



**Science and Technical Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**Ocean County College Technology Bldg., Rm. 107**  
**April 14, 2015, 9:00 am**

**Attending STAC Members:** Jim Vasslides (BBP), Helen Henderson (ALS), Charles Caruso (PPA), Barbara Spinweber (USEPA-R2), Patrick Burritt (NJ Pinelands Comm.), Dr. Steven Yergeau (RCE), Tom Belton (NJDEP-OS), Alena Baldwin-Brown (NJDEP – DWM&S), Vicki Pecchioli (OC Planning), Dr. Matthew Poach (NOAA), Rich Bushnell (ReClam the Bay), Will Ruocco (BTMUA), Bill Crouch (USFWS), John Protonensis (OC Health Dept.), Dave McKeon (OCPD), Steve Mars (USFWS).

**Guests:** Al Modjeski (ALS), Dale Parsons (Parsons Seafood), Sheri Shifren (NJDEP/DWM&S/MWM), Steve Evert (Stockton), Christine Thompson (ALS/Monmouth), Monica Bricelj (RU-Haskins), Trish Ingelido (NJDEP/WMS).

**Barnegat Bay Partnership Staff:** Martha Maxwell-Doyle, Stan Hales, Mary Judge, Erin Reilly.

**Welcome and introductions – M. Poach**

The meeting was called to order at 9:15 AM and introductions were made.

**Review of draft agenda and minutes of February 10<sup>th</sup> STAC Conference Call – M. Poach**

Comments to the draft stormwater letter have been incorporated and Dr. Hales would like this to be added to the agenda for approval. One correction to the minutes was requested as to Patricia Gardener’s affiliation (DWM&S not BWM&S). With that change, a motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Yergeau. The motion was seconded by Mr. Caruso and was passed unanimously.

**2015 BBP Grant Funding Opportunity review – J. Vasslides**

This grant funding is specifically related to shellfish rehabilitation and restoration. Two pre-proposals were received and accepted for full proposals. They have been sent for external peer review and that review will be discussed later.

**GFO proposal presentation – Dr. Monica Bricelj, Rutgers University**

“Assessment of factors influencing the reproductive performance of hard clams, *Mercenaria mercenaria*, in the Barnegat Bay Marine Conservation Zone.” Dr. Bricelj presented on the 2014 sites at Island Beach State Park (IBSP) and the Sedge Island. The proposed study area is in the Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) at IBSP, which is closed to commercial but open to recreational shellfishing. This is a very dynamic system with a unique temperature and salinity

regime. The objectives of the proposed study are to: 1) determine the reproductive performance of hard clams in the Barnegat Bay Sedge Island area in relation to bottom substrate/habitat and locally adopted vs. planted broodstock from an LEH source; 2) to relate seasonal reproductive condition to environmental factors (primarily temperature regime and food supply; and 3) to assess natural mortality rates.

The proposed methods were discussed, as were the possible reasons for the low reproductive allocation at Sedge in 2014. Management Applications/Benefits of the Proposed Study were outlined, to include an assessment of the potential of the MCZ for establishment of a broodstock sanctuary in protected waters. The project goals meet the identified information gaps and recommendations of the BBP report on “Status and Trends of the Hard Clam, *Mercenaria mercenaria*, shellfish populations in Barnegat Bay NJ (Bricelj, Kraeuter & Flimlin 2012).

Question and Answer session: Other reasons for choosing Sedge is because it’s not open to a commercial fishery. It would be nice to compare to other sites, but this budget will only support one site. Sedge Island is one of the most pristine areas around with a broad fauna and flora. We need to know more about how this system works. Natural and wild clams will be released on either side of a transect in order to be able to locate them afterwards. Spray paint is used and will stay on for months on end; they will live in identical situations. Sample size was based on previous studies (Roger Newell and others). They want to write a methods paper on this to make future research easier.

#### **GFO proposal presentation – Mr. Steve Evert, Stockton University**

“Barnegat Bay oyster reefs: Biological and cost benefit analysis for scale up efforts.” This project may help answer questions the BBP runs into for future restoration efforts for oysters. Site selections are at opposing ends of the watershed – Good Luck Point to the north and Little Egg Harbor on the south. The American Littoral Society has ongoing work at Good Luck Point; nothing exists at Little Egg Harbor (no already-permitted site here). The project design was discussed. Two options: remote setting in a laboratory (tank setting); and using Mullica River oysters as a brood stock. Performance measures were discussed: they will use Dr. Bricelj’s monitoring design. Future restoration efforts need to understand the cost differences in using the different types of oysters (disease-resistant and transplant). ALS has current funding at Good Luck Point. BBP funding would provide a seamless extension of the existing funding. The timeline was discussed as well as site specifics for LEH Bay; several farmers are successfully growing out oysters in this bay. All sites are in relative proximity to varying levels of hard clams. They do not anticipate permitting to be an issue. Multi-beam sonar and bottom grabs will be used to select sites. The research plan in LEH was discussed – similar basic timeline. Work begins this summer with permitting and site selection. There will be an outreach plan throughout the project with the help of the American Littoral Society featuring a shell recycling operation. The project timeline is 30-months to ensure two full growing seasons after site selection. The questions answered will include tank setting disease resistant animals vs. Mullica River animals. It will engage citizen scientists; increase aquaculture opportunities; and answer

questions for Fishery Management Plan development. Biological and financial questions will also be answered as a part of this study.

Question and Answer Session: ReClam is supportive of both projects. Whelk shell will be used to set the substrate. They'll monitor the situation of losing shell to disease, but don't see any issues with salinity. Mr. Evert has been speaking with Rob Tunstead about his work and bottom-type data points they can draw from.

#### **GFO discussion and selection – M. Poach**

The STAC will make a recommendation of funding to the Advisory Committee (AC), which is scheduled to meet in early May.

Mr. Yergeau excused himself for the ensuing discussions of the projects. A discussion was held on the three external reviews which were received for each project. The committee discussed the projects and a vote was held. The vote was a tie. A motion to recommend that the Advisory Committee fund both projects was made by Mr. Belton. The motion was seconded by Mr. Caruso and was passed unanimously.

#### **Spring Science Symposium – C. Caruso**

Several meetings of the planning committee have been held. The agenda is virtually complete. The meeting is May 27<sup>th</sup> at Ocean County College. The introduction and welcome will be given by Congressman Tom MacArthur (not yet confirmed). The proposed agenda was reviewed.

#### **SAV monitoring update – S. Hales**

A discussion was held on what monitoring has been done post-Sandy. NJ Sea Grant funded Dr. Kennish who had gone out a couple of weeks before the storm and got transects done. Then they repeated their survey the summer following the storm; the work is not yet published. Some beds survived, many sea grass beds on the eastern side of the bay were buried. NJDEP Bureau of Shellfisheries has also done follow-up studies during their hard clam assessment. The BBP does not have funding to repeat a comprehensive seagrass survey, but would like to have additional data collected this year for the State of the Bay Report. A suggestion was made to speak with Rick Lathrop for an aerial look. The BBP has reached out to Dr. Kennish to see if we could collaborate on a project where he would provide for QA/QC and the BBP part-time staff would conduct the field work.

#### **Draft Stormwater Letter (addition to agenda)**

Dr. Hales reviewed the letter, which was sent out for feedback. Feedback was received and comments were incorporated. Dr. Hales will re-circulate the letter – no new points, just additional detail and additional references. A Motion was made by Mr. Caruso to approve the letter with these changes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Pecchioli and was approved unanimously, with the NJDEP recusing itself.

**Action:** Dr. Hales will add Mr. Belton's recusal to the letter.

### **STAC Vice-Chair nominations – J. Vasslides**

The STAC is currently serving without a vice-chair. Mr. Vasslides asked the STAC for nominations for a term to begin this summer and continue through Dr. Poach's two year term. There will be a vote at the June STAC meeting, and self-nominations are welcome. Any questions, please contact Mr. Vasslides.

**Action:** Mr. Vasslides will email the STAC requesting official nominations.

### **Partner Updates**

Mr. Ruocco reported on BTMUA projects. The Lake Carasaljo project will begin soon and a meeting is scheduled for April 20 at Lakewood Town Hall. The Metedeconk Watershed Plan retrofit of Brick Plaza is ongoing to determine the best approach. They are launching an outreach program with the Brick Twp. school district to include a mascot costume and logo contest. On April 26 BTMUA will partner with Georgian Court University on a Lake Carasaljo cleanup and an email will be distributed regarding this.

Mr. Caruso of Pinelands Preservation Alliance announced the new Pinelands Adventures, opening May 2<sup>nd</sup> – PPA took over a canoe livery and added educational components. Dr. Rhoads is heading a campaign to get municipal resolutions directed to the Pinelands Commission in opposition to the Pipeline and members were invited to contact her.

Forsythe Refuge update: Hurricane Sandy cleanup on the refuge is nearly complete. Three resiliency projects are ongoing: one has been funded (fish passage work on Westecunk Creek) and should be completed by year-end. The other two projects will be awarded shortly. One is a marsh restoration project and the other has to do with the wildlife drive and impoundments in Oceanville. They have a deadline of November 2016 to spend Hurricane Sandy funds.

Mr. Vasslides announced a Barnegat Bay Family Fun night hosted by the Barnegat Bay Foundation at Blackbeard's Cove on Route 9. Proceeds benefit the BBF. Upcoming events, as listed on the agenda, were reviewed.

### **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Vasslides. The motion was seconded by Mr. Crouch, and was passed unanimously.