



**Science and Technical Advisory Committee
WebEx Meeting
June 10th 2020
9:00 am**

Attending STAC Members: Dr. Steven Yergeau (Chair, RCE-Ocean), Dr. Elizabeth Lacey (Vice-Chair, Stockton University), Alena Baldwin-Brown (NJDEP), Linda Brennen (MCPD), Amber Mallm (MCDP), Barbara Spinweber (USEPA-R2), Charles Caruso (PPA), Christine Wieben (USGS), Gregg Sakowicz (JCNERR), Rick Bushnell (RCTB), Robert Karl (BTMUA), Robert Shertenlieb (OCUA), Dr. Swarna Muthukrishnan (COA), Vicki Pecchioli (OC Planning), Mark Villinger (OC Planning), Dr. Peter Rowe (NJ Sea Grant), Dr. Jim Vasslides (BBP)

Attending Guests: Jessie Murray (NOAA), Murray Rosenberg (BBP Citizen rep), Nicole Leaf (OC Planning), Sheri Shifren (NJDEP/WMS), Monica Chasten (USACE), Karen Argenti (SBB), Jessica Cobb (NJDEP Land Use Management), Dr. Grace Saba (Rutgers University), John Protonentis (OCHD), Angela Andersen (LBT), Marty McHugh

Staff Members in Attendance: Dr. Stan Hales, Martha Maxwell-Doyle, Karen Walzer, Ceili Pestalozzi, Nicole Petersen

Welcome and introductions–S. Yergeau

The Meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM EDT and phone callers made introductions.

Review of April 8th Meeting Minutes and draft agenda–S. Yergeau

Dr. Vasslides announced that some name prefixes had been corrected from the original draft minutes. Mr. Sakowicz corrected the initials of JCNERR. The meeting minutes were accepted unanimously with those changes.

BBP Programmatic Update–S. Hales

CCMP: Dr. Hales said that EPA Region 2 had retuned the CCMP a few months ago. The BBP is updating and revising the document based on their comments. A date for completion will be given at the July AC meeting.

Program Evaluation: The PE by EPA Region 2 will be continuing for the planned timeframe in early July, with modifications due to the pandemic. The site visit portion has been cancelled and periodic video conferencing will likely take its place. More details will be available at the July AC meeting. Ms. Spinweber added that EPA will be holding a call in early July to discuss more details.

Work Plan: OCC finalized the Program Office staff salaries at the last board meeting. There was a 0.75% cost savings in salaries compared to the draft budget that was applied to other budget areas. Dr. Yergeau asked about the monitoring plan and the habitat plan and the status of the plans to hire a consultant for the habitat plan. Dr. Hales replied that the monitoring plan is moving forward and there is an upcoming call of the Monitoring Plan Working Group. As of right now, there has been no progress on hiring a contractor to work on the habitat plan.

Coastal Acidification Research and Monitoring—Dr. Grace Saba, Rutgers University

Dr. Saba gave an overview of ocean acidification, current vs. past conditions, and potential negative effects. She emphasized that the rate of change is the concern for most researchers. She outlined specific influences and concerns for the Mid-Atlantic region including freshwater inputs, nutrient-rich runoff, upwelling, diel fluctuations, *etc.* Dr. Saba presented data from her research program collected on the MAB shelf. She also reviewed the current state of research in the Mid-Atlantic and mentioned opportunity for expansion of near-shore monitoring in estuaries/bays. She emphasized that many research gaps still exist on the impacts of ocean acidification and a working group identified the following needs to address ocean acidification in the Mid-Atlantic: more data, risk assessments, industry feedback, identification of relative sources of acidification. The slides from Dr. Saba's presentation will be made available to the members of the STAC.

Working Groups' Updates

Shellfish – Dr. Vasslides

- The April meeting included discussion of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the shellfish aquaculture community and the difficulties they are having moving product due to restaurant closures. The Working Group decided to delay taking any formal action until June, which is the beginning of the busy season, to see if restaurants started to reopen. Possible alternate uses of existing stock were discussed, including utilizing excess aquaculture product to enhance restoration sites.

Pathogen – Ms. Shifren

- Beaches are now open, so pathogen monitoring began during the Memorial Day weekend. There was an exceedance at Beachwood Beach yesterday, and the Department is waiting on re-sample results today. The exceedance is probably due to large rain events at the end of last week. Other than that, results have generally been good. Surveillance flights are happening with modifications due to the pandemic.

Stormwater – Ms. Pestalozzi

- Ms. Pestalozzi provided the update since Charles was having technical difficulties. The BBP submitted comments on the new chapters 5 and 12 in the DEP stormwater BMP manual. The stormwater work group will be meeting today to hear about Rutgers Water Resources ICA and RAP programs as well as updates on the new DEP Green Infrastructure Rule for development.

Monitoring Plan – Dr. Vasslides

- The work group will be meeting today to continue their discussions regarding which existing monitoring programs could inform the ecosystem-based targets described in the CCMP. They also plan to discuss the format of the Monitoring Plan itself. Dr. Yergeau added that it will be interesting to discuss ocean acidification research gaps from Dr. Saba's talk and possible inclusion in the monitoring plan.

Fieldwork in the time of COVID-19

- Dr. Yergeau - Rutgers previously said all non-essential research must be suspended. Not many exceptions were granted. They are in the process of phasing-in research again with

hopes of reaching 100% of research restarting in the fall. No decision has been made for education programs for the fall.

- Dr. Lacey – Monitoring and research at Stockton is continuing with staff only (no students) and precautions are being taken. Work including undergraduates has had to be suspended or continued with only staff.
- Ms. Baldwin-Brown – NJDEP has restarted some monitoring programs, at least in marine sector. Monitoring for shellfish safety (NSSP) has resumed. NJDEP is in the process of planning how continuous monitoring buoys can be redeployed while taking proper precautions. When DEP gets reports of HABs they are going out and monitoring, but that is the only monitoring taking place in freshwater at this time. Plans are being made on how to get back into the field safely.
- Mr. Bushnell – ReClam is planning to continue activities as close to normal as possible. Some hatcheries are having trouble delivering product. Limits will be made on number of people visiting upwellers and presentations at parks may or may not continue this summer pending decisions from parks.
- Ms. Maxwell-Doyle – MACWA is continuing with limited work and they are developing safety protocols. They received word from USFW that they are allowed to restart monitoring on refuge property. They had to skip spring SSIM but will continue that in August.
- Mr. Sakowicz – Rutgers has a moratorium on all lab and field work so the NERR nutrient sampling program is completely suspended. The meteorological station is monitoring without maintenance. The water quality sondes are in the water but will be affected by fouling so only certain parameters will be useable. Gregg is hoping to be one of the first programs to be allowed back into the lab and field.
- Dr. Rowe – The PIs for NJSGC projects have made decisions on whether research could continue. Outreach programs are continuing virtually whenever possible. Ocean Fun Days, which was moved to October, will be a recorded or virtual program now.

US Army Corps of Engineers 1122 Project–Monica Chasten, USACE

Ms. Chasten said that the nearshore placement portion of the project is ready to go but the dredge is delayed due to the pandemic and recent storms. The new time frame for this will likely be August – September 2020. There is a possibility of using two federal dredges to be more effective at that time. She added that BBP feedback on the back-bay project (using Oyster Creek Channel material) has been very helpful. There are multiple options for where to put the material but the intention is to narrow placement to four different areas. Another island may be created around Area 6. An SAV reconnaissance survey is planned to investigate likelihood of SAV colonizing these areas. Monica discussed some different options that are possible for maintenance of Oyster Creek Channel and use of the material.

NEP Coastal Watersheds Grant Program–S. Hales

Dr. Hales provided a brief overview of the new grant opportunity recently announced. A webinar regarding the Request for Proposals was held last week by Restore America's Estuaries, the organization selected by EPA to manage the competition. A recording of the webinar is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e08Z4fqfsuI>. Eligible projects must be located within an NEP study area or select adjoining regions, and the 3 priorities for this year are listed in the RFP. Because an organization can only be associated with 3 applications, Dr. Hales requested that

anyone who wished to have BBP involvement contact the Program Office as soon as possible.

Partner Updates

Dr. Steve Yergeau – Dr. Yergeau informed the members that his temporary absence during April's meeting was to field a call from his Dean to inform him that he received tenure. There was much rejoicing.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 EDT.