



**Science and Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
February 10th 2021
Via WebEx**

Minutes

Attending STAC members: Dr. Steven Yergeau (Chair, RCE-Ocean), Alena Baldwin-Brown (NJDEP), Barbara Spinweber (USEPA-R2), Charles Caruso (PPA), Christine Wieben (USGS), Gregg Sakowicz (JCNERR), Robert Karl (BTMUA), Dr. Swarna Muthukrishnan (COA), Dr. Peter Rowe (NJ Sea Grant), Joseph Smith (USFWS), Keith Maroon (OCUA), Christine Raabe (OCSCD), Vicki Pecchioli (OCPD), Amber Mallm (MCDP), David Steinmann (NRCS), Rick Bushnell (RCTB), Dr. Jim Vasslides (BBP), Jim Nichols (MU)

Attending Guests: Murray Rosenberg (Citizen Representative-Alt.), Sheri Shifren (NJDEP/WMS), Karen Argenti (SBB)

Attending Staff: Dr. Stan Hales, Ceili Pestalozzi, Emily Pirl, Martha Maxwell-Doyle, Shannon Vasquez

Welcome and introductions– S. Yergeau

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

Review of December 9th Meeting Minutes and draft agenda–S. Yergeau

Draft Agenda passed with no revision. Alena Baldwin-Brown checked to make sure her corrections had been incorporated into the December 9th minutes. Jim Vasslides confirmed that they had been incorporated. Rick Bushnell made a motion to accept as amended and Vicki Pecchioli seconded.

BBP Programmatic Update–S. Hales

Program Evaluation (PE) – The PE has continued virtually through the last few months with materials and discussion being passed back and forth between BBP and the PE team at EPA. At this point we are waiting for a draft of the letter from the PE team. This letter will be finalized and then shared with all in the management conference. Stan thanked everyone for their assistance with the PE.

CCMP tracking – The BBP Program Office needs to report annually on status of CCMP items. In order to do this we need progress updates from partners on CCMP items. An excel sheet has been designed to facilitate partners reporting progress back to the Program Office. This is a requirement of all members of management conference. The info for this year will be requested within the next week and will be due Dec. 1 each year so it can be included in BBP and EPA reports. Alena Baldwin-Brown asked if they should complete the excel file before approval from AC, Stan answered that they should so that we can see how it works for everyone.

CCMP update – The final draft of the CCMP was turned in to EPA in Jan. 2021. EPA Region 2 has submitted this draft CCMP to headquarters for review on Feb. 3, 2021. There is no timetable for the review right now. Stan also reported on the following CCMP components:

Communication plan – Parts of this are going out to CEC for review in the next couple of weeks.

Monitoring plan – the work group is moving forward.

Memo of Understanding (MOU) – the work group is moving forward and the next meeting will be late February 2021.

2021 State of the Bay Report Update– J. Vasslides

Data collection has begun for the State of the Bay report. Some sections have information and some have draft text. The work group developed a mock-up for one of the targets to get an idea of what the sections would look like. This mock-up was sent out to work group and, generally, the format was approved but the style of the graphic was not. The status-bar format is problematic and doesn't allow flexibility in reporting on status of targets that may be in different "phases" of maintaining or achieving targets. Jim also reported that State of the Bay report may be delayed due in part to difficulty getting paper. Late summer 2021 is a more realistic expectation for the report to be published given this and other delays.

Alena Baldwin-Brown followed up to see if Jim ever received data from Bob Schuster at DEP MWM. Jim had not received the data.

Steve Yergeau asked about the progress of the WPRPs. Jim reported that the visual stream assessments in the Toms River watershed are almost all complete. The stream visual assessments in the Cedar-Forked-Oyster watersheds are about 2/3rds complete but remote sand roads have been an issue. Data entry is ongoing and all visual stream assessments completed to date have been entered into the database. Water Quality sampling began in November and will occur once monthly until May when the sampling goes to twice monthly for the growing season. The next Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) meetings will be in March/April. We will be making concerted push to get more municipal involvement in these upcoming meetings. There will also be a DEP milestone meeting before the SAC meeting.

Permits/Projects of interest – S. Hales

USACE 1122 project – The first placement of dredge materials occurred at a site recommended by the workgroup. This is in vicinity of SAV vegetation. Monica Chasten reported that bathymetry was measured at the site to check if bottom was brought into photic zone. A report on those measurements is pending.

Lighthouse Center project – The state is waiting on the consultant to provide some information that the state requested.

Stan also reported that he had heard that there is funding for the Mordecai island and Back Bay projects. Stan has asked USACE to report to the STAC on what they plan to do for both of those projects.

Shellfish Working Group – J. Vasslides

Steve Yergeau reported that the shellfish working group is proposing to become a full work group within the STAC as opposed to an ad-hoc group. Jim Vasslides explained that since the creation of the Shellfish Working Group (SHWG) there has been a lot of changes and action related to shellfish within the bay. The working group has continued to meet irregularly, but has exceeded the original mandate set out for the group. Therefore, the group has put together a proposal to become a full working group with updated role/responsibilities. Jim confirmed that all members of the SHWG will continue to be a part of the group as it transitions to a regular STAC work group.

After a question from Christine Raabe, discussion ensued about whether members of a given working group can vote on matters concerning that same working group. The consensus was that, in this case, the votes from the SHWG members present were not likely to significantly influence the outcome of the proposal. All present voted YES and the proposal passed.

Working Groups' Updates

Wetlands Working Group (Martha Maxwell-Doyle) – Martha reported that the work group's first meeting is upcoming and may be in early April. Virginia Rettig is the chairperson. Initial business will be a visioning session to develop

objectives for the group. Lisa Auermueller will facilitate this and Josh Moody from PDE will participate in the discussion as an expert. Other group members were listed in the meeting chat (17 interested parties) Mark Villinger, Barbra Spinweber, TNC, David Steiman, NJDEP (Jill Aspinwall, Metthea Yepsen, Mellisa Woerner) Karen Greene, Elizabeth Lacey, Christine Raabe, Amber Mallm, Joe Smith, Virginia Rettig, Kim McKenna, Greg Sazowicz, Dorina Frizzera, Britta Wenzel, Martha Maxwell-Doyle & Emily Pirl

Pathogen Working Group (Sheri Shifren) – Sheri updated that the group needs members, and hasn't met in a while. Keith Marcoon, Barbra Spinweber, and Rob Karl voiced interest in continued participation. Sheri also mentioned the need to address issues in the Toms River, Metedeconk River, and within the bay itself. Stan and Sheri discussed that other county departments may be interested in being involved as well (OCUA, planning, engineering, etc.)

Stormwater Working Group (Charles Caruso) – A recommendation statement to municipalities addressing the new NJDEP stormwater rules and the need for municipalities to update their ordinances was approved by STAC and AC and sent out. In summary it states that BBP encourages municipalities to go beyond the new DEP stormwater rules in their ordinances. The letter also identified model ordinances that municipalities could look to (Watershed Institute, NJ Future, others). Charles also reported that the last meeting of the work group included two presentation on DEP stormwater grant projects. One presentation was by Craig McGee of the Camden Soil Conservation District on a stormwater basin retrofit project in Lakewood. Christine Raabe clarified that the South Jersey RC&D council was the recipient of the grant and that several organizations are involved with it including OCSD. Mr. McGee/Camden Soil District is the grant administrator. The second presentation was by Rob Karl of BTMUA on implementing projects that were identified during the Metedeconk WPRP process. Moving forward, the work group will be hearing about the updates to the Pinelands Commission stormwater rules from Ed Wengrowski, discussing a 2014 DOT report on Barnegat Bay stormwater basins, and hopefully welcoming a representative from NJDEP stormwater team to future meetings.

Monitoring Plan working Group (Jim Vasslides) – This work group has not met in some time. Currently, the program office staff are working on the hub webpage that will house information about the monitoring plan and monitoring within the watershed. Karen Walzer and Alexandra Blanchet are working on this by starting to build the webpage and populating the geodatabase with data from the program office and from partners.

Partner Updates

General Update - S. Yergeau

Steve reported that we are still accepting nominees for Vice-Chair of the STAC. Elizabeth Lacey will be taking over as chair so the Vice-Chair seat needs to be filled. Steve also followed up from the Marine Debris Presentation in December and reported that they are close to getting recommendations together for organizations to implement as well as working on a marine debris blog. Link to blog was provided in chat https://blog.marinedebris.noaa.gov/new-monthly-webinar-salvaging-solutions-abandoned-and-derelect-vessels?utm_medium=email&utm_source=GovDelivery

NJDEP – Alena Baldwin-Brown

Alena reported on restructuring at NJDEP. The Watershed and Land Use Program has been created and now contains the Water Quality Management Program, Water Quality Restoration grants program, stormwater program, and others. Lynette Lurig will also be a part of the Watershed and Land Use Program. Alena added that there is currently no change on who is representing DEP on estuary program business.

RCTB – Rick Bushnell

Rick thanked Russ Rader and others at NJDEP for help with WQ restoration grant paperwork. He also asked if DEP could provide a new organization chart showing who is working in which DEP program. Alena responded that the DEP website includes a chart that includes the director-level organization. She will see if she can get a more detailed chart.

Stormwater Work Group – Karen Argenti

Karen asked about changing the meeting time for the SWG so that anything that needed approval did not have to wait so long (3 months to get through next STAC and AC meetings). Stan was open to the idea of changing the meeting time and reiterated the importance of doing research and getting approvals before the BBP makes a recommendation or endorsement, even if this process takes time. Charles mentioned that we will be discussing this at the upcoming SWG meeting, including changing the meeting time.

PPA – Charles Caruso

Charles reported that the 2020 State of the Pinelands report has been published. This report gives a thumbs up, thumbs down, or fingers crossed rating for various actions by various organizations. A notable thumbs down was given to the NJ state legislature for its delay in appointing commissioners to the Pinelands Commission. The PPA and SBB are trying to get Senator Sweeney to move appointments through the legislature. A link to the report was posted in the chat <https://pinelandsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/State-of-the-Pinelands-2020-for-website.pdf>

BBP Program Office – Jim Vasslides

Jim reported that the juvenile eel survey started this week after a short delay due to the weather. The next AC meeting will be on March 9. The Jersey Friendly Yards seminar series is continuing in March and April. The next STAC meeting will be on April 14. The next Ask a Barnegat Bay Scientist presentation is will be Dr. Jim Vasslides presenting on American Eels. The date for this seminar is TBD.

NRCS – Dave Steinman

Dave reported that his past field season 25 marsh sites were sampled within the watershed. These samples were associated with the RARE wetlands project. The samples will be sent to the NRCS lab in Lincoln, NE for analysis.

NJSGC – Pete Rowe

Pete discussed several fellowship and grant opportunities that will be offered this year or are already open for applications/proposals. This includes the Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship and the Graduate Fellowship Program in Population and Ecosystem Dynamics as well as the Biennial Research Competition. Other RFPs for aquaculture are going out in the spring and Pete will update the STAC in the future.

Meeting adjourned at 10:29 AM