

**Habitat Restoration and Protection  
Kick-off and workgroup meeting hosted by  
Narragansett Bay Estuary Program & The Nature Conservancy (MA Chapter)  
October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Providence, RI  
Meeting notes 10/31/18**

**1. Overview**

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, NBEP and TNC (MA Chapter) convened a kick-off meeting to introduce the “**Habitat Restoration and Protection Mapping and Tracking Tool**” project to an audience of 30 participants, representing 20 bi-state entities from different sectors and entities. At the meeting, the conveners presented the project’s goals, objectives, deliverables, timeline, synergy, approach and examples of previous efforts by other partners. Following this presentation, a breakout session took place with four (4) groups formed to seek initial input from the participants which will shape the framework of this project. Each group had a moderator who led the discussion of five (5) different topics (see *Workgroup Outline*), and summarized the overall comments from their group members. There were additional comments during the meeting and afterwards that were shared by some participants via email.

**2. Materials**

NBEP created a public site for the [Habitat Restoration and Protection Workgroup](#) to store updates about this project, meetings and notes, products, materials and more.

- The [PPT \(100418\)](#)
- The [Workgroup Outline \(100418\)](#)

**3. Summary of breakout session**

We formed four (4) breakout (multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary) groups that provided insightful comments and feedback based on the topics given for discussion (see *Workgroup Outline*). This activity was designed to brainstorm about the ***categorization of project types, data sources, data sharing, projects’ attributes, and the usefulness of this mapping and tracking tool.*** It is important to reiterate that the information provided in the *Workgroup Outline* was not meant to be the “defined framework”, instead it was used for starting the conversation. The following are the summaries from each group, provided by the ***moderators:***

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***Group 1, Moderator:*** Courtney Schmidt (NBEP)

***Workgroup members:*** Ariel Maiorano (MassAudubon), Amanda Freitas (RIDEM DFW/RINHS), Lealdon Langley (MassDEP), Alex Hackman (MA DER), Giancarlo Cicchetti (US EPA), Kate McPherson (Save The Bay), Pat Marmeekin (USDA - NRCS contractor), Tanner Steeves (RI DEM).

***How can we categorize projects? (see Workgroup Outline for criteria and guidance)***

This group focused mostly on the categorization of activities. They immediately recognized the 4-overarching categories of “*Nature-Based Solutions - NBS*” provided as guidance for this exercise (listed in the *Workgroup Outline*), inadequately described the activities and the nuance of restoration. Then, the group focused most of their time on the “open space” category, further refining it to include *wetland restoration, sustainable management, creation (through brownfields and acquisition)* and others. This group fundamentally recognized the challenges of categorizing the activities NEPORT lists (as listed in the *Workgroup Outline*). They did attempt to group the NEPORT activities into the “NBS” categories but found that the activities could sometimes be in more than one category. They suggested to have two criteria – a ***main category/activity*** and a ***secondary category/activity***.

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**What data are available?**

This group provided a number of data sources or groups to contact who may have data. They discussed the issues of privacy and noted some MOUs would be needed (this really applied to NRCS).

**What information is the most useful for the users?**

To frame this question, the moderator asked the group what information they would like to see if they clicked on a point on the map. For simplicity, the usual categories (i.e. project name, address, coordinates, etc.) were ignored and the group focused on categories people may not think of. This group spent time discussing if permits were useful, and if they were, which permit number to include. Additionally, group members wanted the ability to click on an entire area (like a watershed) and see the number of miles or acres restored. They also thought that being able to look at a specific project and see photos of the project during and after construction.

**How can this mapping tool be useful for your work?**

They would like the map to be very interactive, and easy to use on mobile devices or in presentations. Others wanted to be able to assess whether a proposed project really met a need or was just more of the same in the same place. Save The Bay would like to be able to show investors and donors how well STB is doing by clicking on an area of interest and seeing number of miles or acres restored, or be able to zoom in on a particular project.

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**Group 2, Moderator:** Julia Bancroft (NBEP)

**Workgroup members:** Larry Oliver (USACE), Nils Wiberg (Fuss & O'Neill), Caitlin Chaffee (RI CRMC), Eric Schneider (RI Division of Marine Fisheries), Kevin Ruddock (TNC – RI), Maggie Payne (MA NRCS), Stefanie Covino (Mass Audubon).

**How can we categorize projects? (see *Workgroup Outline for criteria and guidance*)**

The group got hung up on the four Nature Based Solutions categories listed in this exercise (LID, Open Space, Living Shoreline, Aquatic Connectivity). Instead, the group started brainstorming on a blank page divided into three categories: **Primary goal/benefits; Secondary goal/benefits; and Conservation** (not restoration). A variety of habitat restoration projects were listed under these categories. One interesting question asked was how would the projects that are voluntary and proactive versus ones that are required mitigation or remediation be categorized?

**What data are available?**

The group listed various sources in RI and MA, compiled on sticky notes and organized in an excel document.

**How can data be shared?**

The group focused on examples of data sharing features that they would like to tool to incorporate and sources that would be beneficial to have the tool linked to. Pre-existing online tools they would like this habitat restoration one to link to include: MAPPR, NE Ocean Data Portal, NE Federal partners website, RI Habitat Restoration database. The group suggested contacting NatureServe to ask about how they handled uploading large data and compiling everything into one place.

**What information is the most useful for the users?**

Knowing how much the project cost, whether it was proactive or required, whether it was land or water focused and the primary goal were some of the information the group felt would be most useful to users. Among the list is also the project partners, point of contact, and public/private land. If the cost of the project was among the attributes, people could analyze the amount of money spent on habitat restoration projects in sub watersheds and find areas where more projects could be focused.

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**How can this mapping tool be useful for your work?**

Group members agreed that this tool could be useful for identifying “shovel ready” projects as well as identifying projects quickly when funding suddenly becomes available. The spatial distribution of completed projects would help prioritize areas in need of more projects. This tool could also be used when communicating with congressional constituents and municipalities.

**Group 3, Moderator:** Sara Burns (TNC MA Chapter)

**Workgroup members:** Phil Edwards (RIDEM/F&W), Dean Audet (Fuss and O’Neill), Erik Mas (Fuss and O’Neill), Karen Simpson (US EPA), Bob Maietta (MassDEP), Joe Bachard (USDA - NRCS), Tom Kutcher (RINHS)

**How can we categorize projects? (see Workgroup Outline for criteria and guidance)**

At the highest level, the group discussed renaming the entire project a database to track “*Ecological Interventions*”, and then to have the buckets be more related to the primary goals of the project rather than the actions. It was suggested that each project entered could self-identify up to three goals. Goals could be based on ecosystem service functions associated with the project site as is or based around goals.

From the “NBS” categories, the group suggested, renaming:

- Living shorelines could be renamed as coastal restoration.
- LID could be renamed green stormwater infrastructure solutions.

This group also had some discussion about where to best represent wetland restoration projects, and about whether or not permits to discharge, TMDLs and FERC relicensing (for example) count as a type of restoration. There was also discussion about making sure to incorporate newer restoration projects like *permeable reactive barriers* and *other nutrient retention techniques*.

Think in hierarchical system -> land acquisition, forest management, wildlife habitat

**What data are available?**

Present on the ground partners who are more able to share information than federal funders might be. Looking at priority projects and other applications that may not have been funded to get a sense of what’s out there.

**What information is the most useful for the users?**

- Ecosystem services
- Permitting
- Owners public vs private
- Funding
- Metrics
- Other benefits
- Habitat acreage, river miles,
- Habitat type: salt marsh eg.
- Completion date and/or project status (concept/planning, design/permitted, implemented/constructed, monitoring)

**How can this mapping tool be useful for your work?**

The group thought the database could be useful to know any historical work proposed on site, that it would be useful to know the size as well as location of projects. Also, being able to search the database on project type can be useful, and there were a few comments about tracking projects in the database through links to permitting documents. There was some uncertainty about when in the planning phase it might be best to update the database, such as:

- Future funding
- Goals setting
- Understand gaps in work areas and/or project type
- Seeing previously identified projects yet to be implemented

**Group 4, Moderator:** Galen Laurence (TNC MA Chapter)

**Workgroup members:** Dave Janik (MA CZM), Craig Wood (Narrow River Preservation Association: ESS Group), Will Helt (TNC Rhode Island), Robin Weber (NBNERR), Cathy Wigand (US EPA), Gary Casabona (USDA-NRCS)

### How can we categorize projects? (see *Workgroup Outline for criteria and guidance*)

The group did not agree with project categories and did not think the listed “NBS” were restoration activities. The group agreed that the semantics for each project category need to be defined (as provided in the *Workgroup Outline*).

Some of the collective suggestions were:

- Restoration
  - Living Shoreline renamed “Coastal Restoration” because living shoreline is a narrow category in coastal habitat resilience
  - Low-impact Development renamed “Water Quality Improvement” because water quality improvement is not typically thought of as habitat restoration; improvement *has the potential* to positively impact habitat; water quality improvement also includes too many activities to lump into one project (should limit practices to: *constructing wetlands; est. filter strips, grassed waterways on farm fields/ roadsides; green streets/ green parking lots; planting trees*).
  - Aquatic Connectivity
    - Fish ladder: even though a fish ladder may not be full restoration, the argument could be made that nothing is full restoration.
    - Culverts: not restoration. A bigger culvert won’t restore overall because it causes secondary impacts (e.g., flood exacerbation downstream).
- Protection
  - Open Space: do not include Ch 61 lands (MA), only include permanent land protection projects

In addition, the group generally agreed that there should be two levels of spatial project categorization: “comprehensive” and “distinct”. For example, a comprehensive project will include many distinct projects (e.g., 1 comprehensive “Aquatic Connectivity” project may include 3 distinct dam removals + implementation of 1 distinct fish ladder).

At the same time, there was group disagreement on categories. This stemmed from a lack of definitions established for each category. The group agreed that the semantics for each project category need to be defined (as provided in the *Workgroup Outline*).

### How can data be shared?

Data can be shared to TNC/NBEP if TNC/NBEP request the information of data maintained by partners to compile project information. This request could include:

- Year of project implementation, # years to complete project, # years monitored, success Y/N, goals met Y/N, cost, partners, points of contact (so that people could call for help on a project) -- use this to provide a database that acts similar to Yelp.

### What information is the most useful for the users?

- Project start-end year
- # years of project monitoring
- Goals
- Cost

### How can this mapping tool be useful for your work?

- Mapping tool: click on project activity (e.g., culvert replacement)-->light up watershed area
- Story map: click on your town-->click on a project-->land on an info page. Include attribute tables. Info should include lessons learned, success, link to PDF of project page, etc. Easily accessible and user-friendly. Able to be taken to town planner for prioritization.

#### 4. Meeting outcomes

These are the overarching feedback that we received collectively and were discussed in more than one group. All comments from the sticky notes were compiled, which we are currently analyzing to use for next steps.

- ☑ Disregard “Nature-Based Solutions” categories
- ☑ The “NEPORT” (project type categories) can still be used, however, others need to be added; to list all types of projects that are implemented, ongoing, planned, not completed, etc., to restore and protect natural habitat and water quality
- ☑ *Ecological Intervention* as the overarching term for restoration and protection activities
- ☑ Two different frameworks for standardizing, mapping, presenting, and tracking habitat “restoration” and “protection” efforts
- ☑ Group restoration projects by *Goals and Benefits*
- ☑ Broader categories: *Coastal restoration; improvement of water quality; aquatic connectivity*
- ☑ Track project through *permitting numbers or documentation*
- ☑ Spatial project categorization: *comprehensive vs distinct* – scale? Are several “distinct” projects part of a larger “*Goal*” (e.g. TMDL)
- ☑ The intention for implementing these projects “*voluntary and proactive*” versus “*required for mitigation or remediation*”
- ☑ Protected: track only lands in perpetuity status “open space”;
  - Broader categories that are not tracked in the “open space” GIS data or databases – why are these lands protected? Forest management, wildlife habitat, etc.
- ☑ Privacy issues: NRCS can provide data of accumulative efforts by sub-watershed as opposed to individual projects
- ☑ There was overwhelming consensus that this mapping tool will be useful for many different purposes and at levels of the work you do (federal, state, academic, advocacy, and private sector); with information that can be streamlined across efforts, user-friendly mapping tool that can be shared with others.
- ☑ In addition, we are exploring the option to leverage, collaborate and integrate data from an effort led by a RISD’s team that is developing a stewardship mapping ([STEW-MAP](#)) that connects all groups and efforts in Narragansett Bay watershed, spatially depicting who is doing what, where.

#### 5. Next steps

- ☑ NBEP: the outcomes of the meeting provided valuable information to start developing a QAPP
- ☑ TNC: based on input from partners at the meeting, prepare database of partners (as data sources) to start requesting data
- ☑ Follow-up meetings:
  - Re-group with “restoration professionals” to narrow down the categories and information that can be standardized based on data available (December 2018), utilizing the information from sticky notes.
  - Re-group and identify other partners to focus on land “protection” (January 2019)

Contact project leaders: [civy.monroy@nbep.org](mailto:civy.monroy@nbep.org); [galen.laurence@TNC.ORG](mailto:galen.laurence@TNC.ORG); [sara.burns@TNC.ORG](mailto:sara.burns@TNC.ORG)  
if you have further questions, feedback, comments, all are welcomed. Please feel free to share with other interested partners.