

## Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan Subcommittee Meeting #2

Blackstone Heritage Corridor Visitors Center, Worcester, MA  
September 19, 2019  
10:00am to 2:30pm

### MEETING MINUTES

#### Attendees

Laura Blake, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)  
Curtis Bohlen, Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (Casco Bay)  
Caitlin Chaffee, RI Coastal Resource Management Council (CRMC)  
Pam DiBona, MassBays National Estuary Program (Mass Bays)  
Richard Friesner, New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC)  
Dave Janik, MA Office of Coastal Zone Management  
Sue Kiernan, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)  
Regina Lyons, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1 (EPA)  
Karla Sangrey, Blackstone Clean Water  
Tom Uva, Narragansett Bay Commission  
Caitlyn Whittle, EPA  
Julia Bancroft, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP)  
Mike Gerel, NBEP  
Julia Twichell, NBEP

#### Introduction

In the absence of Judith Swift, Chair of NBEP's Steering Committee, Mike Gerel called the meeting to order at 10:10am. Mike welcomed the group and asked everyone to introduce themselves, including our guests Pam DiBona from MassBay National Estuary Program and Curtis Bohlen with the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership. He encouraged the group to share their perspectives and questions readily throughout the day to make the best of our time together.

#### Neighboring National Estuary Program's Discuss Their Comprehensive Conservation Management Plans

Pam DiBona with Mass Bays and Curtis Bohlen next offered an overview of their National Estuary Programs (NEP) and perspectives on their most recent CCMP update/revision, followed by a full CCMP Update Subcommittee (subcommittee) discussion.

##### *Pam DiBona, Mass Bays NEP*

Pam noted that Mass Bays includes three major bays—Ipswich, Mass Bay, and Cape Code Bay. Their service area focuses on the 47 embayments and 49 communities that line the coast along these bays. Their guiding principles include (1) collaboration and cooperation, (2) climate change resiliency, (3) ecosystem-based management, and (4) long-term sustainability. Mass Bays has 1.6 FTE, and five full/part-time Regional Service Coordinators (RC) that are compensated at \$61,000, with 50% of that time offered as match to EPA. RC services include technical support to municipalities, education and outreach, and monitoring. Their host is MA CZM and their main source of funding is NEP, along with a matching grant from MassDEP—they cannot fundraise based on being hosted by the state. She noted that Joe Costa at Buzzards Bay NEP has a good system with the Coalition for Buzzards Bay as a free-standing NGO partner that can fundraise and engage directly with municipalities on issues the NEP doesn't cover.

For their 2019 CCMP Update, the RC held meetings with their regional networks to get input from local partners for setting partners. Next, they hired a social scientist to hold ½-hour interviews with stakeholders, including unusual suspects like fisherman that have not been historically deeply engaged, to get a better handle on specific issues they are facing. The social scientist was a volunteer university student (not paid). He now runs Mass Audubon's sanctuary on Cape Cod, so we can contact him for his perspective on the process. Curtis Bohlen added that he found it easier to engage with commercial fisherman associations, over individual fisherman. Ultimately, Mass Bays chose to narrow the actions in their CCMP those they can complete themselves with existing budget—did not want to be on the hook for actions of others where there is no carrot or stick to compel them to act.

Mass Bays assessed their own and partner capacities to see who could bring what to the table for pursuing action. They next looked at available resources to support plan development. Existing plans and assessments were reviewed. They also noted that citizen group monitoring data was out there but not being used. The outcomes of this assessment were an up to date understanding of what is known and not know about the bays, who is pursuing what work, where there are opportunities for new partnerships and collaboration, where partners that have been disengaged can be brought back in, and get a feel for region-wide priorities that span the study area.

The Mass Bays CCMP update serves as a dynamic plan tied to measurable goals, actions, and outcomes—what we will see if we fully carry out the plan. Some additional process tips and thoughts included:

- (1) The annual work plan to include specific actions to be pursued by Mass Bays,
- (2) Maintain connection between the CCMP and the annual work plan,
- (3) Retain comprehensive essence of CCMP while still maintaining a manageable set of actions,
- (4) Work closely with EPA Region 1 and HQ to focus on what on what is actually achievable,
- (5) Seek interagency/interdisciplinary partnerships,
- (6) Seek input from across sectors, including underrepresented communities,
- (7) Set observable/measurable local goals and then document improvement in ambient water, natural communities, and resilience, and finally, and
- (8) Focus on how you (the NEP) are going to get things done, and figure out how much of completed by other partners is the included within the accomplishments of the NEP.

In closing, Mass Bays felt they pushed the bounds of the CCMP into a new direction by focusing on just what they could do.

*Curtis Bohlen, Casco Bay Estuary Partnership*

Curtis began his presentation by noting that their CCMP committee started by (1) identifying who they are writing the plan for, (2) how to come to agreement with EPA on content, and (3) how much they can accomplish themselves with limited staff capacity (they didn't want to include things they couldn't get done—wanted to be realistic). Casco Bay started from the lens of their role as a backbone organization for partners and the community.

The group considered work by Stanford on collective action prior to starting. For bringing in new voices, they went “one bump” out from who they usually talk to get input—including those who didn't know anything about the NEP or the bay. An internal team took the first cut at identifying priorities, but there was productive tension throughout the process that helped narrow the focus to the most important actions. Staff did a lot of internal work before bringing language to the larger group and to partners. For the types of actions in the plan, Casco: (1) divided out actions that only they could do vs what partners could do (some partners rely on Casco to help them decide what work to pursue), (2) created more concrete deliverables (a more private sector mindset), and (3) built in accountability from the start using goals and metrics to document whether actions were achieved or not. The document used language like “key alliances” and “cooperators” to emphasize the collaborative nature of the document. This approach took the pressure off and enabled more partners to be included where being listed as a lead so early would not have been tenable. As a result, two different type of partners arose—those that were listed as leads and those included as part of an alliance. This was a subtle but important difference.

The group defined was who will read the document and what sort of document they need. These three audiences were called out: (1) EPA—needs full document for formal review, (2) public—basic information about what they do and why, and (3) government—certain sections of document to support visits with decision-makers. The entire document used action verbs as much as possible Casco Bay hired a writer for the public facing parts of the document to ensure continuity and stylistic consistency. They ultimately used an unbound folder format to facilitate the difference mix materials used for each audience. A CCMP update webpage was also used during and after process to share out.

Some other take homes that Curtis felt would be important for NBEP to consider were:

- (1) Address the purpose of the document right up front—NEP work plan or inspiring others to take action,
- (2) It is counterproductive to list everything—want to be comprehensive but narrow,
- (3) Consider dropping actions from last plan or current list that can't be done in 5-year time period,
- (4) Think about what the specific role of the NEP is in enacting the plan,
- (5) How flexible can you get—giving people “room” to move to get things done is key to a useful CCMP,
- (6) Use the annual work plan to define what the NEP will do each year, and enable EPA to check progress, and
- (7) Ensure your CCMP/work plan will help EPA internally and externally report out what has been done.

Curtis closed by noting that their last CCMP was completed prior to the release of the new CCMP guidelines, so a few items may be flagged, including lack of specificity who is doing what and the forward-looking approach employed that did not discuss why actions were dropped in the transition from the old to new plan.

#### *Subcommittee Discussion*

A subcommittee discussion followed Pam and Curtis's thoughts. Sue Kiernan suggested that the NBEP plan should identify goals and who will pursue them but the plan must (1) tell a big story of what has to get done in the watershed, (2) include only things with commitments so we can track progress, (3) call out where major investments have/are happening, and (4) describe the many ways there are to get to the goals. RI has taken “comprehensive” to heart in the past, but it is impossible and inappropriate to include all things. It would be better to call out little things if well-handled by NBEP or a partner. An appendix would be a place to list specifics.

Mike noted the tension with comparing to other CCMPs completed in the past and before the new guidelines. Lengthy documents that provide the whole story of the NEP founding, restate the status and trends, and go into excessive detail, in terms of numbers of actions or details on individual actions, are not going to be useful. We have to keep our eye on creating a document that will be both meet EPA requirement and be truly useful to those working to restore and protect the watershed here locally.

Regina Lyons noted that the CCMP guidelines call for a finance and communications plan to accompany the CCMP as separate documents so they can be revised as needed. Mike clarified that NBEP's plan has been to complete a separate finance plan for covering NBEP's organizational needs (staffing, travel, grant programs, etc.) and to include an investment plan within the CCMP the offers costs for executing the actions in the plan a strategy for covering them across all partners (NBEP, partner spending, other leverage).

Dave Janik inquired how the process has tied in fisheries management. Curtis replied that there isn't enough capacity to tackle the coastal regulatory aspect of fisheries locally, where the focus has been on water quality, habitat restoration, and climate change. The ME Department of Marine Resources is on their CCMP committee, but focus has been on water quality, not fisheries health-related matters. There is no commercial fishery in Casco as groundfish are gone. Sue Kiernan noted that the topic of whether the estuary is too clean for lobster/shellfish is big, so including that issue in the updated CCMP could make sense. Mike agreed that there could be a role for NBEP in that discussion, and perhaps actions (or actions) to address these concerns (research, education, communication, etc.) could be included. At a minimum he said it is important to get those that work the water involved in the discussion at the right time. Pam noted that Mass Bays used the Biological Condition Gradient to set targets in embayments and will also use in future status and trends. Land use is the driver for habitat conditions in their 47 embayments. They are working with their Science Advisory Committee and Northeastern University to explore habitat targets with this context.

**Governance, Capabilities, and CCMP Approach by Other NEPs**

Mike next presented a PPT slide that provides an overview on the governance, capacities, and CCMPs of 17 of the 28 NEPs as context for the subcommittee's work. A copy of this table is provided below. Note that some information will be updated as conversations with continue with other NEP Directors to confirm information.

NEP	NEP Type	Host Type	Governance	Fundraising Affiliate	Annual Cash Budget	# Staff	CCMP Year	Includes Actions By	CCMP Time to Complete	Consult
Narragansett	Hosted	NGO	Guiding Principles	No	\$800,000	3.8	2012	NEP & Partners	2 years	Yes
Casco	Hosted	Academic	MOA	No	\$750,000	4	2016	NEP & Partners	2 years	Yes
Mass Bays	Hosted	State	SOPs	No	\$834,000	1.6	2019	NEP only	5 years	Yes
Buzzards	Hosted	State	None	No	\$2.2M	6	2013	NEP & Partners—municipal emphasis	5 years	Yes
Piscataqua	Hosted	Academic	MOA	No	\$822,000	4	2010	NEP & Partners	1.5 years	Yes
Coastal & Heartland	Hosted	City	Guiding Principles	No	\$1.2M	6	2019	NEP & Partners	16 months	Yes
Delaware Inland	Own NGO	n/a	Bylaws	n/a	\$1.1M	13	2012	NEP & Partners	18 months	Yes
Galveston	Hosted	State	Legislation	No	\$1.2M	8	2018	NEP & Partners	2 years	Yes
Indian River Lagoon	State	Special District	Interlocal Agreement	n/a	\$2.2M	3	2019	NEP & Partners	2 years	Yes
Lower Columbia	Own NGO	n/a	Bylaws	n/a	\$6.8M	24	2011	NEP & Partners—calls out NEP actions	1 year	No
Mobile	Hosted	NGO	MOA	No	\$954,088	9	2019	NEP & Partners	18 months	Yes
Morro	Own NGO	n/a	Bylaws	Yes	\$2.0M	9	2012	NEP & Partners	22 months	Yes
Peconic	Hosted	NGO	Guidelines	No	\$650,000	7	2019	NEP & Partners	2 years	Yes
Puget Sound	State	n/a	Legislation	n/a	\$9.4M	47	2018	NEP & Partners	1 year, implementation plan	Yes
San Francisco	Hosted	NGP	MOU	Yes	\$17.7M	14	2016	NEP & Partners—called out “owners”	3 years	Yes
Tampa Bay	State	Special District	Interlocal Agreement	Yes	\$967,987	5	2017	NEP & Partners	2 years	Yes
Tillamook	Own NGO	n/a	Bylaws	n/a	\$1.3M	8	1999	NEP & Partners	2.5 years	Yes

Some thoughts arose from the group based on review of this table:

- Be careful about comparing CCMP updates and revisions and CCMPs completed before or after the new EPA guidelines.
- Comparing budget is tricky because some programs fund a lot of outside work as there are several institutional styles. Mike acknowledged that the table includes total budgets where possible (funds used for internal and external needs), but further discussions with NEP Directors would be needed to break out the dollars by internal and external use. Also, need to track monies that come in one year and are spent in a following year.
- All NEPs should work to create the best document possible that is realistic with existing capacity, staffing, etc.

### **NBEP 2012 CCMP—What Actions Were Completed?**

Mike walked the group through a table that provides a rough view of progress on the 27 actions called out in the 2012 CCMP Revision. He emphasized that the listed status as just a rough judgment (green, yellow, red) to help categorize the listed actions. Mike also noted that at the next subcommittee meeting all 119 actions (or a condensed list that pulls those that are complete, redundant, no longer relevant) in the 2012 document will be considered for carrying over into the update.

Some ideas that arose from the table included:

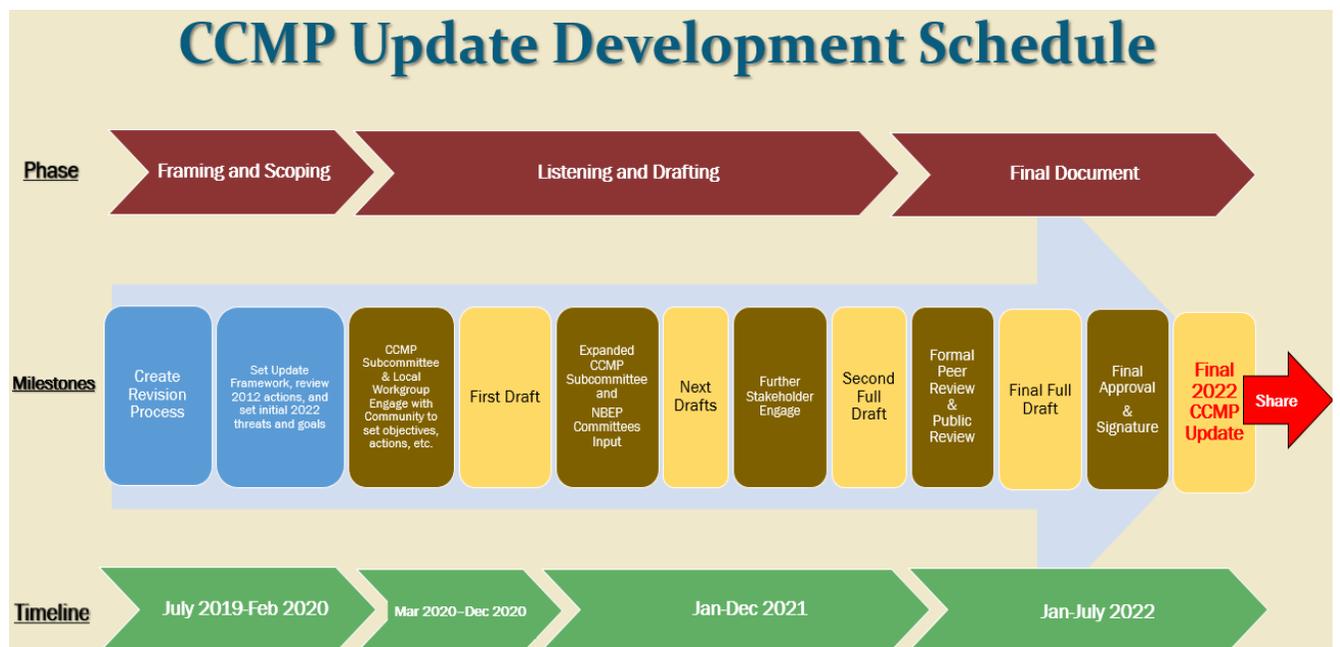
- The 1992 CCMP and 2012 CCMP revision were more of a wish list of items than actual considered decisions about what can be completed.
- Need to remember that different needs and resulting actions will depend on RI vs MA.
- For stormwater/climate change actions, best to ask municipal/private engineers working locally whether their implementation has increased.
- Caitlin Chaffee noted that the more specific the action can be the better for it to inform/drive implementation—could be at the level of activities under each action, like a work plan.
- Pam noted that including an example work plan with the CCMP can be a way to show more specificity and how actions turn into activities each year.
- Multimedia tools are a good way to share NEP information—to flow from status and trends to CCMPs to work plans to progress on metrics. Can use same template, tone, etc. to tell the story.
- Sue noted that there was no way to measure progress with the past CCMPs. She also noted that progress is a unique challenge with the two states. As to our table, probably best to have different ratings for actions by state. Be careful with language and offer specifics to provide resolution needed to distinguish between states.
- It was also noted that there is a challenge to organize this report, so it matches the current approach taken by the program and its partners.
- The uniform advice was to involve partners early on—how to best do this is a very important question.
- Important to have “clarity of goals” vs. “clarity of achieving those goals. Defines pathway vs the result/outcome. Also need to write goals/actions in a manner that allows, even invites, flexibility to included alternatives and future amendments.
- Can get away from command and control and more into how best to get to the desired outcome.
- A major point was that you can still be direct and specific for voluntary actions.

High Priority Action	Status	High Priority Action	Status
<b>GOAL #1—PROTECTION AND RESTORE CLEAN WATER</b>		Target state investments to drive <b>sustainable growth</b>	●
Revised NPDES permits for Blackstone and Ten Mile <b>WWTPs in MA</b>	●	Increase <b>public access</b> to watershed resources	●
Upgrades at 11 <b>RI WWTP</b> to achieve 50% TN reduction	●	State technical assistance to municipalities to <b>implement state and federal regulatory requirements</b>	●
Accelerate elimination of <b>cesspools</b> via phase out requirements	●	<b>GOAL #3—PROTECTION AND RESTORE FISH, WILDLIFE, AND HABITAT</b>	
Reduce the impact of <b>onsite septic systems</b>	●	<b>Protect lands</b> threatened by development	●
Reduce pollution from <b>combined sewer overflows</b>	●	Improve river <b>connectivity</b> and fish passage	●
Enhanced <b>funding</b> and assistance to municipalities with stormwater management ( <b>SWM</b> ) program implementation	●	Create <b>bi-state habitat sustainability strategy</b> for fresh and saltwater systems	●
Develop <b>new local funding tools</b> SWM/water infrastructure projects	●	<b>Manage waterfowl</b> to reduce pollution and habitat damage	●
<b>Prioritize SWM BMP retrofits</b> to areas most impacted by runoff	●	Update and execute state plans for managing <b>invasive species</b>	●
Implement a scientifically-based <b>water supply management</b> program	●	Establish state of the Bay via indicators, <b>status</b> , and progress	●
Fully utilize existing watershed, TMDL, and <b>other plans</b>	●	Create a dedicated <b>RI habitat restoration</b> program like MA	●
<b>Increase capacity</b> of NGOs to implement restoration actions	●	<b>GOAL #4—MANAGE CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS TO HUMAN AND NATURAL SYSTEMS</b>	
Maintain and fill gaps in existing <b>monitoring programs</b>	●	Develop strategies to guide <b>development away from hazard zones and natural areas</b> to provide storm protection	●
Manage/synthesize <b>data and analytical tools</b> to support decisions.	●	Design stormwater facilities to handle <b>increased flow expected with climate change</b>	●
<b>GOAL #2—MANAGE LAND FOR CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY</b>		Develop a shoreline change <b>Special Area Management Plan</b>	●
Local <b>low impact development ordinances</b> in place	●		

## CCMP Update Framework

Mike next presented a draft big picture framework for the CCMP Update that includes basic principles, process, and format that reflects feedback from our previous discussions and sought thumbs up from the group on the draft thinking. The table below list the eight key elements included in the framework.

Key Element	Description
1. Purpose	Inspire people of varied interests and experiences to come together to craft and “commit” to implement a shared comprehensive, realistic, and accountable plan of priority actions that will improve the water quality and habitat of the Narragansett Bay Region by 2032 (frame as renewed “call to action” for the region in 2022)/
2. Scope/Criteria	Pursue a ‘comprehensive but narrow’ plan that includes actions that (1) are consistent with Clean Water Act §320 mandates, (2) an entity has committed to implement, (3) is justified by the Status and Trends, and (4) can be completed in 10-years.
3. NBEP Role	Coordinate development of the plan, commit to implement specific actions consistent with its capacity, provide data and financial resources for other actions, and track and share progress in a user-friendly manner.
4. Guiding Principles	Some initial principles include: (1) plan across boundaries, (2) listen to local communities, (3) be open and inclusive to all, (4) remain collaborative, (5) respond to best available science, (6) be specific, (7) be realistic, and (8) adhere to a timeline.
5. Participants	Strategically expand engagement—from new stakeholders, to consultants, to the general public—to ensure meaningful involvement by varied interests and experiences at the right venue with the right message at the right time.
6. Timeline	Deliberately move through the following phases and over three years: (1) initial framing and scoping with subcommittee, (2) listening and drafting via NBEP committees, work groups, and local sessions, (3) build final document via peer review and public input, and (4) share final update with target audiences. See the graphic below for a rough CCMP Update development schedule.
7. Potential New Focus Areas	Some open niches that match NBEP’s mission include (1) upland climate change impacts, (2) underserved communities, (3) emerging contaminants, and (4) convergence of environment and public health/safety
8. Document	The initial format proposed includes a stylized plan-language overview, 1-pp action plans that distinguishes between NBEP and partner work (goal, objective, action, metrics, committed lead, partners, timeline), and includes a very thoughtful format (concise, specific, limited hard copy, and multi-media that flows from NBEP mission to goals to actions to metrics to indicators to progress.



Feedback on the framework included the following:

- The criteria listed under scope can help narrow down the scope of the document to what is appropriate and realistic for the update.
- Clarify that “implement” should mean “committing to implement” in the CCMP. Need stakeholder engagement, transparency of purpose, and consensus of goals and actions.
- It was also noted that the term ‘strive’ would be appropriate because some that are willing to implement actions have no control over their ability to execute so they can’t fully commit. For example, MA is a home rule state and implementation is led by municipalities that at the will of their elected officials.
- Make sure to clarify that what NBEP will do and others will do—NBEP’s best role is creating the pre-conditions for other’s actions.
- It was noted that NBEP’s best role may be tracking and sharing progress in a user-friendly manner—what has and hasn’t been accomplished. Buzzards Bay NEP tried an effort to do a community report card for 2 years and it didn’t work as communities didn’t like being callout on commitments they hadn’t met. An option is to keep track something that is fair, in their control, perhaps aggregate results (don’t call out specific municipalities, but number or percent performance), and won’t cause resentment.
- A question arose whether tracking should be tied to indicators? Folks thought metrics that will be tracked should be clearly defined, stay at the big picture level (goals over actions), and retain a connection to progress in the field.
- Another thought was that NBEP does more than provide data and financial resources—be careful not to sell the organization short. The breadth and depth of what NBEP can do should be represented in the actions it commits to in the CCMP.
- A point was also that the audience for the update is vital. The subcommittee should track the audience work by the Executive and Steering Committee’s and consider doing its own work to guide the content, tone, and format of the document. Mike noted audience targeting is something to consider for the next CCMP meeting.

**CCMP Participant Brainstorm**

Julia lead a group brainstorm to collect organizations, individuals, geographies, disciplines, etc. that are not represented at the meeting today but should be part of the update process. Some highlights included:

- A consensus point was that the subcommittee will need to think carefully about how to engage, when to engage, and who to engage with new stakeholders. Mike offered that this is one of the biggest challenges he sees moving forward and will require deliberate discussion and assistance by the subcommittee.
- Expertise in the potential new areas noted as item #7 in the proposed document framework, such as underserved communities, upland climate change impacts, emerging contaminants, and the convergence of environment, public health, and safety. There was uniform support for the connection between environment-health-safety (drinking water, beaches, mosquitos, heat islands, asthma) being an important focus and means for NBEP to strategy assist/drive action from many angles.
- The group felt the existing list of potential new Steering Committee members (which is inclusive of potential CCMP members) was a good start. The table below provides further suggestions from the group:

MA DOT—David Goldstein	Salt Ponds Coalition—Alicia Eichinger	RI-CRMC—Dave Buetel
RI EC4, Tech Committee—Pete August	RI shell fishing—Mike McGivney	RI-DEM—Conor McManus
MA Assoc of Conservation Commissioners	RI Lobsterman—Laney Dellinger	Harvard Climate Group
Save the Bay Board—Dave Prescott	Ocean State Aquaculture	RI lakes group
Ri Land Trusts—Rupert Friday	MA Land Trusts	Inspire Environmental—Drew Carey

**Next Steps**

1. **Subcommittee members** should review the notes and provide any edits to Mike ASAP.
2. **Members** should reach out to the potential new participants they volunteered to contact and share the outcome with Julia Bancroft prior to the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 2:32pm