

## **Mystic River Watershed Initiative Steering Committee**

June 15, 2017 | 10:00am-12:00 pm

GreenRoots Chelsea | 227 Marginal St, Chelsea, MA

### **Meeting Summary**

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute

**Present:** Magdalena Ayed (The Harborkeepers), Roseann Bongiovanni (GreenRoots), Karen Buck (Friends of the Malden River), David Bulter (MassDEP), Mel Coté (EPA), Ian Dombroski (EPA), Ona Ferguson (CBI), Patrick Herron (MyRWA), Alicia Hunt (City of Medford), Fidel Maltez (City of Chelsea), Lise Marx (MWRA), Carole McCauley (Northeastern / MassBays), Karen Pelto (EEA/MassDEP), Tony Rodolakis (Amec Foster Wheeler), Deneen Simpson (MassDEP), Michael Sprague (Town of Lexington), Kathleen Vandiver (Friends of the Malden River & MIT), Caitlyn Whittle (EPA).

**Next Meetings:** The next Steering Committee meeting dates are September 14, and November 30.

### **Action Items**

- All
  - Attend the June 29 Water Quality Report Card announcement.
  - Let Ona or Mel know if you'd like to host the Sept. 14 Steering Committee meeting.
- Subcommittees
  - Meet to develop 2017-2018 Mission and Priorities and clarify priorities. Circulate draft several weeks before the September meeting.
    - Water Quality – Andy Hrycyna and Caitlyn Whittle as organizers
    - Open Space – Amber Christoffersen, Alicia Christofferson and Ivey St. John as organizers
- Coordinating Team
  - Plan the next steering committee meeting. Proposed topics: presentation about what is in the sediments of the Malden, update on the Aberjona River project
- Amber Christofferson
  - At 25% design, present the Draw 7 Park to casino pedestrian bridge to this group.
- Mel Cote and Caitlyn Whittle
  - Find staffing support.
  - Caitlyn forward the press release on EPA-Belmont Stormwater Agreement.
- Deneen M. Simpson
  - Share slides on MassDEP EJ Work Plan including the EJ definition
- Kathy Vandiver
  - Share new digital flyer from FMR on why we need a Human Health Risk Study
  - Share survey on the Malden River (could get a copy of this from MyRWA)
- Tom Philbin
  - Confirm where CAD cell is going.
- Roseann Bongiovanni
  - Send Caitlyn Fidel Maltez's contact info.
- Ona Ferguson
  - Send out purpose and structure document w/ a note about what it says to large list.
  - Help Andy and Caitlyn convene the Water Quality Subcommittee and Amber, Alicia and Ivey convene the Open Space Subcommittee soon to work on mission and priorities.

## Welcome and Documents Approval

Patrick Herron (MyRWA) welcomed participants and thanked GreenRoots for hosting the meeting. The group approved the April 2017 meeting summary and the June 14 Purpose & Structures document. The Purpose and Structure doc will be further revised so it can be finalized at the September meeting.

The Mystic River Watershed Water Quality Report Card will be released June 29 in Chelsea. It now provides grades for each water body rather than for the whole watershed, allowing for more accurate guidance on which water bodies are in good shape and which need attention. Water quality in Alewife Brook, the Mill River, and storm-water run-off from Belmont are in need of and getting attention. MyRWA and EPA are happy to report that Belmont and EPA just signed an agreement committing Belmont to removing all sources of stormwater pollution within five years. This will go a long way toward improving conditions in Alewife Brook. The group thanked EPA and Belmont for this step.

## Environmental Justice in the Watershed

Featured Municipality: City of Everett – *Tom Philbin, Everett Director of Communications*

According to a 2010 study by the Boston Business Bureau, Everett ranks as the #1 most diverse community in MA and the most evenly split across all racial groups. Everett is very dense and urban, a city of immigrants. Boston Globe Magazine named Everett one of the top 10 places to live in MA. Open space, recreation, public access, parks, and trails are a huge priority for the mayor of Everett. The mayor is redoing all the city parks, six have been completed to date.

There's some access to the Mystic River now at the Tufts Boathouse, but the waters around Everett have long been feared, avoided, or fenced off because of their history of industrial pollution. Companies like GE, Exxon, Monsanto, and coal plants left legacies of contamination, though those sites have since been remediated. Residents tell each other not to recreate in the waters of the Malden River because they believe it isn't safe. MyRWA and the city are trying to initiate studies about the safety of local waters to combat those fears. MIT, Tufts, and the City of Everett are also conducting a study of recreational opportunities – testing water and sediment quality, and considering where to put in boat ramps, allow swimming, and otherwise increase accessibility.

Everett's residents tend to think the water is polluted and to wall it off mentally and physically. Many don't know where the Malden River is, but the city is trying to change that by opening the waterfront

### *Current Projects:*

#### 1. WYNN CASINO SITE

The Wynn Casino Site has been polluted and empty for thirty years. The site contained tidal flats and shellfish beds before chemical companies (Merrimack then Monsanto) left huge piles of yellow sulfur from dyes and acid production. Until recently, acid from this industrial waste seeped into the water and along the shore, so the area was cordoned off from the public. Because those plants provided jobs, the public health hazard was overlooked. Wynn Casino has spent \$30M, with no federal or state assistance to remove the contamination and put a train spur to haul away the contaminated soil.

Now that Wynn has removed all of the contaminated soil (it was shipped out of state), a harbor walk and living shoreline are being built. The Wynn Casino will dredge the Mystic as soon as dredging is permitted. The environmental cleanup was costly, but will lead to increased use of the marina and

unprecedented public access via a public park, bike paths, walking trails, and an amphitheater, which is very exciting.

## 2. GE SITE

This site, the old Telecom City area in the Village neighborhood of Everett, was in very poor condition (a sort of neighborhood of polluted factories). GE capped it a few years ago, though there is still limited access. Wynn has purchased the site to relocate a company there, and will be building an 11-acre park through a previous agreement. The city has started to work on the river-walk along the Malden River, which has never been accessible. They have three quarters of a mile built now. The city also has a small river-walk by the Woods Memorial Bridge, which the state is rebuilding on Route 16 near Wellington. Finally, the city is also building a river-walk to connect the small park to Wellington under Route 16. Eventually, they plan to connect to the GE parcel's river walk.

Thanks to MyRWA and Friends of the Malden River, National Grid had a revised chapter 91 license filed with MassDEP. In 2016, National Grid did not properly notify their neighbors or the municipalities that they filed for Chapter 91. When they learned this, the mayors of Everett, Malden and Medford requested that the DEP re-open the Chapter 91 hearing for National Grid to talk about public benefits. They immediately held a hearing attended by 100 people, including two state senators, representatives, and several non-profits like the CLF. Everyone testified. National Grid was surprised by this unified front all encouraging the company to do more to connect this site from the Malden Riverwalk to the Wynn Harborwalk and into Charlestown.

The Mayor's office has commissioned a \$450K study to connect two paths: one along Malden for walking, and one to bike into Boston. Everett received state funds to create a route for bikers get into Boston safely, like the popular state-funded Minuteman and Cape Cod bike trails. Wynn's construction on Broadway this summer will include a raised bike path along Route 99. The city staff hope this will allow diverse, lower-income community members to get into Boston safely not using a car. In 2017, an express bus lane into Boston will be piloted, with the hope to make that permanent.

*Conclusion:* It is the mayor's priority to allow residents to experience the beauty of the Malden River, using every opportunity to get people to the river, including getting the media to write about the beauty of the Malden. Boat launches, ferries, fishing piers, and other steps will help make this vision a reality. It should be a coordinated effort to study what contaminants are in the sediments and in the water and then communicate with the public and reassure them when possible. All nearby communities could probably use the same approach for this research and risk communication/education.

### Discussion and Q&A:

- Rosanne said Green Roots wants to focus more on EJ in Everett, helping to engage the community. Tom indicated that they'd like to engage the community, noting that Everett does not have the strong neighborhood groups or associations. The City has also struggled to get people on boards and commissions.
- Rosanne wants to visit the health and wellness center and see what Chelsea can learn from that. Chelsea is a Robert Wood Johnson finalist this year, and Everett was awarded that last year.
- Deneen suggested reaching out to faith-based organizations in Everett as people who do not trust EPA might trust their churches. It may be worth posting notices at the churches, and in different languages.
- Tom thinks stormwater can and is slowly being dealt with, and noted that water quality in Malden (especially towards the Mystic) is pretty good and there should be a focus on increasing

human access to get people onto the water. He asked about sediment contamination levels, which he expects will need to be addressed. Someone noted that the MIT study targets human health and helps MyRWA be sure it is promoting safe use of the river. Other studies by Army Corps and private entities may also be looking at sediment.

#### Friends of the Malden River - *Kathy M. Vandiver*

Kathy works for the Center for Environmental Health Sciences at MIT and volunteers with the Friends of the Malden River. She described the outreach attempts by Friends of the Malden River in Malden, noting that Malden is a diverse community where 70+ languages are spoken in the high school. While the high school has a crew team, like Everett, many local residents do not know how to access the river.

The Friends of the Malden River (FoMR) was founded around 2013 to promote awareness and interest in the Malden, improve its water quality, and increase access for public enjoyment. They are working to overcome the Malden's legacy of pollution, a toxic vestige of the US Navy Yard and other legacy manufacturing sites from the 1930s. The organization works on these issues in a relatively poor community with many language barriers. They meet in Malden, Everett and Medford.

Kathy gave some examples of how they are reaching out to various populations around the Malden River. In summer 2016 and summer 2017, FoMR held meetings at the Chinese Culture Connection, where participants generated ideas including that of an outdoor gym. FoMR produced brochures in English and Chinese about the need for a human health risk study. FoMR members are also learning to advocate for the Malden on particular projects. For example, they appealed DEP permit to get more benefits from redevelopment at 295 Canal St in Malden, but that appeal failed. That taught them to be proactive, looking out for properties that may be redeveloped soon, and to always have a lawyer in your group. They are working to raise expectations for developers that the community expects public benefits. Meeting participants suggested that FoMR members track the EOEEA Environmental Monitor – which lists all the DEP or Chapter 91 or MEPA permits that get filed. FoMR members are tracking greenway planning efforts and sharing information on their river health and safety questions. Some of this research is funded through the MIT Center for Environmental Health Sciences (which won a superfund research award that covers the Mystic).

#### Discussion and Q&A:

- Someone asked about the Cad Cell permitted for the shore of Charlestown. Magdalena said they are building a new cad cell on Charlestown near the Tobin Bridge, 90' deep. The dirty sediment in the harbor cannot be shipped to the MassBay disposal site.

#### Environmental Justice Workplan at MassDEP – *Deneen M. Simpson, Environmental Justice Program Director, MassDEP*

Deneen has been working in the environmental justice (EJ) department at DEP for three years, and has been director for one of those years. She gave the following update on the new EJ policy:

The new definition of environmental justice: *“Environmental justice is based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from environmental hazards and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment regardless of race, color, national origin, income, or English language proficiency. Environmental justice is the equal protection and meaningful involvement*

*of all people and communities with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of energy, climate change, and environmental laws, regulations and policies and the equitable distribution of energy and environmental benefits and burdens.”*

This policy directs Energy and Environmental agencies to consider EJ impacts and is the first update since 2002. Updates include:

- You need to meet one of three criteria (percent minority / English Second Language / low income) to be considered an EJ community in MA.
- There is a new optional tool available: the DPH environmental public health tracker for asthma, low birth weights, etc.
- All agencies are required to have a language access plan, as required by EPA under Title 6.
- There will be a public annual report showing who got EJ grants (likely state grants) and awards, as well as the policy/accomplishments completed in the prior year.
- The Secretary’s office is considering an opt-in position where communities can petition to be considered an EJ community even if they don’t meet the thresholds above.
- MassDEP has to develop an agency work-plan about how they will promote EJ. There will be one EJ strategy, but each agency will have its own workplan. The MassDEP EJ committee meets quarterly and has started developing their work and public involvement plans.
- Under the EEA EJ policy, MassDEP has to develop a compliance policy. Each region has to work with an EJ municipality to provide some technical assistance.

*Recent and Ongoing Work in EJ by MassDEP:*

- November 2016 – Toxic Action Center reached out to all 9 REGGI (Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative) states and asked for statehouse meetings about how EJ communities can benefit from REGGI proceeds. There were two meetings, in Dartmouth and Springfield. They worked with the communities to plan, and host, and get translations. They were asked recently to host another set of meetings, and will be doing so soon. MassDEP is doing this because they need to engage in EJ in order to fulfill their climate agreement. REGGI gives DEP some funding, some of which needs to go to EJ communities.
- MassDEP is translating vital documents that they routinely send to communities. They are in the midst of getting a contract for translators of materials and interpreters for meetings. DEP has a Diversity Office and a language bank (which is not comprehensive). A flag “communication document” goes out in 16 languages with every document from MassDEP that could potentially be appealed. It says the document is important and has to be translated, so people have a warning and do not miss deadlines. Staff are hoping this helps until they have contracted interpreters who can translate all public documents.
- MassDEP is developing a toxics grievance plan.
- Each bureau has an online community involvement and public participation site.
- The new Office of Municipal Partnership and Governmental Affairs provides municipalities access to their services. Deneen has contact info and a list of upcoming events.
- MassDEP is working on child-care, right time of day, translation, and public transit to increase public engagement equitably.

*Discussion and Q&A:*

- Are the departments across EOEEA (DCR, DEP) meeting together? Deneen responded that there is an unfilled leadership spot for an EJ director, but that the departments are siloed at the moment though they are required to work together.

- Should community groups take advantage of the EJ office at MassDEP? Are there services that can help them do their work? Deneen said to contact DEP, or specifically contact her, so she can tell organizations who to talk to. The EJ team has two people in every MassDEP region and Boston office. They also have a team of ~15 people with different areas of expertise (air, water, GIS). The commissioner is very supportive of EJ. This is a good time for community groups to get together **and have one voice**. She returns every call and email.
  - Rosanne commented that that unification helped get the EJ executive order passed. Progress is being made, and having the office is much better even if it is not perfect. MassDEP process are already more accessible for communities of color.
- Is the state has considered more flex time for employees who have to attend public meetings in the evening? It could make evening meetings less of a burden on staff that need to be present.
  - Deneen said that MassDEP is fairly flexible, and as long as staff put in enough time, they are allowed to adjust their schedules. But interpreters and translators are the ones they have concerns about, and advance notice is key.
- Mel notes that EPA also has EJ resources, which they are happy to make accessible to community groups. Anyone who wants to get at EPA Superfund or other programs from an EJ perspective should reach out to Caitlyn or Mel.

### **Subcommittee Reports and Discussion**

Note we're going to start calling these subcommittees, not subgroups.

#### 1. Water Quality Subgroup

This group needs to meet to review the Mission & Priorities document and distribute it in advance of the September meeting. Andy and Caitlyn will manage this.

The group held a successful science forum about science on the Mystic this spring. These are held every other year. See the [summary](#) for more information on the presentations, which addressed topics such as the phosphorous loading program to reduce nutrients (EPA and MyRWA), MWRA climate resiliency efforts, Cambridge and Stantec climate modeling, citizen science river herring monitoring by MyRWA, and others. Presentations are posted on MyRWA's [website](#).

#### 2. Open Space Subgroup

- Alicia noted that the group hasn't met, and that Ivey St. John and Amber apologized that they couldn't attend.
- The Clipper Ship Connector in Medford is moving forward with design. DCR has hired a design landscape consultant who should provide full construction documents by end of 2017. Over 50 abutters attended a recent meeting about this project, and there is a lot of interest.
- The Malden River greenway public planning process is underway with a June 26 meeting.
- Draw 7 Park – DCR has hired a design consultant to redesign the park. There will be public meetings in late summer and fall.
- Blessing of the Bay Park – MyRWA received a MassDEP grant to redesign the park.

### **Other Member Updates and Announcements**

- EPA
  - *National EPA Funding* - There's level funding for EPA at the moment, with just 1% cut last week across the agency through end of 2017. Staff cannot speculate about budget

numbers for fiscal year 2018. Caitlyn and Mel are in touch with the Urban Waters program staff, who will be joining the National Estuary Programs and the Trash in the Wetlands and Oceans divisions. The former director of the Urban Waters program will be leading the new group. In the last round of urban waters small grants, MyRWA got \$60K for stormwater education. They hope to offer another similar national competition in the coming year.

- *Urban Waters Award* - The Urban Waters Federal Partnership team is up for “the Oscars of government” – the Sammy’s (Samual Hayman). There are 26 finalists of hundreds nominated. Nine medals will be awarded in September. People can use this voting as an opportunity to promote awareness of this coalition.
  - *Phosphorous study Phase 1* – This phase of the 100K project we got funded last year is coming to an end. The next phase will be modeling, and there is reason to believe there will be another \$100K for this year for Phase 2. Can’t confirm, but it seems likely.
  - *Trash Free Waters* – This is the newest term for marine debris, floatables, includes source control, waste management, stormwater management, and beach clean ups. Many Region 1 activities and programs will get tied into this. EPA Region will receive \$15K for a project in the Mystic. It is likely MyRWA will undertake the project with partners in this coalition and with the MassBays Estuary Program – this would be the first of its kind in our region.
  - *Staffing* – Liz Glivinski, who worked for EPA for 2.5 years supporting the Mystic and Urban Waters Federal Partnership, stepped down in May. EPA is still struggling with that transition and getting our coordination and leadership smooth. EPA just got funding for CBI to provide additional support for these and related meetings. Ona offered help to subcommittee leads or anyone who wants help with collaboration or planning within this initiative. EPA will continue to send regular emails communicating about jobs, grants, etc. Someone suggested formal invitations and postings on key websites to invite new people to get engaged in this initiative.
- Energy and Environment in Medford got its operating budget quadrupled, including an unsolicited \$10K for water chestnut work.
  - Fidel Maltez is new City of Chelsea Assistant Director - he will be involved going forward.
  - The Industriplex site on the Aberjona River now has an MOA with co-federal trustees (USFWS and NOAA), so they will be initiating restoration planning in the next few months. Those agencies form a Trustee Council and work together to identify restoration projects with the public before implementation. They will also undertake restoration on the wetland, stream, and bird and fish populations. \$4.2M for the Aberjona. There may be public meetings, small groups to talk about projects and solicit ideas, or meetings with people to evaluate the ideas on the ground. There will be lots of opportunity to participate even if you are not able to complete a grant proposal: projects have to be in the same or similar location as the injury – Aberjona and Mystic River lake, and to the same resources (floodplain, wetland, river). [There will be a presentation on this at this meeting in September.]
  - Central Falls Dam in Winchester has a new fish ladder as mitigation for habitat loss which should start operating next season.
  - EPA Region 1 staff are looking into getting an email box for the Mystic River, so people involved in this initiative would get email from one address.
  - Boston Harbor Habitat Coalition is now the Boston Harbor Ecosystem Network. They are doing field trips – seeking new locations (the group suggested the Mystic). They work on coastal

resilience, stormwater, and habitats from Hull to Saugus. It is a stakeholder group of MassBay. Carole can add anyone to the group. Let her know if you are interested.