sea level rise.
 - There is information on the website regarding coastal portions of New England. The Municipal Sustainability Group is dealing with this and is prioritizing adaptation.
 - Having good plans and the problem defined well will position this watershed position themselves for funding down the line.
- Can EPA account for climate through discharge permits?
 - This is a challenge since it's all conjecture. EPA is aware of the situation – green infrastructure and diverting initial peak flow.
 - We need to soften watersheds. Someone has to stand up and say that they need to be over 15%.
 - EPA doesn't control against flooding. At a certain point, the Army Corps may build more to control flooding and we need to ensure that what they do is not opposed to environmental concerns. Try to keep as much stormwater out of systems as possible. The problems are investment – gray or green – infrastructure is hard to fund.
 - Rafael – if we met again in 5 years and we've been successful – what would we have done?
 - You are doing things that will improve the water quality in the Mystic. SSOs and other basics are all very important and that ties in with climate down the road.
 - SW infrastructure is important and softening watersheds. I hope in 5 years people get it that we need to do something about stormwater and flooding.
 - Need to be ready and have people working on the GI issue and identifying what it all means.

- New or updated advisories in October 2011 – two are in the Mystic. One for Alewife Brook (PCBs) and one is for Lower Mystic Lake (PCBs and DDT). Both are DCR properties. Mike has been in contact with DCR about posting signs and requesting translations. They are both historical sediment contaminants. Fish are solely or predominantly bottom feeders.
- Lower Mystic Lake – no consumption of white sucker
- Alewife Brook – sensitive populations: no consumption of carp and all others limit consumption to two meals/month
- Others submitted a letter of intent to MET – lower Mystic doesn't have a specific advisory, it is part of the Boston Harbor advisory since 1986. Boston Harbor advisory is from 1986 and the Harbor has improved since then.
 - There are data collected from MWRA that have not been reviewed by DPH. DEP contacts DPH every few years to classify the water body for uses. The Harbor advisory is very confusing and it is hard to understand the basis for it. There is over use and under use.
 - There may be a public health concern that people might be consuming fish that they should not be eating, but in addition, there are people who are not fishing in the lower mystic because they don't know what fish are safe to eat. Hoping to get better advisories that will help people make smarter choices.
- At the last meeting there was a group of volunteers who were going to work with Mike to follow-up on the discussion (Ivey, Karen P. Nick, and Ellen). We will get the notes out and it would be good if there are actions that would be useful before the next Steering Committee meeting. Mike will take the lead.
- MyRWA is keeping current advisories on their website.
- The way the list is kept right now is not ideal. There might be a static map. Through this group, it could be pushed somewhat and run up the chain to see if maps and communication can be improved.
- In Washington DC there is a picture of each fish that you might catch and it tells you if you can eat it or not.
- There needs to be a sign in the fishing location. It also needs to be translated, etc. There is a long way to go on this.

Municipal Subcommittee

- The current focus of the municipal subcommittee is preparing munis for when the permit comes out
- Hoping to organize a stormwater sampling workshop for later this Spring
- The group has shown interest in taking a trip up to the UNH Stormwater Center

Water Quality Work Group Discussion

- WQ Plan (See attached handout)
- It has been very challenging to deal with the comments and if we need to go back to public comment which would further slow things down
- Discussed a GI forum to talk about what municipalities have been done – roundtable. Some cities might know more and others don't know anything. Is

this something that would be valuable for the Steering Committee to host something like that??

- Ruth – Chelsea is R1’s GI community. CWRA is finishing up a study on green vs. gray. It will be ready soon. (it should be finalized by the end of February)
- This would tie into MAPC’s sustainable communities consortium
 - EK – had a forum like this at Century Bank at 2008.
- Next meeting might be after the holidays, but we may do a call if the next substantive meeting won’t be until February/March.
- We will bring this back since they’ve already identified their priorities. If that makes sense, we’ll bring this up at the next meeting.
- Chelsea was selected as one of 10 places nationally where we’re doing a pilot project where EPA has put aside contract funds. EPA is looking at ordinances and bylaws to identify places where they can open up the bylaws and do outreach to get the GI concept out more. Want to focus on class C&D soils or areas that might be surrounded by contaminated properties. We are trying to pinpoint some priorities. We are meeting in January to identify what we are going to do first. There’s an element of bringing other watershed communities into the workshops.
 - It would be helpful to have regular updates at the Steering Committee meeting.
- Is the timing right to link this to the MS4 permit. It is very timely and we did something similar in the workshops we did last spring. We had entire afternoon sessions on GI. The skepticism comes into play on the porous pavement issue.
- Ivey – Boston Autoport is planning to demolish the Pier 4 building. They want to green it. They would be interested in the Chelsea project.
- EK – one thing that would be helpful to committee members – as we, as EPA at the table – develop these ideas or programs (like the Chelsea GI meeting or other discussions about area-wide colleges) it would be helpful to send out early notices to the committee. A lot of members are related to these causes on the ground. The information will be helpful for EPA and also for groups to know what’s coming down the pike. It would be good to get a preview of it.
- Ruth – it might be useful with the university engagement that the groups have been solicited by different universities on the ground. It would be good to know that they are all talking to each other.
 - Lynne – and organizations will help us make sure we are talking to the right people.

Business Subcommittee Update (Ivey and Tony)

Discussion of Business Subcommittee Representative to Steering Committee

- Lengthy discussion and direction at the last meeting given to Ivey and Tony on what the committee would like to see as far as a business subcommittee rep.
- We settled on an interim appt of Tony for 1 year to work with business of all sizes in the watershed and to work within that group to identify a representative.
- Ivey would like to nominate Tony.
- Tony has:

- helped pull together two committees (business/municipal subcommittee). Told the business folks they will be pulled together again once the MS4 permit is issued.
- gotten us volunteers and businesses.
- Worked with MWRA on Alewife Master Plan, gas repair projects along the lower Mystic near Boston Edison plant where there were PCB releases needing mitigation, brownfield sites, and sediment mitigation. Most river work is shoreline and/or sediment investigation/remediation, etc. No projects in Chelsea.
- A year's term is a constructive way for everyone to get to know him and for the business group to get more involved. There needs to be specific issues to get the business folks involved.
- Tony – when he first got involved it was with the expectation of pulling together a business group and identifying who the representative will be full-time.
- The MS4 permit will be a catalyst to get the group involved.
- Tony – the WQ priorities – the Malden River priority #4 might be a good one that we can also rally the business group around.
- With the M&P and the short-, medium-, and long-term goals leave a lot for discussion.
- We can move the consensus here.
 - EK – at the outset the idea was to engage the business communities as a total group to support all aspects of the Steering Committee.
 - Arlington abstains. All in favor.

Open Space Subcommittee Update (EK and Ivey)

- A lot of parcels aren't moving at a very quick pace – the opportunities are still where they were. The real estate market is very slow.

Steering Committee Logo (Liz Pucci, EPA)

- The group voted, and a logo has been chosen.

Wrap up and Announcements

- Ivey – DCR Presentation on Master Plan for Mystic River Reservation

Action Items:

- The Water Quality Subgroup will organize a stormwater sampling workshop for municipalities
- The Water Quality Subgroup will begin a discussion on organizing a Green Infrastructure and Low-Impact Development forum to share experiences and ideas.

**Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee – Sign In sheet
December 7, 2011**

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