

Program Report

To: Members of the Executive Committee, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP)
From: Mike Gerel, Program Director, NBEP
Date: February 15, 2019
Re: Update for February 19, 2019 Executive Committee meeting

Please find the following report for your review.

General Reports

A. FUNDING

Open cooperative agreements with EPA. See table below.

FY15 (JCC: 318)	FY16 (JCC: 326)	FY17 (JCC: 332)	FY18 (338)
10/1/2015 - 9/28/2019	10/1/2016 - 9/30/2020	10/1/2017 - 9/30/2020	10/1/2018 - 9/30/2021
SNEP Projects	Contractual	Research Grants (\$47,000)	Finance RFP (\$15,000)
Jamestown \$10,700 – complete	Storymaps \$45,000	August (split 318 & 332) \$26,159	2019 SNEP RFP
COA (find & fix) \$15,456 – in review	Habitat mapping tool \$20,000	STORMTOOLS \$22,240	\$552k (old & new \$)—2-3 projects
East Providence \$100,000 – in review	Synthesis paper \$20,000	Communications (\$12,500)	\$54,159 (new money)—1-2 projects
Research grants (\$90,841)		Watershed Counts website	Case statement
Codiga \$29,040		Project comms	Indicator update and QAPP
August (split 318 & 332) \$8,841		Priority projects \$7,500	Science strategy
King \$33,601		Photography RFP	Habitat mapping tool
COA (Beaches) \$16,000			Blackstone event April 29 th
2019 SNEP RFP			CCMP committee, development plan
See 338			Fy19 Work plan and budget
			Grant writing
ACTION: EPA has approved our plan to pursue a no cost extension for this agreement. Future expenditure limited to existing contractual obligations.	ACTION: EPA has approved our plan to closeout this agreement.	ACTION: Plan to assess personnel charges with most recent financials and switch to 338 when appropriate.	ACTION: Will be charging travel and supplies here, and then shift to personnel within a few months.

B. STAFFING

New Program Director. Mike Gerel joined the NBEP on February 4, 2019. He has since been doing a mix of learning, outreach, and project work. Mike completed NEIWPC orientation, a meeting with staff at EPA Region 1, began meeting/scheduling meetings with key partners, and has met one-on-one with all NBEP staff as a precursor to development of the work plan for the FY19 application. He has also developed or finalized several written materials, including the agenda, Program Report, and Director’s introduction (including priorities) for the February EC meeting, the NBEP SNEP RFP, and speaker invite letter for the Blackstone event.

Kim Groff Departure. Kim is leaving MADER and will be stepping off the NBEP Executive Committee. The Committee will need to seek an appropriate replacement near-term to maintain strong MA representation.

Priority Staff Tasks.

Gerel	Schmidt	Monroy	Bancroft
Program Management	Synthesis Manuscript	GIS Management	Website Updates
NBEP Committees	Science Strategy	NEPORT	Metadata
Case Statement	Indicator updates, including QAPP	Restoration Map	Blackstone Event
CCMP Revision	SAC Support	Indicator Updates	CCMP Revision
Finance Plan	Tech Transfer & Outreach	Tech Transfer & Outreach	Photography
Work Plan and Budget	SNEP Support	SNEP Support	GIS Support
SNEP Support	Watershed Science and Policy paper	STORMTOOLS	
Communications	LNB & SWCP Data Gathering	STB HAC Restoration Plan	
Grant Writing		Storymap*	

Please consider: Further consider prioritization of Mike’s tasks and whether any are missing or should be removed.

C. COMMITTEE UPDATES

Science Advisory Committee.

- Technical Report Synthesis Manuscript. Courtney has crafted much of document, except the Discussion section, which is presently in outline form. She has contacted other NEPs looking for information on management actions employed to address nutrient, pathogen, metals, and hydrocarbon loading to their watersheds that can be incorporated in the Discussion to offer additional information, comparison/contrast, and otherwise bolster the piece. She asked for the action taken, the length of time to implement fully, cost/who paid, and any ecosystem impacts realized from these efforts. She has received multiple responses and is working through them.
- Science Strategy. A draft is complete and is currently under review by Mike and Sue Kiernan. Once their review is complete and considered, Courtney will make necessary edits and share with the Executive Committee (hopefully at the March meeting). A 1-2-page summary of the strategy will also be prepared to use for outreach purposes.
- New Committee Chair. Courtney, Mike, Sue, and John King will meet to discuss John’s gradual step-down as Chair. Potential candidates for his replacement have been mentioned, and prior to asking them, a job description will be written. The new Chair’s priorities will be drawn from current/future work plans, the Science Strategy, and other sources as necessary.
- Next Committee Meeting. Courtney will schedule a meeting with the full Committee in the spring to introduce Mike and address the next steps for the Committee, which include the items noted above.

Grants Subcommittee Update.

- NBEP SNEP RFP. Heather and Mike drafted this RFP and appendices, sought and incorporated comments from Grants Subcommittee members, and plan to release the solicitation this week. This RFP is for projects that will help improve water quality and/or restore natural habitats in Narragansett Bay and its watershed consistent with the NBEP CCMP and SNEP program. A total of \$606,00 is available across two categories of projects: restoration projects (\$552,000) and planning and design for future restoration projects (\$54,000). 4-6 projects will likely be funded. Pre-proposals will be due April 2nd.
- Grant Reports. Several grant reports are being processed. Comments were provided on Jamestown's final report and once feedback is added the project will be closed out. The Clean Ocean Access and East Providence final report were submitted, and we are awaiting comments from the subcommittee.

Finance Subcommittee Update

- Finance Plan. Mike will be working with Jonathan Stone to schedule the next Finance Subcommittee meeting and begin drafting an NBEP finance plan this spring. This plan will guide funding identification, cultivation, and grant writing to expand and diversify funding in a manner that delivers a more secure and flexible funding base, while avoiding competition with partners and assuring compliance with NEP program guidelines.

D. CONVENING

Blackstone Workshop. The Blackstone Workshop will take place April 29th at the Blackstone Heritage Corridor Visitor Center in Worcester. Confirmed speakers include Janet Coit (RIDEM), Martin Suuberg (MassDEP), and Ken Moraff (EPA). Julia organized a well-attended second planning meeting in Pawtucket on February 11th to present the draft agenda and solicit feedback, particularly from additional RI partners who were unable to attend the previous meeting in MA. Julia will be revising the agenda to create a mix of speakers and panels to offer a past, present, and future perspective, recruiting further speakers, and working through NEIWPC to set up the registration page and obtain sponsors for food and beverage. More information will be posted here: <http://nbep.org/blackstone-watershed-workshop/> as it becomes available.

E. PROJECTS

Data Management, Analysis, and Mapping Projects.

- Habitat Restoration and Protection Mapping Tool ("Restoration Map"). Eivy and Julia met with TNC-Boston to identify next steps for this mapping project. TNC is interested in local mapping, while NBEP would like to pursue a basin-wide tool. TNC will be collecting all data for this effort. NBEP is awaiting approval of a QAPP that will enable our analysis of the data to develop the tool. Eivy is still exploring connections/synergy with RISD's StewMap project.
- GIS Training. Eivy and Julia completed comprehensive training in new ArcEnterprise and AcroPro software covered by an Esri Conservation Grant. They learned how to deploy the software and migrate from the current outdated ArcGIS Desktop platform. We will be working with NEIWPC IT to have the software installed and functional with 2-3 weeks.
- Data Storage. Eivy and Julia developed a memo to explore the pros/cons of various long-term storage options. NBEP data is currently stored on a laptop with extended memory, which is not a sustainable course moving forward. We will be working with NEIWPC to pursue cloud-based storage or purchase and maintenance of a server. Pending assessment of costs, the cloud-based option appears the most stable.
- Technical Report Metadata. Julia is continuing a significant effort to create the metadata that will underlie the data used in the technical report and better enable future updating and sharing of the data.

- New Photography. Mike and Julia are considering the utility, timing, and cost of hiring a photographer to get additional high-quality photos, particularly photos in MA and of people around the watershed. Before we pursue an RFP, Mike suggested investigating the International League of Conservation Photographers' Rapid Assessment Visual Expedition (RAVE) program. If selected by the RAVE program, a team of ILCP photographers, many who work with National Geographic, are deployed to depict the places and people of the watershed. The only cost is for film and prints. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation was selected by RAVE in 2010 and an amazing collection of photos resulted. See more information on the Chesapeake Bay effort here: <https://conservationphotographers.org/?expedition=chesapeake-bay-rave>. RAVE has not come to New England, so the Narragansett Bay and its watershed may be a good candidate.

Planning Projects.

- NBEP Priority Planning Documents. NBEP is pursuing several important planning-related efforts noted throughout this report, including completion of the FY19 work plan, restoration map, finance plan, science strategy, and revised CCMP. We will be creating a matrix to clearly explain how the program's key guiding documents are interrelated, timed, and utilized.
- MA NPS Management Plan. MADEP is in the process of updating their 2014-2019 NPS Management Plan for 2020-2024, and they would like to include NBEP's work that is planned for the next five years. If included in the plan, it would make our projects (including those that involve installation of agricultural BMPs and healthy watershed protection) a priority for Clean Water Act 319 funding. Mike will be speaking to their consultants with ERG this week to engage in this process.

On-the-Ground Projects.

- Current Work.
 - Save the Bay/NBEP Hundred Acre Cove Project—Eivy met with STB's team to start NBEP's tasks for this project, including creating a list of data needs and sources for GIS mapping purposes.
 - High Street Dam Removal and Bridge Replacement Project—Eivy reviewed two pre-proposals and submitted letters of consistency for each to MADER's High Street Dam Removal and Bridge Replacement.
 - RI Coastal and Estuary Habitat Restoration Fund—Eivy is part of the grant committee for this fund that will be meeting later in February.
- Potential Work.
 - NBEP taking on an expanded role or being more "proactive" in restoration work has been mentioned by EPA and several partners.

Please consider: In consideration of the next work plan, what is meant by "expanded role in projects"—from the continuum of very general support to boots on-the-ground work—in the context of our mission, CCMP, budget, science strategy, etc. Further, do you have thoughts on potential projects for the next work plan that staff can begin considering prior to discussion with the Executive and Steering Committees this spring?

F. GRANT WRITING

- Restore American's Estuary's SNEP RFP for \$2 million (maximum request is \$500k) is expected to be released February 19th. Potential projects categories are quite broad, including watershed and ecosystem restoration, nutrients, partnerships, regional models, and building upon existing plans and programs. Pre-proposals are due late March.
- NBEP has developed a spreadsheet to begin proactively capturing and vetting grant writing opportunities.

Please consider: Means to coordinate with EPA, NEIWPC, and partners in the region on grant writing to ensure proper use of 320 funds, avoid competition with partners, and identify needs we are uniquely positioned to address with new monies.

Outreach and Technical Transfer

Below is a summary of outreach and technical transfer efforts since the January 9th Executive Committee meeting and those planned prior to the next Committee meeting. Mike will be pursuing several outreach meetings with partners into the spring.

- January 10-11 Leadership RI overnight retreat (Schmidt)
- January 30 Leadership RI focus day (Schmidt)
- February 4-5 Esri training (Monroy, Bancroft)
- February 15 TNC-NBEP restoration mapping meeting (Monroy, Schmidt)
- February 20 MADER NPS Plan development meet (Gerel)
- February 22 Resilient Taunton Watershed Network (Gerel, Monroy)
- February 25 EPA SNEP Stormwater technical assistance brainstorm (Gerel)
- February 26 Meeting with New England NEPs in Boston (Gerel)
- February 27 Leadership RI meeting (Schmidt)
- February 27 EPA Eel Grass-- Zosterapalooza (Gerel)
- February 28 RI Woodlands Partnership meeting (Bancroft)
- March 2 Girl Scouts Southeastern New England STEAM event (Schmidt)
- March 12-14 EPA-NEP Training Workshop in DC (Gerel)
- March 28-29 NEIWPC's All Staff meeting (Gerel, Schmidt, Monroy, Bancroft)—Courtney is facilitating a discussion of GIS use across three study areas, with a presentation of NBEP's work, and Julia will be presenting a poster of the Bay and its watershed "fun facts."

Other Announcements

None.

Upcoming Meetings

Our next scheduled meetings will take place on March 6th (9:30am – 10:30am) at RI DEM, 235 Promenade Street, Room 340C, Providence, RI. The Steering Committee meeting will immediately follow the EC meeting on March 6th from 10:30am to 2pm at RI DEM, 235 Promenade Street, Room 300, Providence, RI.

Contact

Please let me know if you have any questions. I can be reached at mike.gerel@nbep.org or (401) 633-0552. Thank you!