

State of the Blackstone kick off meeting

Tuesday, November 27, 2018 – 12-2pm
MassDEP Worcester Office, 8 New Bond Street, Worcester, MA

Meeting notes

On Tuesday, November 27th, the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program held a kick off meeting for the planning of the “State of the Blackstone” event, the third installment of watershed focused workshops. The meeting was well attended and led to good discussions on various topics pertaining to the bi-state Blackstone River Watershed. The goal of this watershed workshop is to honor the historical importance of the river watershed, highlight the success stories, address the challenges, and form a plan for moving forward. **The workshop will be held on Monday, April 29, 2019 at the Blackstone Heritage Corridor Visitor Center at Worcester.** More information will be posted on the [NBEP website](http://www.nbep.org) as it becomes available. Please find a summary of notes from the meeting below:

In attendance:

- Jason Sorenson, USGS
- Matt Ely, USGS
- Ted Beauvais, BRWA
- Maggie Plasse, BRWA
- Jim Plasse, BRWA and BRC
- Pieter de Jong, BRWA, BRC and Blackstone River Valley NHP
- Matthew Reardon, MassDEP
- Kate McPherson, STB
- Caitlyn Whittle, EPA Region 1
- Karla Sangrey, UBWPAD
- Therese Beaudoin, MassDEP
- Richard Carey, MassDEP
- Kim Groff, MassDEP
- Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon
- Ariel Maiorano, Mass Audubon
- Janine da Silva, Blackstone River Valley NHP/NPS
- Jen Smith, NPS
- Peter Coffin, BRC
- Heather Radcliffe, NEIWPC
- Courtney Schmidt, NBEP
- Julia Bancroft, NBEP

Discussion of themes:

The group discussed the various topics and themes that pertain to the Blackstone River and watershed. The watershed area itself is diverse, and sometimes making the connection with the public is difficult to explain how it all comes together. There is a lot of information being collected by different groups, so there needs to be a better way to pull it all together and integrate it to inform management at the different local, regional, and watershed scales. There is also great opportunity with the formation of the National Park which leads to economic development associated with tourism, recreation, and education. Another important topic to address is the reduced nutrient loads from the wastewater treatment facilities and the rebound of the aquatic resources in the river such as fish and eel species. There are many issues within the watershed such as more frequent flooding and storm events, and increasing temperatures. The State of the Blackstone workshop will bring together partners within this watershed and provide attendees with useful information and networking opportunities to continue improvement efforts in this watershed.

Synopsis of successes and challenges discussed:

Successes:	Challenges:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ National Park formation○ Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant program (MVP)○ Increased fish diversity and passage and eel passage○ Opened more waters for boating○ Nutrient reductions and water quality improvements (WWTFs)○ Providence and urban BMPs and RI GIC○ Continue having meetings like this in the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Flooding○ Climate change○ Invasive species (plants and animals)○ Legacy issues; pollutants and dams○ Land use and impervious cover○ Getting data to managers for decision-making○ Municipalities; difficult to work at watershed scale and not all have a planner or the capacity○ Storm water BMP implementation○ Watershed Based Planning Tool needs more promotion

Moving forward:

Three ideas that were discussed as potentials:

- Bring together three Blackstone Watershed groups and other partners in watershed together for an annual meeting, following this workshop event
- Make data and information available to the general public, and user friendly to make the connection of why this information matters and how they can help
- Flood control and better land use planning by using data that are available

Next Steps:

The next steps for this workshop include drafting a program agenda and defining speakers and topics. Another priority step will be to reach out to Congressmen and Senators to invite them to speak. Another smaller meeting will be scheduled with those who are interested in being part of the planning committee for this event. This planning meeting will be held in the lower reaches of the watershed, location and date TBD.

If you would like to be involved in the planning meeting, please contact Julia Bancroft.