

Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee
Wednesday, September 7, 2011, 9:30 am – 11:15 am
Conservation Law Foundation
62 Summer Street, Boston, MA

Agreement Points

- Meeting minutes approved.
- No changes to the agenda.
- Tony Rodolakis will serve as the interim representative of the business subcommittee for a period of 1 year. During that time he serve as a liaison from the Steering Committee to businesses of all sizes in the watershed and to recruit a representative from that community to serve as a permanent member representing the Business Subcommittee.
- The next meeting will be on December 7. Volunteer hosts will be considered for meeting location.

Understanding Fish Advisories (*Mike Celona, DPH*)

- There are two types of fish advisories that the state health dept has put out in the past
- Resources are available to getting information out to communities and residents
- The state tests for mercury, PCBs and pesticides – as advised by EPA since the early 1990s.
 - Program started in the early 1980s. First advisory was for the Housatonic River. Source of contaminants in the river was the GE plant and facilities.
 - With additional testing, the causes appeared to be more global from atmospheric deposition
- Mercury and pesticides can drift to the bottom – fish are eating sediment. Carnivorous fish eat the tiny fish and it builds up in their tissues. Bottom feeders can absorb through the skin and also through food. Over time, it builds up – lipophilic compounds build up in the fat. Mercury builds up in the muscle and also in the fat.
- MDPH trying to balance contaminant levels with the nutritional value of fish.
- There are statewide advisory and waterbody specific advisories
- Mercury in freshwater fish throughout the country started in the 1980s and came to a head in the 1990s. The fish program that was started during this time, there are mercury levels found in fish throughout the state.
- In 1994 the state decided to make decisions for sensitive populations – women of childbearing age who may become pregnant, pregnant women, nursing mothers, children under 12.
 - Canned tuna was involved in this advisory.
- In 2001, advice was updated to include some marine species – swordfish, shark, king mackerel, tilefish, or tuna steak.
- Also involved the same freshwater advisory, unless the water body has less restrictive waterbody-specific advisory.

- State advisory is for commercially bought fish as well as fish you catch. Mike doesn't think there is a commercial market for MA freshwater caught fish. If you are going to the supermarket and buying swordfish, the information should be posted at the counter.

Waterbody specific advisories

- Specific data collected from a particular waterbody.
- These advisories limit or advise all people from eating the fish.
- There are 179 waterbody advisories throughout Massachusetts. Many of these are for mercury.
- To issue an advisory – DEP collects and analyzes the fish under three programs (interagency committee on fish toxics public requests, DEP watershed assessments, DEP mercury initiative)
- Interagency committee on fish toxics – DPH, DEP, DFW allows for residents to fill out a form and request that certain waterbodies be tested. The committee gets together in the spring to evaluate the requests and make recommendation on whether or not the waterbody ends up being tested. This is only for freshwater.
- DEP collects the data over the summer and then analyzed by DEP and results sent to DPH. DPH looks at the data and if they determine there should be an advisory, then will contact a local health department and provide them with the information about the advisory. Information is on posters and on the DPH website.
- Sometimes the local health department will issue press releases, DPH can do translations.
- In 1996 an advisory was issued for Boston Harbor which advised sensitive populations to not eat lobster (and no one should eat tomalley), flounder, soft-shelled clams, and bivalves. Contaminants are both chemical and microbiological.
- Belmont, Clay Pit Pond – issued in 1986 – no consumption for chlordane. It is a pesticide and is seen in urban environments.
- Arlington, Spy Pound – issued in 2004 – no consumption of carp. Contaminants are chlordane and DDT which are pesticides that have been banned. Poster here would say, no one should consume carp. DEP tested 4-5 different species of fish and only found contamination in the carp. This water body has been tested for more species and is less specific.
- In 2008 a no consumption advisory was for Mystic and Malden Rivers. Fish were tested from the Mystic River and the levels of PCBs, chlordane and DDT are elevated mostly in carp. There is no barrier between the Mystic and Malden. DEP will collect a bottom feeder, mid-feeder, and top-feeder to get a solid representation of what is out there. Get three individuals from each species. May not be as representative for large rivers because fish samples are composited. The state's fish sampling has been almost entirely freshwater. The marine side of things (downstream of the Amelia Earhart Dam) is generally handled by FDA. The statewide advisory would apply to what you're catching off shore.
- The DPH website has a database where you can look up your waterbody or you town to see if you have a specific advisory in place. There are also pamphlets, which are sent out in health fairs, boards of health, there are posters to all boards of health, on the websites. There is a form for requesting fish testing – for

freshwater. Forms are sent out if someone calls up and asks for information on a water body where there is no information.

- Joan – we hear a lot about pharmaceuticals in water – are you going to start looking at that in fish?
 - DPH has not looked at these chemicals. The difficulty is that the list of contaminants is never ending and the ability to identify them and analyze what they mean is well behind. EPA (the region and ORD) have been doing sampling for pharmaceutical and personal care products (PPCPs) in fish in the Assabet River.
- Joan – if a local organization offers to get the fish and do the testing, will the state accept the fish or data?
 - DEP will sometimes accept the fish. DPH really needs to see the SOP beforehand to make sure the fish are collected correctly.
 - State has used EPA and ACE data.
- Bill Sweet – USGS has done a lot of investigation into personal care products – seems to not be a concern for people.
- EK – primarily the FDA that does marine testing – is that done at sea?
 - It is either done at sea or at market. Unsure how often they do it, but they handle the marine fish testing.
- EK – the Boston Harbor advisory applies to the lower Mystic –
 - yes
- What about striped bass?
 - Some other states have issued advisories from striped bass. A lot of them come from different places. Many of them come from the Chesapeake. There was some initial sampling done for striped bass collected off MA and the results seemed to not be an issue. MA did not join in with other states to issue the advisory. Different states use different criteria for issuing advisories – such as weight of consumer, what portion of the diet is made up of these fish? It gets very complicated really quickly.
- EK – in the advisory for women you include the five marine species, but all freshwater fish. What are the differences between the freshwater bodies and the giant ocean? Dilution?
 - Mike – to some extent, yes. The FDA has reported out levels and if you compare them to freshwater bodies in the state, the levels are very different.
- Gene – is the pamphlet given out when people get fishing licenses?
 - Mike will find out
- Gene – An issue in Spy Pond is arsenic. So if someone makes a request for a specific body of water and sites contamination by a specific contaminant will it be added to the suite sampled for by DEP?
 - DEP used to sample for a number of metals and arsenic was one of them. Problem with testing for arsenic in fish is that you always find arsenic in fish. If there is specific data in an area and documentation to support it, DEP will consider it.
- Gene – if a population is taking fish that we don't normally sample for – like the Herring Run – can we say to DEP that people are catching these on a regular basis, can we ask DEP to go and specifically do the Herring?

- Mike – you can always request it. The DEP lab is really well run. They are always interested in new information. There is no harm in asking.
- Karen P – usually people are taking buckets of herring because they are bait for lobster and striped bass.
- Gene – The signs for Spy Pond were up and now they disappeared. They were up for about a year. So now people are back and fishing and we don't know if they know there is an advisory. About a year or two ago, someone advertised that he was teaching kids to fish and knew about the advisory. You can never be sure if people know.
 - Mike – got a call earlier this year about no signage at Spy Pond and a request – DPH provided the city with signage and they said it would be posted.
- Now, DPH is providing laminated signs and they don't last. The onus is on the implementer at the local level to maintain the signage. The locals should ask for the language and know where they should be put up.
- Rafael – how expensive is it to test a water body? Is it expensive – is that why we don't test them frequently and we don't test a lot of them. It is probably a people limitation.
 - Lynne – the old method was time consuming and messy. It ties up the lab for a few days.
 - Mike – DEP will go out for an entire day and maybe not catch anything. There is a time element and it's one guy who does it as part of his job. The sampling staff that are doing all the other sampling
- Is there potential for volunteers to chip in?
 - Mike – there have been instances where they didn't contact the state beforehand. The state cannot use the fish or the data in that case.
- In the Mystic – the issue Ivey identified – there is a gray area below the dam. What we consider the lower Mystic – anything estuarine. It is under the Boston Harbor advisory – not saying no consumption, so people would think it is ok to eat fish from there and also that advisory is from 1986. We also care about people being able to use the Mystic. It is an issue we need to grapple with.
- Another issue is that while we have tons of information, it is complicated. What we need is – I caught such and such, can I eat it or not? A reorganization of information that is more user friendly might be helpful. A lot of people are interested in consumption.
- Ivey – As we push in the open space group for more public access, the more opportunities for people to fish. We need to find a way to get good public information out there. This should be a parking lot issue.
- Both Draw 7 Park and the North Washington St. Bridge are under consideration for improvement. There needs to be things installed permanently where you can put in laminated signs. The con com asked FRIT to build a new pier and dock off Draw 7 that will create opportunity for people to go there and fish.
- EK – There is opportunity also for Rafael's point to have the information flow both ways. The WQ volunteers could easily obtain fish so that more information could be gathered. We could get more information about the quality of the fish.
 - This needs to be a discussion between open space and DEP and DPH.

- Rafael – wants to improve this in general. At this point we aren't maximizing the opportunities for people.
- Mike is willing to work with whomever to identify better types of informational materials. If a small group wants to get together and brainstorm what it might look like, DPH is willing to do that.
- Nick – looking at the Mystic above the dam (the Malden too). Based on the fish advisory, it appears as a lost cause, at least in the near term. Maybe focusing on a smaller area and identifying what the real risks are is time better spent.
- Mike – DEP generally only samples once. If you can only do 6-10 in a year, you aren't going to go back and re-do one. You don't get to see trends, don't get to see a larger sample set. At the state, has never rescinded an advisory once it's been issued. Don't usually have good data to do so and want to maintain consistency. With fish, you are being conservative, and often err on the side of caution. There is no policy for taking advisories down.
- Lynne – can we continue with a smaller group – who is interested between now and the next meeting to work together on some next steps? Seems to be a cross over
 - Mike Celona
 - Ivey St. John
 - Karen Pelto
 - Rafael Mares
 - Nick Cohen
 - Ellen Mass
- Ellen – there is a neighborhood meeting in the Alewife area to discuss stormwater project and they test carp. With this project, they could test some of the fish. It's at the west Cambridge Youth Center. The Alewife area has lot of coyote and they go into shallow parts of river and pull out the carp.
- Mike will leave copies of the request form and some of the literature. Please send the presentation to Karen Simpson and a link to the advisory page.

Municipal Subcommittee Report Out (Caitlyn Whittle)

Current Focus of Subcommittee

- Will work with the WQ group to identify some things we can work on with the munis.
- Focused on Priority #2 in Mission and Priorities
- The WQ committee want to meet in October after the muni meeting on September 22. Roger is going to come and if others are interested, they should join us and help this group focus on what their needs are.

Water Quality Work Group Report out (Lynne Hamjian)

Meeting the Needs of Local Municipalities

- Want to bring together MyRWA, EPA, DEP, and others on SSO reporting form and notification. We will be working on this in the fall. We had the fish advisory presentation today and this was a direct result of the WQ group recommendation.

- There is a lot of push to work moving forward on the Malden River. We need to do some leg work here.
- Gene/Nick and others are going to sit down and try to figure out how to move forward. Some of the contamination Mike talked about the Mystic and Malden, we can figure out where it came from.
- Gene – Nick and Patrick have pulled together information about what the contamination is and what the companies were, what releases were known. Want to get all the information in an easily digestible format. Gene wanted a law school group to work on this, but wasn't chosen. Still want to get a combination of law and engineering students help to pull it together. Bill Sweet might have some information about this. EPA will continue to play a supporting role. Want to create a one-pager to identify needs and next steps to share with Bill Sweet and other EPA staff.
- MWRA had hoped to go to the board in September with recommendations, but it will be in October.
- EK – There will be a stormwater management seminar by VHB on September 21 – coffee and light fare – at NY Bank Mellon on the Malden R. in Everett. Goes from 8m – noon. Will review a variety of topics. It is free and there will be lunch at noon. MyRWA is the host of this statewide seminar series.
- Ellen would like the committee to continue to pay attention and updated on this project. It is often omitted in the paradigm we put out there.

Open Space Work Group Report Out (EK Khalsa)

Discussion of Current and Future Work

- Continuing to work and follow-up on the specific sites in the mid-watershed. Developed out of the assessment of that area. Pursuing interest in each of the sites.
- Federal Realty Parklands – in preliminary design and have been a number of public hearings and the landscape architects presented to the MyRWA committee. Should break ground in the fall.
- Draw 7 Park – Ivey keeps a close eye on this. Collaborative effort by Federal Realty, MBTA, DCR, others. Want to bring bikeway through the MBTA yard to include Charlestown. Dan Driscoll is actively involved.
- GE site on the Malden – still under consideration and MyRWA is taking a lead to work on the developer to include the waterfront in the access.
- Monsanto site – Ivey, Caitlyn and EK will meet with the developer in the fall to talk about resources available. Want to start a conversation about public open space at the site.
- MyRWA put out an urban trail map and guide. Available in English and Spanish. It's a jumping off point to talk about the history and natural conditions in the watershed.
- Joan is working on walking routes to the River. On September 10th the blueback herring river route is ready to go in Somerville. There is strong interest in extending this work in the watershed – potentially in the upper watershed. Maybe the Aberjona.

- A letter written to Secretary Sullivan and DCR Commissioner from the Committee to support the Wellington Greenway project. The letter was sent and we started discussing how we would evaluate needs and how we will send other letters from the committee.
- Joan – the Blueback Herring River Route is going to be the model to help develop a toolkit for other communities to develop other routes. Is starting the process with the other 6 lower Mystic communities to start identifying the route?
 - Trying to get the most local people with the most local knowledge from the 6 communities to identify important places and then look for good routes to get to the river from neighborhood locations.
 - Need to take people to safe and accessible locations.
 - After this process, will get to what Somerville did to walk routes and identify if it's safe, where are the road crossings, etc and see which routes gain momentum.
 - Joan is trying to get a handful of people together to get the momentum going. After the meeting will be an optional walk of the Blueback Herring route. Want to get information tied in about the fish advisory. The GIS person working on this is trying to get the GIS data from their master plan maps. Joan will send out the notice today. It is not a general public meeting for people to come and talk about the routes. The routes could be throughout the watershed and the logo will be a familiar sign leading to the water.

Business Subcommittee Report Out (Ivey St. John)

- Nomination and Discussion of Business Subcommittee Representative to Steering Committee
- Tony Rodolakis has worked with Ivey and Rich Nyles on a lot of the issues in the watershed that impact businesses – particularly the MS4 permit requirements. Tony has attended almost all of the Steering Committee meetings.
- The last business subcommittee meeting was held in March. It was agreed that there would not be another meeting until the final MS4 permit was released by EPA. Rich Nyles recently talked with Thelma Murphy and EPA received over 100 pages of comments. The agency is reviewing the comments.
- Discussion on business subcommittee representative:
 - Tony has been avidly involved and interested in this committee. The focus of the work has been really on MS4 and municipal issues. Tony and Rich really have the perspective of the professional engineering and consulting businesses. They have a very strong connection to that. When thinking of the business interest broadly, there needs to be the big facilities that we are working with – Exxon Mobil, etc.
 - Tony could work well as a good liaison for those people – reaching out to the business community. If the focus stayed on municipal issues, he could liaison to the engineering/consulting folks. This would allow the day-to-day business community to represent their interests. There are large business enterprises that it would be really good to have at the table.
 - Tony and Rich serve both munis and private business – their client base is very broad. Tony works for Amec in Westford. Tony lives in Medford

and walks the Alewife routinely. There is a sense that Tony and Rich don't have as good a sense of local conditions in the Mystic. A lot of their examples are in the Charles – Franklin, etc.

- They might not have enough local understanding. They both have experience working for EPA and both have had clients working in the Mystic. It is important to try to find someone who owns a business in the Mystic. Tony currently is a consultant for a business that is not in the Mystic. We need to find a business on a water body that really has a business interest in a cleaner, better used Mystic river.
- Someone who could look at the mission and see how well it works with their business. We are currently discussing a temporary nomination that Tony could fill.
- Amec has a lot of powerful perspective on things we are working on. It would be interesting to connect to that knowledge base and task him to find the kind of person we are talking about. It will give him a reason to talk to businesses in the area and work looking for us for a volunteer to find the person we are all talking about.
- It would be good to have someone to outreach to the business community better than we can do it. They can talk business to business. The proposal on the table is for an interim position until the business subcommittee elects their own chair.
- Tony has been recruiting businesses for the group. He is actively recruiting businesses to participate in this effort. Cummings Property, Spaulding, National Development, Colin Kelley, Schnitzer NEIt might not be appropriate to nominate Tony at this point for a full two year term. A two year term is not appropriate. Presentations at the September/March meetings were not appropriate for the Mystic and were grounded more in the Charles.
- There is no relationship between the business industry in the Mystic and in the Charles. There is not enough connection to the Mystic. Is there opportunity for a blended approach? We want the business community to be aware of and engaged with what we are doing.
- Tony and Ivey have been working really hard to engage the community and the relationship is still being formed. Now the muni community made a 2-year appt for that committee. The representatives came by default interim reps by agreement because we hadn't yet formed the subgroup yet. For the next 6 months, or some reasonable amount of time, we could ask
- Tony to serve in a similar capacity so that we have a liaison to the community with the idea that he and others will pursue establishing a firmer connection and ultimately a group that will send a representative to the committee. He would serve as an interim rep and liaison with the committee and discover and promote someone from the community who will serve as the committee as representative.
- How about a 6-month term? There needs to be an understanding that it is short-term and transitional. Would work if Tony is interested in accepting that kind of task. Would have to ask him specifically if that is the role he envisions for himself.

- Our action is subject to his consideration. Suggest a 1-year to accommodate meeting schedule for this committee. Some did not support Tony's re-election after the interim appointment of one year.
- Tony is active and invited to attend, as these are open meetings.
- **Motion to request that Tony Rodolakis serve as interim representative of the business subcommittee for a period of 1 year and that during that time he serve as a liaison from the Steering Committee to businesses of all sizes in the watershed and to recruit a representative from that community in the watershed to serve as a permanent member representing the business subcommittee.**

Ivey – second.

Committee approves conditioned on Tony's acceptance of these terms.

Gene Benson abstains.

Wrap up and Announcements

- Malden R. festival Sat Sept 17 – 10-4pm
- MET grant round is open until Oct 14, RFR on Compass and on MET website. General grants open to everyone. Trustees of reservation is sponsoring urban parks, in Worcester. Gene went a few years ago, it was good.
- Next meeting date – **December 7**. We will find a host.
- Ivey St. John nominates Tony Rodolakis to fill a business slot on the Steering Committee

**Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee Sign-in Sheet
September 7, 2011**

Name	Organization	E-mail address
Ivey St. John	Charlestown Waterfront Coalition (CWC)	gran.nie@comcast.net
Ekongkar Singh Khalsa	Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA)	ek@mysticriver.org
Rafael Mares	Conservation Law Foundation	rmares@clf.org
Andrew DeSantis	Chelsea DPW	Adesantis@chelseama.gov
Joan Blaustein	Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)	jblaustein@mapc.org
Lise Marx	Massachusetts Water Resources Authority	Lise.marx@mwra.state.ma.us
Michael Celona	Massachusetts Department of Public Health	Mike.celona@state.ma.us

Lynne Hamjian	US EPA New England	hamjian.lynne@epa.gov
Karen Simpson	US EPA New England	Simpson.karen@epa.gov
Nick Cohen	Tri-CAP	ncohen@tri-cap.org
Bill Hinkley	EOEEA	William.hinkley@state.ma.us
William (Bill) Sweet	ATSDR	Wgs5@cdc.gov
Stephen Perkins	EPA	Perkins.stephen@epa.gov
Kim Foltz	NOAH	kim@noahcdc.org
Caitlyn Whittle	EPA	Whittle.caitlyn@epa.gov
Jovanna Garcia Soto	Chelsea Collaborative	jovannags@chelseacollab.org
Eugene Benson	ACE	gene@ace-ej.org
Patrick Herron	MyRWA	Patrick@mysticriver.org
Karen Pelto	EEA	Karen.pelto@state.ma.us