



Science and Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
April 14th 2021; 9:00am
Via WebEx

Minutes

Attending STAC Members: Dr. Steven Yergeau (Chair, RCE-Ocean), Dr. Elizabeth Lacey (Vice-Chair, SU), Charles Caruso (PPA), Amber Mallm (MCDP), Alena Baldwin-Brown (DEP), Dr. Swarna Mutukrishnan (COA), Rob Karl (BTMUA), Christine Raabe (OCSCD), Barbara Spinweber (USEPA R2), Joe Smith (EBF NWR), Keith Hanson (NMFS), Christine Wieben (USGS), Greg Sakowicz (JCNERR), Robert Shertenlieb (OCUA), Dr. James Vasslides (BBP)

Attending Guests: Monica Chasten (USACE), Matt Csik (NJ American Water), Glenn Golden (NJDEP), Emily Russ (USACE), Murray Rosenberg (BBP Alternate Citizen Representative), Sheri Shifren (NJDEP), Barb Conlin (USACE)

Barnegat Bay Partnership Staff: Dr Stan Hales, Martha Maxwell-Doyle, Raquel Rotem, Ceili Pestalozzi, Emily Pirl

Welcome and introductions: S. Yergeau

Dr. Yergeau called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. Introductions were made.

Review of February 10th Meeting Minutes and draft agenda: S. Yergeau

S. Yergeau indicated that a request was made by the Program Office to add a brief discussion to the draft agenda of the recently announced Notice of Intent to issue a Draft EIS for the Ocean Wind project. That topic will be added to the agenda following the presentation by Ms. Chasten.

A motion was made by A. Baldwin-Brown to accept the minutes as is and was seconded by B Spinweber. The minutes were approved by consensus.

BBP Programmatic Update: S. Hales

CCMP - The CCMP was approved by the EPA in early February. OCC and the Program Office are working to identify a vendor to provide graphic design services to finalize the document. It is anticipated to take 4-6 weeks to complete the document, with a final product anticipated to be available in June. B. Spinweber noted that she will investigate using EPA's in-house service to translate the document into Spanish.

MOU - The MOU workgroup has met 3 times and has made substantial progress in reviewing the MOU. The BBP and OCC have come to an agreement on sharing the indirect rate from grants, which will provide a pool for funds to support grant writing over time. The STAC charter was reviewed with positive feedback. The CEC charter required modifications to be consistent with the other documents under review. The advocacy and donations policies were revised, and will be distributed in the upcoming Advisory Committee meeting.

Program Evaluation (PE) - The draft PE letter from the EPA was received by the Program Office last week, and is currently under review with EPA HQ. Dr. Hales thanked the members of the review team for their hard work and the thoughtful recommendations contained within the document.

NEP Coastal Watershed Grants – The NEP Coastal Watersheds Grant Program administered by RAE recently announced their 2021 Request For Proposals. The RFP is nearly identical to last year’s RFP, with a specific subset of priorities identified.

Program Office Relocation – OCC has told the Program Office that they anticipate moving the Program Office back into the Conference Center building this May/June. The physical relocation has not begun because there is currently a greater focus on the exhibit space, which has made great progress.

USACE 1122 Barnegat Bay Project Update: M. Chasten

M. Chasten presented on the progress of the US Army Corps of Engineers 1122: Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Pilot Program. This pilot project is centered around the Barnegat Inlet Federal Navigation Channel. The objective of this project was to link dredge material coming out of the federal navigation channel for beneficial reuse to support beaches, and build natural, nature-based features. Along with the federal navigational channel there are numerous state NJ DOT channels included in the inlet system, which is a benefit for trying to use both state and federal dredge material.

During 2019/2020 the focus was developing alternatives and environmental coordination with various groups. In July of 2020 the funding for the construction process was received. Due to the Continuing Authority Program, there was a slight setback as they waited for some approvals (e.g. decision document for approval). In December of 2020 they were able to begin project implementation. There was a 2-week timeframe to conduct the dredging activities due to seasonal restrictions.

The project has two components, 1) taking material from the inlet itself and placing it off of Harvey Cedars for an in-shore nourishing project, and 2) utilizing sediment from the Oyster Creek channel to create an island. The island creation portion began with the December 2020 activities, the near-shore placement will take place this summer. This project is a partnership between many programs within and external to the USACE. The USACE Engineering with Nature Program was highlighted in the recent congressional appropriation, so there is significant funding to move that program forward. The Regional Sediment Management Program has been supporting with robust funding as well. Within the USACE there is strong recognition that it is important for them moving forward to dredge sediment effectively and responsibly.

Harvey Cedar portion

- They will be dredging and capturing material between the Barnegat Inlet jetties. The Harvey Cedar beachfront area was chosen because of its chronic erosion. The nourishment cycle for that beach is 7 years; the goal of this project is to develop a large near-shore nourishment that would alleviate chronic erosion between those 7 years.
- Preconstruction surveys have been planned for immediately before material placement. Single- and multi-beam monitoring surveys will occur during and post construction.
- This portion of the project also includes wave gauging to observe wave transformation. All the gauges were launched last summer, but will be reset in the beginning of June because of the project delay.

Island Creation portion

- During previous dredging activities (1970s?) two islands were created (26A and 26B) in the Barnegat Inlet area. One of the island transformed into good upland habitat and is occupied by a number of bird species. The second island has developed a surrounding fringe of a good SAV habitat. Both of these long-term dredge material placement islands unintentionally turned into good habitat. The current

project is interested in intentionally creating an island that offers similar habitat uplift to help inform them how to build islands more effectively (e.g. transferable techniques, strategic placement, dredging less and gaining more) when considering coastal resilience.

- The project selection process, including collaborations and alternative analysis, was described.
- There have been several different survey components. A pre-project SAV survey entailed a dive team utilizing a camera along geo-referenced transects to develop a baseline for the project. Fixed sensor stations were identified pre and post construction. Additional “roving” surveys just prior and during construction were implemented and primarily focused on turbidity. The current plan is for a quarterly bathymetric survey; if any drastic changes are noted then a more frequent survey will be required. They are in the process of pre- and current project comparisons and are interested in post-construction SAV surveys. Surveys are limited by contracting mechanisms.

Questions

- M. Chasten reported that there is a lot of congressional interest in the 1122 program, and they are the first of the 10 originally selected that are under construction. Congress has appropriated funding that will allow for another placement of material in the fall of 2021. The Corps anticipates tracking channel shoaling to assess the effectiveness of the material placement.
- C. Caruso questioned whether the Harvey Cedar off-shore placement project will result in beach widening, or if that is the purpose of the study - whether the placement will widen the beach. They further questioned whether the goal of the project was to widen the beach or prevent further loss by putting sand in the boxes offshore. M. Chasten noted that the goal is not necessarily to widen, but rather stabilize and mimic a natural process. Every 7 years they participate in a major construction project placing sand directly on the beach, which builds a template. The template allows for natural waves to move the material off of the direct placement. This sediment from this project will support the template of the general beach fill just from a different direction. Overall, this will have less environmental impact because it is not the large construction project.
- E. Lacey questioned what the exact footprint of the placement area is and wondered if the material is remaining where it is placed? The concern is that the deposited material not be transported into the existing nearby SAV beds and smother them. M. Chasten offered to distribute the initial data that captures and provides a better visual of the footprint. They are also tracking the movement of the sediment as well as any encroaching SAV along the outer edge of the placement area.
- G. Sakowicz asked if the created island is subtidal or are there super-tidal features because there are different erosional effects, which may determine the monitoring approach. M. Chasten noted that the site was subtidal directly post-placement.

Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS for the Ocean Wind project: S. Hales

S. Hales reported that the BOEM has announced the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Ocean Wind offshore wind generation project, and that BOEM is soliciting comments on what should be included in the EIS. The closing date to submit comments on the scope of the EIS is April 29th. K. Hanson suggested that partners provide comments individually and that the BBP should submit a comment letter on behalf of the partnership as a whole. Partners expressed concerns associated with potential negative impacts on SAV and shellfish habitat, disturbing infrastructure already buried below the bay, and impacting human activities. S. Hales noted that this is an opportunity to inform others on the importance of these issues to coastal communities and resources before additional projects arise.

G. Sakowicz noted that different impacts are associated with drilling-type. S. Hales reported that the drilling type is horizontal directional drilling under the island, and it is yet unknown in regards to under the bay. K. Hanson anticipates open-trenching across the bay. K. Hanson encouraged all to view the NJ Offshore Wind website, which has additional information regarding the project.

At the request of the STAC, the Program Office will coordinate submission of comments on behalf of the partners. J. Vasslides requested that partners provide comments about the issue by next Thursday, April 22nd, to allow for enough time to collate the comments and prepare a submission.

2021 State of the Bay Report: J. Vasslides

J. Vasslides reported that they are continuing to receive information from various partners to develop the report. They are currently focused on the context of the report (e.g. targets, status and trends are consistent) rather than the presentation. Once prepared this document will be distributed to the State of the Bay Workgroup for review, and after revisions it will be provided to the STAC for review. J. Vasslides anticipated having the report available to the public in early fall. They are pleased with the focused approach of ecosystem-based targets compared to previous reports.

In response to a question J. Vasslides reported that there is no State of the Bay conference or presentations planned at this time. Further discussion with the CEC is needed to identify what format would be most useful for conveying the information under the current and future pandemic restrictions.

FY22 STAC Grant Funding Opportunity: S. Yergeau

As part of this year's workplan, the Program Office will be issuing a Grant Funding Opportunity (GFO) utilizing funds from FY20, FY21, and FY22. This three-year cycle allows the BBP to fund a more substantial project(s). It is anticipated that approximately \$52,000 will be available under this GFO.

A discussion ensued regarding the priorities to be identified for funding in the GFO. S. Yergeau noted that the general direction seemed to be to prioritize 1) CCMP Objectives and Action Items, and 2) addressing gaps in the Ecosystem Based Targets identified in the CCMP. Since the CCMP is not finalized it is not currently on the website. S. Hales noted that the targets and Objectives/Action Items can be posted to the website for reference.

In accordance with EPA priorities B. Spinweber emphasized engaging with environmental justice communities when disseminating the GFO and considering potential projects.

J. Vasslides described the anticipated timeline. The STAC needs to approve the priority areas as a recommendation for the AC prior to their May 11th meeting. Once the AC accepts the STAC recommendation, the Program Office will issue the GFO. The GFO will likely give 45-60 days for submission of letters of interests (LOIs), at which time the Program Office and STAC leadership will review the LOIs and request full proposals. The full proposals will be due late fall/ early winter, with presentations given to the STAC at their October or December meeting, and STAC voting to occur immediately thereafter. Final approval will occur at the subsequent AC meeting.

Working Groups' Updates: S. Yergeau

Wetlands: E. Pirl

E. Pirl reported that their first meeting was held on April 8th. The focus of the meeting was creating the vision statement, defining their scope of interest, and setting up following meetings.

Pathogen: S. Shifren

Source-trackdown projects are occurring this spring at Beachwood and Brick Township recreational bathing beaches. She noted that letters were sent expressing concerns about the beaches opening up for recreation this season, and that additional studies are required to determine whether they should open. The following studies were considered: ebbside, floodside, traditional storm study, and 48-hour storm study. A traditional storm study was conducted in the Beachwood beach area this March; the analysis is underway now. Coordination to

implement these studies is still under development. The DEP also spoke with municipalities to encourage renewed enforcement of existing ordinances and stormwater housekeeping activities prior to the bathing season.

S. Mutukrishnan also provided an update on their NJDEP-funded Toms River Source Tracking project. Thus far the project has established a base of operations at the SBB eco-center, and communication protocols have been developed. The project team has also developed a draft report that documents the history and current status of pathogens along the river based on publicly available sampling. The draft is ready to be submitted to the DEP. Finally, the SBB student summer grant program will be funded under the DEP grant and will specifically be engaged in water quality monitoring on the Toms River watershed during the summer. The project team has been identified and is working on the QAPP now ahead of the start of sampling.

Stormwater: C. Caruso

A meeting was held on April 8th, and continued with the objective of learning about DEP stormwater projects. The meeting also discussed the CCMP objectives and action items and how they relate to stormwater. A questionnaire and survey was sent to all of the members to ask what of the CCMP is/are most pertinent in terms of stormwater, and what course of action should be taken. The group also discussed which specific project(s) that the workgroup could undertake such as monitoring stormwater utilities throughout the state.

C. Caruso recommended that partners review the stormwater utility guidance website provided by the DEP. He also suggested inviting Nancy Temple from the NJDEP to a STAC or AC meeting to present an update on their stormwater utility guidance and implementation.

Shellfish: J. Vasslides

J. Vasslides reported that there are no major updates, and the group is likely to meet again in the fall. Rutgers distributed a survey to participants in the recent oyster aquaculture purchase programs (RU/NJSG and TNC/PEW SOAR), and received generally favorable comments, including interest from aquaculturists in extending the program into the future.

The TNC/PEW SOAR project has released an RFP for a second round of funding. One RFP is for funding supporting culturists and producers directly. A second RFP will fund collaborative work for shellfish/shellfisheries resilience.

Vice-Chair Nominations: S. Yergeau

The partners were reminded that we are currently soliciting nominations for STAC Vice-Chair. The current Chair's term ends at the conclusion of the June meeting, at which time the Vice-Chair will be elevated to serve as Chair. The Chair highlighted the responsibilities and benefits of the position, and remind folks that the deadline for nominations is the June meeting.

Partner Updates

J. Vasslides informed the partners that Ms. Alena Baldwin-Brown, the NJDEP representative to the STAC, will be retiring prior to the June meeting. He thanked Ms. Baldwin-Brown for her service to the STAC and several workgroups, and for her efforts in coordinating information flow between the BBP and the vast bureaucracy that is the NJDEP.

DEP, A. Baldwin-Brown

A. Baldwin-Brown reported that the Water Quality Restoration Grant RFP is expected to be released within the next 30 days. She also indicated that the DEP will be launching their 'Countdown to Beach Season' social media campaign in May on their Instagram and Facebook page. This will not only bring awareness to the beach season, but also educational opportunities for the Cooperative Coastal Monitoring Programs. Lastly, she

indicated that the DEP has 10 additional water quality monitoring buoys to be placed in watersheds that have a history of recurring harmful algal blooms. Locations for the buoys are still to be determined, but will likely be focused on freshwater systems.

USGS, C. Wieben

C. Weiben reported that their office director is retiring, and the selection process for a new one will occur over the summer.

NERR, G. Sakowicz

G. Sakowicz provided a link to paper that is recently out of the NERR system regarding the use of UAV as a survey tool to guide marsh restoration.

OCSC, C. Raabe

C. Raabe reported that they applied for and received a second round of funding for the Technical Assistance grant to continue working with aquaculture producers in the Barnegat Bay. They reported that the SPARC program (sustainable practices for aquaculture resources conservation) provides funding to have district staff continue their training for NRCS conservation planning to directly assist aquaculture producers in the region.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:08am.