

September 4, 2012

Attendees:

Name	Title	Organization
Cindy Cook	Facilitator	Adamant Accord
Doug Thompson	Facilitator	Keystone Center
Johanna Hunter	Manager	EPA Region 1
Ken Moraff	Director	EPA Region 1
Karen Simpson	Staff	EPA Region 1
Margherita Pryor	Staff	EPA Region 1
Tim Gleason	Branch Chief	EPA ORD
John Torgan	Director of Ocean & Coastal Conservation	Nature Conservancy
Richard Ribb	Director	Narragansett Bay NEP
Susan Kiernan	Deputy Chief	RI DEM
Caitlin Chaffee	Coastal Policy Analyst	RI CRMC
Bruce Carlisle	Director	MA CZM
Jonathan Stone	Director	Save the Bay
Cathy Rogers	Ecologist	Army Corp of Engineers
Ed Dewitt	Director	Assoc. to Preserve Cape Cod
Paul Niedzwiecki	Executive Director	Cape Cod Commission
Anne McGuire	Assistant to Paul Niedzwiecki	Cape Cod Commission
Eric Boettger	Resource Conservationist	RI NRCS
Rick Devergilio	Project CCWRRP Coordinator	Cape Cod Conservation District
Donald Liptack	District Conservationist	NRCS
Ann Rodney	Staff	EPA, Region 1
Walter Berry	Research Biologist	EPA, ORD

Introduction

Introducing the Facilitators - Doug Thompson and Cindy Cook

There has been a strong push from Senator Reed's office for this effort so we have the momentum and the support behind us. EPA has been charged by appropriations committee to convene this regional effort. Since then, EPA has hired facilitators from their own budget. Moving forward, facilitators Doug Thompson (Keystone Center) and Cindy Cook (Adamant Accord) will play a collective role in the process by dividing up the workload where necessary. Their intent is to make the process as efficient and effective as possible, and to be neutrals for the entire group.

Goals of the Council

EPA's Perspective, Ken Moraff

This an effort to fill a geographical between the Gulf of Maine and Long Island Sound Study programs, and an institutional gap as well. There are many entities, agencies, commissions, groups, etc. working actively on restoration work. This is not a new

program and we are not looking to replace existing programs. This effort serves as the structure for a basic coordinating system to enhance the capabilities of existing work. For example, the “council” could make connections among numerous groups in order to align water quality and habitat restoration efforts and funding.

In a more complex sense, we could fit together pieces of restoration work into a holistic effort by identifying key regional priorities and develop a shared sense of where we should focus our efforts. We could come up with some strategies to implement (pilot projects, new funding) to complement existing work, find synergies, collectively strategize, and find gaps at a regional level in order to increase our chances in attracting future funding.

In order to sharpen ideas and figure out how it is going to work the working group will need to shape the council. The working group can help determine how can it be most hopeful, how should it function and who should participate. Over the next few months, we are anticipating launching the council into operation. The council will operate in a way that best compliments work that is already ongoing.

Donald Lackey

The point that this is a bi-state initiative merits a lot of importance. In addition, the Fish and Wildlife Service may be a valuable partner. We may want multiple federal agencies to be a part of this because federal involvement is a major part of this initiative.

Jonathan Stone

Three questions/concerns:

1. What is the scope of this restoration work? Where does it begin and end so that it's not duplicative of other efforts? Are we focusing on water quality and watershed restoration or other?
2. Language talks about outreach to involve more people. This involves a lot of different avenues to bring municipalities, NGO's, research aligned in same goal
3. Issue of restoration work on the ground - how do you rank priorities?

John Torgan

- What is the definition and scope of restoration? Have urged EPA to consider it's role as systemic. Compliment on the ground projects with looking at the conditions (habitat value enhancements). Help frame this effort so programs talk to each other to get better outcomes for the environment
- We could also take a look at other large systems (Chesapeake, Great Lakes, Puget Sound, etc.) that compel interstate partnerships with environmental priorities.
- The idea is to integrate rivers, estuaries and coastal waters as a single system.

Doug Thompson

Sounds as though the key premise to work together has value. Would this group play a coordination role? Or gap filling role? Are there any doubts about this effort?

Bruce Carlisle

- Shares views on the scope issue. Would ask EPA to share what appropriations committee has shared. It will be quite a challenge with a large scope and a tight budget. We want to keep it focused so prospects for success are greater and created a nexus between WQ and habitat. Is there a real gaping gap to "brick and mortar" projects?
- We missing dept of ecological restoration and fish and game players
- Why a "council"? There is already a council that covers this area. It's always appealing to have a seat on a council, but it adds to workloads. We need to figure out the synergies between the Northeast Regional Ocean and the Gulf of Maine councils. Canadian council - same people around the table. How did we arrive at establishing a council?

Ken Moraff

This effort has evolved and has had many names, but it doesn't have to be called a "council". We need some body of key stakeholders that stays engaged and this group can revisit the name after talking about it's function.

Johanna Hunter

EPA is bringing a team to help staff the council with the desire that we will be efficient and respectful of the time put in by working group. (Karen Simpson, Margherita Pryor, Edna Villanueva, Mel Cote, Ann Rodney, Lynne Hamjian, Tim Gleason & Walter Berry) Bringing a lot of peices together, hoping to do the leg work for the people at the table.

Tim Gleason

ORD is committed to being a partner with the region and is acting as link to this partnership and to other ORD work across the country. This includes technology leveraging from other regional labs.

Ken Moraff

Sees an early theme emerging -- the scope of this effort, which a critical issue. we don't know how it will develop or what kind of funding will be available but we can prioritize.. The proposed budget has funding, but keep in mind that it's only a proposed budget. As we think about the scope, there may be some uncertainties about initial priorities.

Jonathon Stone

There won't be a lot of argument about dealing w/ stormwater issues. Municipalities are under mandates to do something about it and funding resources are limited. Mass DEP and RI Dem initiative to support to municipalities in meeting

these requirements (this effort, however, didn't focus on Taunton River). There is a significant failure in helping communities address the stormwater problem that adequately prioritizes where municipalities can put to use scarce dollars. We must have something that brings focus to this issue. We could provide recognition for design, initiative, restoration & water quality linked strategies. (GI, green buildings)

Sue Kiernan

Noticed that restoration is being used as a habitat restoration concept? It's easier to link regional habitat restoration strategies than water quality restoration. When dealing with water quality restoration, regional personal identities are set for each geographic area (a few exceptions). A lot of work hasn't resonated with state water quality program because the issues are localized. This is not a great link to regional water quality restoration and it's hard to get people excited. We should work on things that groups have in common or focus only on habitat.

Rick Devergilio

We have focused broadly on runoff in shellfish growing areas. It's not a big global WQ issue, but it seems to work pretty well. There are other examples.

Eric Boettger

The water quality restoration issue needs to be addressed at different scales. Monitoring is hard to maintain, even with it being so valuable.

Richard Ribb

We are excited about variety of projects identified by Rick). Some work of that nature would be very positive in getting priorities set. Bi-state and fiscal processes are extremely challenging at times. There must be a way to move and spend money effectively without being lost in bureaucratic jungle.

Ed Dewitt

What we take for strengths have a lot of weaknesses. There is a good reason why there are gaps. There are negative side effects for going regional. There are trade-offs that you need to be aware of because you could make things worse rather than better.

Donald Liptack

To be a little more optimistic, would recommend to get direction from the group and others - engage all local partners that can identify local priority in their region. If we can get some commonality among those groups, then that's the priority. We should look at issues that resonate with everyone. The local partnerships may provide insight on this.

Cathy Rogers

Figure out what the problem is for this region would be helpful.

Doug Thompson

This is in an early stage which can be both good and bad news. This group is figuring out how to piece these things together. If the council is successful, how are things tangibly different within this geographic area after a certain period of time?

Rick Devergilio

What does this all come down to? Is it fish? Or economics? The bottom line is that we need money to do what we want to do. So what is attractive to the politicians that would want to fund ecological restoration? Fish is definitely one of them. What is the political reason (motivating force) to get things done? We might be able to get some funding if we go after what politicians are after.

John Torgan

We hope it will be systemic improvement for plants and animals, not just fish. In order to do eelgrass restoration, we tested the suitability of where eelgrass could potentially grow. Based on this model, we began a pilot project to enhance eelgrass restoration. Similar efforts have been done regionally for eelgrass, oysters, etc. We should find what the limiting factors are and work to that. A programmatic institutional function will support this effort. Another piece is to not backslide water quality efforts, but to offer innovative, technology discussions with stakeholders. One big and common problem is degradation of waterbodies from nutrient pollution. We need to improve systemic health through a means that costs less. This might require having conversations outside of regulatory discussions and appeals. The regulators and regulated entities standoff over nutrient pollution issues so we need to partner around innovative solutions.

Cathy Rogers

Part of the desire from politicians is the concern that we are being left behind in economically limiting problems. LISS created a body to come up with needs and plans that are hard to implement. In other places, plans have gotten enough support to implement. In our region, we would argue that we have extraordinary natural resources and we are concerned to see that they are managed sustainably. There is a desire politically to do innovation, interest in collaborative but these are too soft for the academics. People wanted something more concrete and programmatic rather than new and innovative. There was talk about a center -- but that was a large investment. So we came up with a council where people would be coming from different groups to collectively come up with a charter in order to bring their perspectives together.

Margherita Pryor

Do we all know what we need to do in order to do the things that we want to do? It takes the investment being in the right place. Looking upstream and downstream - is there a way of doing work in one place, and have others benefit from it?

Eric Boettger

“If you build this initiative, then they will come.” The money will come down the road and people will get what they are looking for if we are clever about it. Can we model it after another effort or can we come up with something on our own? The Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) come out with documents including lessons learned during watershed projects, outreach efforts, modeling, monitoring, and on the ground projects.

Doug and Cindy will be synthesizing info about other efforts to craft something that works for this region.

Ken Moraff

It's important to keep in mind that if only we had the money we could do these things. We know what to do, but we need the resources. There are other areas that if we want to tackle nutrients and stormwater, that we don't know what to do. There are places to start with available technologies. If we wanted to reduce nitrogen or stormwater runoff by a specific percentage, we don't know exactly how to do that. Another example is septic systems. What exactly do we do to solve this problem? The council may play a different role in those cases to put our heads together in thinking through creative approaches to these broad issues. Are there tools available for municipalities? Can state/federal regulations help? We want to develop the approaches that would bring the resources.

Caitlin Chafee

It's important to not just focus on the things that are shovel-ready. We need to narrow down issues that are common in the region. Then if there's funding for a pilot, develop a blueprint for that project. This would be useful from a state perspective.

Paul Niedzwiecki

Nitrogen is a huge problem in the Cape so we could look at Cape ecosystem as a test site. We have already started working with EPA to find parcel specific model and the triple value model. We need to find a better way to determine effectiveness in monitoring and find a new way where coastal communities have a different attitude towards compliance. They are discharging into other backyards. We need to find different ways to regulate and to get people to comply with these regulations.

Richard Ribb

We can use our expertise to look at some alternatives. Are there ways to engage scientific communities? Are there consortium models (such as the urban harbors work)? We need to get the questions answered.

Jonathan Stone

In terms of the people who could participate we need to move beyond scientific research into the applied research (engineering) without the diminishing need for monitoring. Individuals would come up with the technology can help identify

solutions that are affordable. This would create some momentum around creating awareness to take small steps which add up to make improvement. Also, RIDEM has been terrific at helping communities with awareness of stormwater pollution problems to address funding vehicles associated with those problems. We need to be more open to doing something about it where there's a problem with a solution. I see great value in learning and sharing experiences from the Cape to some places in RI, not only best practices but engineering solutions too. We know what we could do, but the "how to" is a challenge.

Sue Kiernan

Sharing isn't currently optimized or institutionalized so something to be gained by sharing better.

Doug Thompson

The council could help set priorities more efficiently and more intelligently. Some things are more tractable on a regional scale. There are both benefits and challenges of bi-state partnership. There might not be an immediate geographic similarity. We might just need money to incubate new solutions and ideas. Where to go from here? Take a stab at drafting a goals statement for people to chew on.

Paul Niedzwiecki

The midpoint on the cape is the same distance to Providence than it is to Boston. The coastal restoration work already is regional, and there's a lot to learn from regional. part of what is dogging us - cape litigation. We have a 35 year old Clean Water Act, so we are really good at dealing with old problems. But the problems are more insidious and pervasive today than they were in the 1970s. We don't have the tools to use to make solutions more doable. We need to find some flexibility in the existing system to deal with existing problems.

Discussion on goals...

Tim Gleason

When we first started, we were focused on technology. As the discussion wove through political systems, became more about habitat restoration. Is it technological innovation or habitat restoration that is needed to deal with nutrient issues?

Paul Niedzwiecki

I think we should address the nitrogen issue first. If we focus in on one major stressor, then we can figure out what we are benefitting. The focus should be on coastal community which includes the natural system. The missing piece is the major stress on the environment from a regulated source (stormwater and wastewater). The challenge for EPA & partners is to find the "sweet spot". Are there innovations in technology or regulatory paradigms? Are there opportunities to share science? There is some difficulty with this. Many entities have been having this same conversation for a long time.

Jonathan Stone

The linkages are very clear in our view since every project has a nitrogen component. They have the same project initiative. We are very interested in shellfish restoration. NOAA is defunding their mission so they are eliminating community based restoration partnerships. EPA is qualified to help out when linkages are much tighter.

Paul Niedzwiecki

It's much more attractive to local funders if there's a lot of local buy in. We could pool resources as an alternative and seek other funding as a match.

Process for Working Group

Looking for the key players that should be engaged from the state. And then cast a broader net for those on the council. Who else should be involved?

- Cape Cod National Sea Shore
- Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies
- National Park Service
- Engineers, landscapers, architects – schools and centers
- Broader economic and scientific communities
- URI GSO – 9th year of studying hypoxia with NOAA funding
- Harvard Grad School of Design
- RI school of design
- UMass
- MIT
- USGS - Keith Robinson
- NOAA
- FWS
- Watershed organizations/councils
- Representation from the islands Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket commissions
- National Research Reserve (NBNERR)
- Waquoit Bay Estuarine Research Reserve
- NRCS WQ initiative – bi-state effort
- Woods Hole (Brown University's Marine lab)
- Dept. of Fish and Game (Div. Marine fisheries)
- Blackstone R Coalition (bi-state)
- Municipalities (MA Municipal Association, RI League of Cities and Towns)

Sue Kiernan

There are currently separate initiatives around nutrients. This council, Narragansett Sustainability oriented project (3VS systems level model), Initiative at AED/ORD – part of a multi-year plan. At some point these initiatives need to converge.

Doug Thompson

Some questions to think about:

- Can we come up with what other projects are in place to make sure not to duplicate and to address which issues are not being addressed?
- Who will this effort be for?
- What is the relationship between working group and the council?
- How do we get there?
- **What is it?**
- Does the council need the working group? Or does it become it's own entity?
- Who is going to do the majority of the work? EPA? Working group? And what is the work?

Johanna Hunter

Worry less about the launch, but more about the strategy behind this effort. To get to January, have in person meetings 1x a month or have conference calls. Can go to other locations – RI (Save the Bay) and the Cape (Cape Cod Commission)

Do we have a clear statement of the goals? The Council may be good catalyst to get things into motion. EPA wants to make sure that what we identify gets to the needs that are identified by partners. Be strategic.

Bruce Carlisle

We are lacking on the “what is it” part of things. We can do an assessment of what the gaps are later on. To the extent that we can paint the picture – why and what do we hope to achieve in short/medium terms? Until that is nailed down, it's going to be tough to talk about priorities and the people who should be involved. We need to keep a narrower focus and define what the sweet spot is. The work plan will evolve from there.

Cindy Cook

What are existing programs that are similar? Is there a sweet spot in these initiatives? Or is the landscape covered? We (the facilitators) will look into this and have more comfort by mid-fall.

Jonathan Stone

This initiative is exciting and different because we have a lot to learn from each region – which is valuable. We want to get away from the focal point that EPA can bring. It means going around to smaller restoration groups and be more strategic. Also to connect water quality and restoration and think of projects and priorities differently. How do we rank the ideas that percolate up? There is value in achieving a larger strategic goal in improving water quality and habitat restoration. A small demonstration project may have high value for a variety of reasons. How do we hone in on the scope, and result in a series of initiatives that advance regional goal?

Comment [SK1]: This was either Johanna or Ken, don't remember which. Maybe a combination of the two?

Walter Berry

This is an opportunity in terms of scale. Most projects come about because the money is available. If we have an opportunity to be on a bigger scale to look at smaller projects then we can compare and contrast. Choose which ones to put together to increase the impact on a particular waterbody.

Richard Ribb

We could create a set of criteria for the projects. There would be certain criteria for which projects arrive at the council.

Bruce Carlisle

I'm trying to bring focus for the trajectory of the group.

Doug Thompson

Form follows function. Are we trying to put both of these together?

John – it might be worthwhile to engage in analysis of opportunities from local groups or higher level management strategies. If we are thinking about nutrient and SW pollution, maybe we can come up with criteria to evaluate proposals. Efficiencies of reducing N runoff. Might rank highly? Do assessment as a group at first, rather than leave to individual organizations. Idealism and excitement towards this effort. Chance to set replicable outcomes in terms of policy. Hoping others will follow

Paul – money should go towards projects that wouldn't be funded under other mechanisms. Projects that have the capacity to influence watersheds and sub watersheds. Best area to put efforts to impact degraded water bodies.

Tim- group provides strategic framework to evaluate projects.

Paul – 80% of problem is N coming from onsite WW (controllable load from septic)

Sue- in RI it's a dichotomy. Some septic issues. Upper part of bay is WWTF influenced. From a WQ perspective – pathogens. Abating CSOs for shellfishing grounds. Have to have a strategic focus to not get bogged down.

A little diagnostic work before prescribing

Margherita – what are the ecological services that do function as treatment? Getting habitat and WQ, is a form of treatment. Narrows the universe to look at, opens up more interesting research about what you can do.

Nutrient sinks – transfer of development, nutrient sinks – keep it doing its job

Paul – focusing on regulatory structure itself is worth taking a look at.

Walter – are we interested in monitoring? Most people want to spend money on projects. Look at projects that look promises, then look at model, do the project and then do the monitoring. Calibration and validation of the model.

Paul would love a more cost-effective way to monitor.

Eric – starting to look at models that could help measure effects.

Ed – what is the tolerance for failure? Sometimes are aren't monitoring because we don't want to know the answer

Paul – monitoring N on a right time basis – very promising. Technologies are there, would be worth taking a look at.

Restoration Priorities

Next Steps, Wrap up, Assignments

Meeting summary

Re-draft of goals, shape of council – answering the “what is it” question

Coordinate with potential hosts (Cape or RI) – 4 weeks out

Final thoughts:

Walter – excited about strategic approach and including the regulatory questions.
Recognize other barriers outside of CWA

Tim – look at technology, regulation and ecosystem services. Pieces of the pie to come together

Margherita – be more nimble, and less permanent

Ann – Look outside of their own types of models that they know of. NEP – can we look outside the model that could serve us well?

Sue – Value added to get people excited about restoring conditions in the watersheds.
Cautious about biting off too much and not being successful.

Ken – thanks for great insights

John – keep focus on outcomes on the environment – ecosystem health, productivity and diversity of natural systems.

Richard – would be great to make easier rather than difficult or complex

Bruce – enthusiastic and excited, wants to succeed and make a difference.

Johanna – carving out what it is?

Paul – watershed based scales, look at habitat. Innovation and regulations. Visualize data for general population.

Rick – can we extend geographic focus

Ed- likes things to be easy. Don't have enough tolerance for failure. Be innovative if you're not afraid to fail

Donald – v. important to make sure recipients and audience have interest. Get the buy in and support. Would be better to have support early on at local level.

Jonathan Stone – Sue and Paul's comments. "Council" terminology could be changed. Look into detailed finish work. Always an opportunity to be more efficient – with sub-groups. Smaller groups to have conference calls with smaller group

Eric – find out target audience, and narrow our goals.

Cailtin - excited that restoration is being defined so broadly. Gives ability to fill in gaps. Be aware of stakeholder fatigue. Bring them in at the right time.

Cathy – Suggest that in statement we include adaptability to climate change.