



Science and Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
December 8th 2021
9:00 am

Draft Minutes

Attending STAC Members: Dr. Elizabeth Lacey (Stockton University), Robert Karl (BTMUA), Mark Villinger (OC Planning), Victoria Kemp (OC Planning), Gregg Sakowicz (JCNER), Joe Smith (USFWS), Christine Weiben (USGS), David Steinman (USDA-NRCS), Charles Caruso (PPA), Barbara Spinweber (USEPA-R2), Dr. Swarna Muthukrishnan (COA), Rick Bushnell (RCTB), Colleen Adams (OCC), Dr. Steven Yergeau (RCE), Dr. Jim Vasslides (BBP)

Attending Guests: Jonathan Kennen (USGS NJ Water Science Center), Tom Suro (USGS NJWSC), Sheri Shifren (NJDEP), Murray Rosenberg (Citizen Rep.)

Staff Member in Attendance: Dr. Stan Hales, Ceili Pestalozzi, Karen Walzer, Martha Maxwell-Doyle, Emily Pirl, Shannon Vasquez

Welcome and introductions–E. Lacey

The meeting was called to order at 9:02 AM and call-in attendees made introductions

Review of October 13th Meeting Minutes and draft agenda–E. Lacey

Stan has a couple additions for the Director's update; agenda approved with those additions

No changes or corrections to meeting minutes. Minutes were approved without changes (Steve Yergeau abstain).

BBP Programmatic Update–S. Hales

Memo of Understanding (MOU) – The MOU committee met a couple weeks ago and discussed changes regarding the donation and advocacy policies. Those are still going through review at OCC. Dr. Hales would like to get those documents out to partners before the end of the calendar year.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Funding (BIF) – The NEPs will be getting some additional funding (~\$1 mil per year for 5 years for each NEP) as part of the recently signed Infrastructure bill. We are not sure what directions/guidance will be given regarding the use of that money. It looks like most or all of the funds will be committed to on-the-ground projects.

Offshore Wind money – The BBP has received a commitment from Atlantic Shores to provide support for communication/outreach, community science (P4E), and restoration projects. There was discussion about the BBPs position on offshore wind and whether or not we should issue a statement about our position. Rick Bushnell said that RCTB has received grant and they made it clear that the money was given freely without expectations. Charles Caruso said that PPA is hosting a presentation by Josh Kohut (Rutgers) in the near future to discuss offshore wind issues. Rick suggested that the BBP could put together a series of talks about offshore wind so that people who are interested can get scientific and unbiased information. Dr. Lacey suggested that we address this at another STAC meeting as there is a lot of interest.

FY22 STAC Grant Funding Opportunity – E. Lacey

Jonathan Kennen of the USGS project team provided a presentation on their proposal entitled “Determining Streamflow Conditions at Select Tributaries to Barnegat Bay as a First Step Toward the Development of Ecological Flow Targets.”

- Streamflow is inextricably linked to the health of streams and rivers (magnitude, frequency, timing, duration, rate of change). The Poff (1997) seminal paper led to other research and efforts, including the development of the HIP (USGS and NJDEP). This project would build on those early advancements.
- Z – how did you choose the 4 stream gauges that you did? They aimed to choose a breadth of development, land use, geographic location. These are the only four with current data
- Jim – is there enough of a historical record to capture minimally altered stream condition? Jonathan says and Tom agrees, yes, in the TR and Cedar Creek. Possibly for the Metedeconk, but it would be nice to have a longer record there.
- Jim – what is the timeline for the completion of the ELOHA process? Jonathan says that in general the efforts can take 3-4 years (depends on momentum of the process and interests of the stakeholders that are driving the process). Once the science is in place the implementation of that is up to stakeholders.
- Stan – water supply issues are potentially critical in the state. The development of ecological flow targets are important for other efforts (like water reuse, etc.)

**The USGS team, including Christine Weiben, recused themselves from the WebEx call.

Jim summarized the reviewers comments (2 reviewers, one at federal level, and one academic). He said that most comments were complimentary and the concerns that they did have were addressed in the presentation. Jim and Z pointed out that this is just a first step but at least it is a step forward. If it has to happen one step at a time then that would be slow but it is still progress. Stan mentioned that there may be other funds that we could search out that would get this effort moving faster.

G. Sakowicz asked about any hurdles to building upon this data (like anything with proprietary data or ideas)? Jim answered that the best way to go about this is probably a USGS technical report so that the data and report goes through extensive USGS review and then both become public.

Proposal was recommended for funding by a vote (motion by Steve Yergeau) with no abstentions and no opposing

2021 State of the Bay Report – J. Vasslides

Jim indicated that he has received a first draft of the layout and that it looks pretty good. Discussion ensued about the process for approving the SOTB report. Most people were supportive of having the STAC approve the document and then recommend that it be approved by the AC to give everyone a chance to weigh in. Jim will send out the report as soon as he can so that comments can be made before the AC meeting.

Working Groups’ Updates – E. Lacey

- a. Estuarine Habitats (Maxwell-Doyle) – The EHWG combined their November and December meetings, where they will prioritize the activities that they are working on in 2022. Their next meeting is Dec 15th at 2 PM.
- b. Pathogen (Shifren) – NJDEP conducted two stormwater pathogen studies last month, one in Barnegat Light and one in Metedeconk. The study at Barnegat Light didn’t find anything definitive. The Metedeconk study was in the Forge Pond area identified a human source and a domestic animal source. Swarna gave update on the Clean Ocean Action REP project – they investigated 27 sites through six different towns, most of which were suspected hotspots. Water samples were taken and then shipped to specially trained dogs in CA. Garden State Laboratories run the fecal and entero analyses for them. They will continue their sampling regime and getting ready to start the mini-grants phase of the project. One-on-one meeting with municipalities will happen next week.

- c. Stormwater (Caruso) – Following the presentation last month, the Stormwater WG submitted comments on the NJDEP stormwater utility website, circulated a stormwater feasibility study, and Stan contacted Nancy Kempel at DEP to ask for a representative from DEP to attend the working group meetings. Steve Boyer is the NJDEP MS4 supervisor, and we will meet with him and talk about next steps. The next SWWG meeting will be on Feb. 9th after the next STAC meeting.
- d. Shellfish (Vasslides) – Shellfish working group met in late November and had excellent turnout. We spent a lot of time on partner/program updates because there has been so much action in the shellfish realm. Among the highlights - Tuckerton Oyster reef has gotten additional DEP funding. New sites with DEP funding include a dual-habitat reef site. SOAR purchase program has formally ended; a new SOAR award went to a consortia in New Jersey for marketing oysters. Everyone agreed that the working group could do more to support shell recycling in the watershed. About half of the working group would like to meet in the next month or so to talk more about actions. Shellfish working group will meet about three times a year and do a field visit to project sites.

Multi-Decadal Declines and Species Assemblage Shifts in the Fish Community of a Northeast US Temperate Estuary – J. Vasslides

Dr. Vasslides provided a presentation on the results of data analyses on the BBP long-term seining dataset that is currently under peer review at a scientific journal.

Partner Updates

G. Sackowicz updated that he submitted some names for people to contribute to and SAV needs assessment. You can contact him to be added to the list.

A discussion ensued regarding the STAC meetings remaining in a virtual format for the time being or moving back to in-person meetings. The general consensus was to remain virtual.

Adjournment