

Southeast New England Council¹ for Coastal Watershed Restoration

Draft Detailed Notes from 2nd Work Group Meeting

October 10, 2012 at Save the Bay

Meeting Attendance:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Jane Austin	Save the Bay
Eric Boettger	RI NRCS
Caitlin Chaffee	RI CRMC
Cindy Cook	Adamant Accord
Rick Devergilio	Cape Cod Conservation District
Ed Dewitt	Assoc. to Preserve Cape Cod
Wenley Ferguson	Save the Bay
Tim Gleason	EPA ORD
Bill Hubbard	Army Corp of Engineers
Johanna Hunter	EPA Region 1
Erin Jackson	Cape Cod Commission
Susan Kiernan	RI DEM

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Ann Lowery (by phone)	MassDEP
Anne McGuire	Cape Cod Commission
Ken Moraff	EPA Region 1
Paul Niedzwiecki	Cape Cod Commission
Margherita Pryor	EPA Region 1
Richard Ribb	Narragansett Bay NEP
Elizabeth Selbst	EPA Region 1
Karen Simpson	EPA Region 1
Jonathan Stone	Save the Bay
Doug Thompson	Keystone Center
John Torgan	Nature Conservancy
Edna Villanueva	EPA Region 1

Introduction

Ken Moraff opened the meeting by framing it as a discussion about this group's structure, niche, and role in advancing restoration efforts. A draft vision statement was shared with the group based on the group's insights into the scope and focus of this effort from its September meeting. Two key roles emerged: a bi-state element to identify synergies and transfer knowledge across state lines; and developing a complementary approach to focus and prioritize current restoration efforts.

What We've Heard Thus Far

In order to get a sense of individual perspectives, Cindy and Doug have been conducting interviews with key stakeholders. These discussions revealed both excitement and skepticism with one common theme being an emphasis on aligning resources more efficiently. Communication and coordination are also seen as a huge piece of this effort in order to timely share what is happening at a broad level across the region.

There was also receptivity to the idea that the group could have two overarching functions. The first of these functions is to fill the right space so that work is not duplicated, and would require integration and filling and reinforcing gaps. The second function would be to get some projects developed and ready to go in order to have something demonstrable on the ground.

Geographic Scope

¹ Note the name "Council" may be changed as structure is further defined.

The geographic scope of this effort was discussed by the group, including a recommendation that Pleasant Bay should be included because it brings another important waterbody into the system from nutrient management and sensitive ecosystem perspectives. Participants suggested that including Pleasant Bay in the scope of this regional effort also seems to make sense politically, financially and ecologically.

Naming This Project

TNC suggested that we call this effort a program, and provided language from the Long Island Sound Study as an example. Other members agreed that calling it a “program” makes sense because it is consistent with the existing federal framework. Ken Moraff reminded the group that in order for a new program to be created, Congress has to make the decision to do so. EPA is not attempting to get ahead of Congress on this issue, and does not want to create the appearance that it is.

According to the Senate Interior Appropriations Committee, this bi-state effort is included in the budget for programs of the EPA. Under this year’s Continuing Resolution, however, the effort is not defined. It may make sense to come up with an organizational structure for this effort in the event that a new program is created.

EPA clarified that the group is providing individual advice, and has not been asked to come to a consensus or vote in order to make decisions. In order to establish transparency, EPA is going to set up a website in order to post meeting materials. Meeting attendees were satisfied with calling themselves a “Work Group” and are willing to work on the evolution of this effort.

Vision Statement

The group reviewed and discussed the details of the vision statement document and made several suggestions regarding the language, as well as the technical scope and prioritization of projects for this effort. There was also a discussion about finding a balance between generality and prescriptiveness in the vision and goals of the group. A sub-set of individuals from the Work Group volunteered to work with Doug to revise and refine the draft vision statement for review at the next work group meeting.

Restoration Definition and Priorities

The meaning of restoration and the identification of restoration priorities was discussed. The group settled on water quality and habitat as key components of ecosystem restoration. RIDEM qualified expectations for coastal restoration noting that efforts should focus on primarily on coastal water quality and address freshwater inputs to coastal areas without getting into upland issues. Cape Cod Commission noted the need to avoid solutions --- such as treating septic systems as point sources --- that left the nutrient problems intact, and that did not adequately coordinate resources already available.

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The group also suggested there would be value in participating in complementary habitat initiatives that go beyond the reach of existing programs. EPA can bring a water quality component to restoration which is important at a systems level.

In defining coastal restoration, Sue Kiernan expects that efforts will focus on coastal water quality, and the freshwater inputs to coastal areas rather than upland issues. This may be an important topic to consider when restoration priorities are being fleshed out by the group.

An example of this is that restoration could be enhanced by leveraging municipalities' obligation to deal with stormwater with federal funds. This effort could encourage the use of stormwater investments, such as provide assistance to municipalities creating stormwater utility districts, as part of a comprehensive restoration approach. By funding pilot projects which are conditional on the community coming forward with funding, there would be positive incentive for the communities to take on this comprehensive approach.

Coupling between water quality and habitat restoration could be promoted by choosing projects based on evaluation criteria which include both of these aspects.

In order to identify gaps to help inform a the determination of priorities, the group could survey stakeholders to get their insight. Communities have studies but do not have the financial means to follow up with implementation projects. Stakeholders can provide information on how to implement projects with existing funds and what additional funding might be needed.

Liz Selbst, from EPA, was assigned to collect and summarize information regarding restoration efforts so as to identify gaps in the current landscape. This exercise will create a categorized inventory of coordination opportunities and to help narrow the focus. Group members were asked to provide initial information by October 17. Karen Simpson, from EPA will collect information regarding existing communication mechanisms regarding restoration in the region and will investigate methods of communicating and coordinating information to the group.

After reviewing several examples of organizational structure from other regional programmatic efforts (Long Island Sound Study, Buzzard's Bay Estuary Program, Chesapeake Bay Program, etc.) several members indicated that it may make sense to wait to decide on the structure of the effort until goals are better defined and funding is in place. There was some discussion on what the functional areas of the group should be and that they should be combined in order to maximize the value of all voices at the table.

November Meeting

The next meeting will be hosted by the Cape Cod Commission on November 16 at 9:00am. The focus of this meeting will be the development of guidelines for restoration priorities and criteria for funding projects. This will include identifying technical and geographic gaps, pilot project concepts, and potential technology needs.

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Participants requested that future meetings be scheduled as far in advance as possible – ideally several months out. There will not be a meeting during the month of December and the group will reconvene in January.

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