

Executive Committee Meeting

Zoom Meeting

February 14, 2023

1:00pm-2:00pm

MEETING NOTES

ATTENDEES

Richard Carey, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Caitlin Chaffee, Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NBNERR), Chair
Allen Hance, Roger Williams University (RWU)
Sue Kiernan, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)
Dave Monti, Vice-Chair
Regina Lyons, US EPA Region I
Mike Gerel, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP)
Darcy Young, NBEP

MEETING OPEN

Caitlin Chaffee, NBNERR, Chair called the meeting to order at 1:04pm, summarized the meeting agenda, and asked for feedback on the November 2022 Executive Committee (EC) meeting notes. Regina Lyons requested to change the notation of the federal fiscal year to October 1, 2022. *DECISION: The EC meeting notes from November 9, 2022 were approved as amended by a motion (Sue Kiernan, RIDEM) and a second (Allen Hance, RWU).* The presentation for this meeting is available [here](#).

NBEP QUARTERLY REPORT

Mike Gerel, NBEP walked through the NBEP Quarterly Financial Report, which has been simplified to track by source of funds rather than by funding year. NBEP's financial standing remains solid. FY2023 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funds for EPA FY2023 (which start October 1, 2023) have already been received, and FY2023 base (320 + SNEP) funding is expected to total \$1.1M with \$850,000 from EPA 320 and \$250,000 from SNEP. Mike said he will be watching to make sure we have sufficient staff time to manage these awards, and whether hiring a consultant or new FTE is warranted next year.

Mike next moved on to the Programmatic Report. EPA Region I approved a budget amendment that enables NBEP to issue an RFP totaling approximately \$675,000 for habitat restoration planning in late spring 2023. NBEP expects the RFP to fund pre-project steps (like studies, conceptual designs, permitting) for upland, coastal, and estuarine restoration projects that offer co-benefits like public access.

NBEP continues to develop Vision 2032. Mike thanked EC members for scheduling meetings with NBEP consultant, CoastWise Partners, to discuss critical aspects of Vision 2032 development. He noted that staff plans to build a document which includes three sections that target different audiences: topline feature stories aligned with each of our four Vision 2032 goals for the public, action plans for those that pursue conservation work, and appendices that address more inside box-check requirements. NBEP is making good

progress on developing stories, working with a designer, and gathering foundational information for each Action. Staff plans to convene a meeting of the Vision 2032 Subcommittee in April to review this progress. Regina Lyons (US EPA Region I) encouraged NBEP to reach out to the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership to discuss their recent experience working with CoastWise. Sue Kiernan (RIDEM) supported the plan to develop stories for each chapter and questioned how NBEP plans to ensure scientific accuracy in the stories. Mike noted that staff will conduct fact-checking on stories. Dave Monti (Vice-Chair) suggested that NBEP consider creating a video to accompany the written stories.

The NBEP Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) has been submitted to EPA Region I for approval.

NBEP's EPA Performance Evaluation (PE) visit has been scheduled to align with the June 2023 Steering Committee meeting. Development of the PE Narrative that NBEP must submit to EPA will be developed this spring.

NBEP has been developing a host of new data tools, including an environmental justice planning tool for the City of Providence, and a larger EJ planning tool for our whole region that will be the foundation of our Equity Plan that is required to be submitted to EPA in June to support our BIL funding.

COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

Caitlin Chaffee, NBNERR: Caitlin noted that the NBNERR program evaluation is also upcoming this summer and NBEP will be invited to participate in the in-person portion. NBNERR recently brought on a new Project Coordinator, Mary Schoell, to help develop funding proposals and manage projects. NOAA will be doubling NBNERR's capacity-building funds so there will be opportunities for more hires.

Dave Monti, Vice-Chair: The New England Saltwater Fishing Show will take place at the Rhode Island Convention Center in early March 2023. Planning is in the works for the RIDEM Fishing Camp, which only happens in one location; Dave would like to see it expanded to other locations throughout the state. Dave also mentioned that he has been following the news about whale mortalities due to ship strikes along the Mid-Atlantic and New England coasts; he understands that whales may be changing their foraging behavior due to forage fish moving closer to busy coastal areas.

Sue Kiernan, RIDEM: Sue encouraged NBEP partners to keep in close communication as federal infrastructure funds continue to flow through different channels. RIDEM will conduct a Clean Water Needs Survey, which feeds into an EPA assessment of capital investment needed nationwide for publicly-owned wastewater collection and treatment facilities to meet the water quality goals of the Clean Water Act. Sue also mentioned that rulemaking on PFAS is likely forthcoming.

2023 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Mike asked EC members for feedback on the meeting, which was intentionally scheduled to be shorter than past EC meetings. Feedback was positive; suggestions for further time savings included simply showing the project updates slide (rather than walking through it) and soliciting ideas for meeting conversation topics in advance so that we can gauge the required meeting length if more than an hour is needed.

ACTION ITEMS

None

The meeting adjourned at 2:00pm.