

Program Report

To: Members of the Executive Committee
Narragansett Bay Estuary Program

From: Mike Gerel, Program Director
Narragansett Bay Estuary Program

Date: May 17, 2019

Re: Update for May 20, 2019 Executive Committee meeting

Provided below for your review is the Program Report for the May 20th Executive Committee (Committee) meeting. Attached are the draft notes from the March 6th and April 3rd, 2019 Executive Committee meetings.

Please let me know if you have any questions or comments. I can be reached at mike.gerel@nbep.org, 401.633.0552 (office), or 804.332.1197 (mobile).

Thank you for your consideration of these materials.

Program Management

1. Financials

- NBEP finances in general.
 - Based on approved budgets and amendments to date, the NBEP 2Q financial report, and expenditures projected in the draft FY19 Work Plan and Budget, NBEP appears to have enough funds in place to meet current and projected expenditures and obligations through September 2020.
 - At the forthcoming June 6th Executive Committee meeting, NBEP will present current financial status in more detail, including a projection of “unbudgeted” dollars through September 2020 in active agreements that could be used as a ‘back stop’ to cover staff salary and other critical expenditures if anticipated incoming EPA funding does not arrive or other unexpected circumstances arise.
- EPA cooperative agreements continuing obligations and status (see table on next page).

FY15 (JCC: 318)	FY16 (JCC: 326)
10/1/2015 - 9/28/2020	10/1/2016 - 9/30/2020
SNEP Projects (\$5,071)	FY16 Work Plan
E. Providence \$5,071—extended until 6/30/19	\$85,000 for contracts shifted to 338
Research grants (\$71,482)	
Clean Ocean Access \$14,542—closes 6/14/19	
Dan Codiga \$29,040—closes 8/31/19	
Pete August (split 318, 332) \$8,841—closes 6/30/19	
John King \$33,601—extended until 8/30/19	
2019 SNEP RFP (\$0)	
\$152,000 for subawards shifted to 338	
<u>STATUS:</u> No cost extension until 9/30/20 in place to satisfy remaining four contractual obligations for research grants.	<u>STATUS:</u> NEIWPC submitted close-out paperwork and the project will close 5/31/19. The following three tasks will continue in JCC: 338: Story Maps, Habitat Tool, and Synthesis Paper.
FY17 (JCC: 332)	FY18 (JCC: 338)
10/1/2017 - 9/30/2020	10/1/2018 - 9/30/2021
Research Grants (\$48,399)	2019 NBEP SNEP (\$606,000)
Pete August \$26,159	~\$126,260—Planning projects
STORMTOOLS \$22,240	~\$250,000—Blackstone Needs Assessment
	Remainder TBD
Communications (\$12,500)	FY18 Work Plan (\$100,000)
Archive Watershed Counts \$253	Storymaps \$45,000*
Project communications Support \$TBD	Habitat Tool 1.0 \$20,000*
Priority projects (\$7,500)	Synthesis Paper \$20,000
New photos \$5,000	Case Statement
Other priority \$2,500	Finance Plan \$15,000
	CCMP Revision Kick-off
	Little Narragansett Bay and Ponds Data Gathering
	Priority Science Strategy
	Development of Habitat Tool 2.0*
	Blackstone Workshop
	Grant writing
<u>STATUS:</u> About two months of personnel time is remaining in this JCC, so beginning this summer we expect to only charge contractual and subaward expenses to this agreement.	<u>STATUS:</u> We will be charging travel and supplies here, and then shift all personnel costs to this agreement this summer. Per initial discussions with the Steering Committee and EPA in FY19 work planning meetings, NBEP is considering pursuing a modification to this agreement to remove the tasks marked with an (*) that are no longer viewed as viable and/or useful.

1. Staffing

- *GIS/Watershed Specialist Position.* About 90 applications were received for the position. A subset of top applications were reviewed thoroughly by NEIWPC and NBEP staff. Six applicants were interviewed on May 15th in Providence. The hiring team has not finalized their decision yet but is confident the position will be filled out of those interviewed. We will notify the Committee as soon as a candidate has been selected.
- *Nick Wildman stepping off Executive Committee.* Nick informed Mike and Judith of his intention to step down from his position on the Executive Committee due to current job responsibilities at MA DER. Nick will continue to participate on the Executive Committee for the time being, with a hope to continue as DER’s representative on the Steering Committee through the end of 2019. Thanks to Nick for his service on the Executive Committee and we look forward to your continuing participation in the Steering Committee.
- *MassDEP Representative on Steering Committee.* Mike spoke to Lealdon Langley at the NEIWPC meeting in Providence on May 2nd and he indicated that MassDEP is still working to determine who will join the Steering Committee. Mike and members of the Steering Committee have reached out to MassDEP to emphasize the importance of their participation moving forward.
- *Priority Staff Tasks for Next Month.*

Gerel	Schmidt	Bancroft
Partner meetings	Synthesis manuscript figures and update	GIS data management
NBEP Committee coordination	NBEP SNEP full proposal review	NBEP Committee support
Julia 6-month review	SAC meeting notes	STB Hundred Acre Cove GIS
FY19 Work Plan, and Application complete and submitted to EPA	Complete SAC meeting action items	TNC Taunton Habitat Mapping Tool GIS support
SNEP full proposal review & selection	Metadata	EPA ORD story map pilot
Finalize GIS/Watershed Specialist hire		Metadata

For discussion:

- ✓ **Any suggested candidates to replace Nick on the Executive Committee?**
- ✓ **Any further steps we should take to encourage MassDEP participation?**

2. Organizational Planning

- *FY19 Work Plan.* The Steering Committee began discussion of the of the forthcoming work plan at their last meeting on March 6th and NBEP held special Steering Committee work planning meetings on April 16th in Worcester and April 25th in Providence. At these meetings, Mike led a facilitated discussion to obtain additional input and refine the list of potential tasks. Agendas and meeting support materials were distributed prior to each gathering. Based on input, review of the FY18 Work Plan, and review of other NEP work plans, Mike created a draft FY19 NBEP Work Plan and obtained NEIWPC review. Heather Radcliffe also prepared a draft FY19 Budget. Both documents

are shared with the Executive Committee along with this document and will be discussed and considered for approval at the Committee's May 20th (and/or potentially the April 6th) meeting. The final version of the work plan and budget will be provided to the Steering Committee for review and approval at their June 12th meeting.

- *Request for Match.* So far, the Narragansett Bay Commission obligated \$100,000 and CRMC will provide \$175,000. Sue Kiernan confirmed that RIDEM will provide the remaining \$325,000 of match needed by NBEP for our FY19 agreement. The completed match form is expected this month.
- *Quarterly Report.* Mike completed and NEIWPC reviewed and submitted to EPA a comprehensive report of 2Q activities and accomplishments by NBEP.
- *Office Space.* Mike and Sue Kiernan met with the RIDEM CFO to discuss the proposed updated Cooperative Agreement for NBEP's office space provided at match. As our current agreement is expired, we hope to have a signed document by this summer.
- *Program Director partner engagement.* Mike continues to meet with partners from across the watershed. He is aiming for one meeting per week. Since the last Committee meeting, he met with Sue Kiernan and Adam Brusseau, RIDEM; Bob Stankelis, NEERs; Pieter de Jong, Blackstone Watershed Coalition; Sara Burns, TNC MA; and Peter August, Aimee Mandeville, and Greg Bonyng, URI Environmental Data Center. Already scheduled for the next three weeks are John Torgan, John O'Brien, William Helt, Heather Kinney, and Kevin Ruddock, TNC RI; Karen Bradbury, Senator Whitehouse local staffer; Chuck LaBash and Chris Damon, URI; and Jonathan Stone and Mike Jarbeau, Save The Bay.

For discussion:

- ✓ **Any feedback on the draft FY19 Work Plan and Budget?**

4. Committee Updates

- *Executive Committee.*
 - The Committee held a very productive meeting on April 3rd. As there was not a quorum at the meeting, a copy of both the draft meeting notes from March 6th and April 3rd are provided with this document for review and approval at the May 20th meeting.
- *Science Advisory Committee.*
 - The Science Advisory Committee (SAC) meet on May 9th. Most members attended and the meeting was very productive. The SAC accomplished the following:
 - Agreed upon a process and job description framework for selecting new Co-Chairs that will be drafted and shared with the Executive and Steering Committees for approval.
 - Mapped out the form of future indicator updates and what indicators are best suited for an update near-term.

- Noted that NBEP should be compiling and synthesizing new data on an ongoing basis to inform annual indicator updates and be better prepared for the next full status and trends update in five years.
 - Identified a list of potential workshops that NBEP and the SAC could convene to refine certain indicators and bring together scientists.
 - Created an up-to-date list of scientific needs, pulled mostly from the existing NBEP spreadsheet that prioritizes data gaps identified in the *State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed*, which NBEP will use to inform future research proposal solicitations.
 - A facilitated discussion led to conclusions that (1) NBEP does not require a “guiding” science document at this time, (2) NBEP should look for opportunities to synthesize and share topical scientific information via the outreach channel best suited for the mix of audience and topic (i.e., website, workshops, white papers, or journals), and (3) the role of the SAC should remain the same, with an emphasis on identifying scientific priorities across NBEP’s plan of work and fostering coordination among the scientific community.
- *Synthesis Manuscript Subcommittee.*
 - The draft synthesis manuscript for the *State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed* was shared with the subcommittee with reviews due June 1st. Further information on the manuscript are provided in the Data section below.
 - *Grants Subcommittee.*
 - SNEP Pre-Proposal Review and Selection. Seven (7) planning -pre-proposals requesting a total of \$181,500 were received in response to the NBEP RFP for SNEP funds. No pre-proposals were received for large restoration projects; we were told this was due to the amount of dollars available per project and the requirement that projects be complete within 24 months. The subcommittee met on April 11th to discuss, score, and ultimately decided to invite full proposals from five applicants. Initial plans were to award 2-3 small projects, but the subcommittee and NBEP decided that due to the lack of any large restoration projects, all five planning projects could be funded if they have merit. Further, the subcommittee decided to allow applicants that would require a QAPP to add up to \$5,000 to their proposed budget to support QAPP development. Heather and Mike developed and sent out full proposal request and decline letters to applicants on April 16th. NBEP staff spoke on the phone with both applicants who were not asked to submit a full proposal to provide constructive feedback and encouragement.
 - SNEP Full Proposals Receipt. Full proposals requesting a total of \$126,260 were received from all five invited applicants by the May 15th deadline. The subcommittee will be meeting on May 21st to review the full proposals. NBEP staff have reviewed all proposals. Subsequently, one applicant, the Town of Richmond, was disqualified from further review based on notable financial health concerns brought to our attention by NEIWPC’s accounting staff. Award/decline letters will go out May 29th. NBEP will provide the list of awards at the June 6th Executive Committee meeting.
 - Final Reports. Final reports on the four FY15 Bay and Watershed Research projects and the FY15 SNEP project are expected by August 2019, which will all be shared with the subcommittee for review and comment when received.
 - *CCMP Subcommittee.*

- CCMP Revision. Meetings of the CCMP Subcommittee, which as of now includes the entire Steering Committee, were set for July 16th, September 19th, and November 18th.
- CoastWise Partners. Mike reached out to Rich Batiuk of CoastWise Partners, a friend and long-time colleague from the Chesapeake Bay, to inquire about obtaining assistance with the CCMP revision in the future. CoastWise Partners is currently supporting the Peconic NEP.

5. Grant Writing

- *RAE SNEP RFP*.
 - Blackstone Needs Assessment. RAE was unable to meet NEIWPCC's up-front payment requirements, so NBEP did not submit a pre-proposal for this opportunity. **However**, based on further conversations with EPA NEP and SNEP staff, NBEP was give the go-ahead to submit an agreement amendment to use some of our existing unobligated SNEP money to pursue this effort. A budget of roughly \$250,000 has been developed and will be shared with EPA as part of a larger amendment request. We are very excited about this opportunity to build on the Blackstone Workshop and pilot the approach to bottom-up community engagement that we will use in other areas and for the CCMP update.
 - Floating Wetlands. The floating wetlands that URI submitted to RAE that included NBEP as a funded partner was not selected to submit a full proposal. The review committee felt the project would not provide enough nutrient reductions to justify the cost and that the opportunities for the practice's use as a management tool were limited.
- *EPA Supplemental NEP Funding*. NBEP's \$25,000 funding request to EPA to complete an assessment of opportunities to install living shorelines in the Providence-Seekonk River systems was not selected for funding. No details were provided as to why this proposal was declined.
- *Landscape Conservation Catalyst Fund*. After discussion with staff and Board members of the Network of Large Landscape Conservation, the organization that is administering the fund for the Doris Duke and Hewlett foundations, Mike decided not to submit a pre-proposal after all. Because NBEP is not its own NGO and staff are employees of NEIWPCC, NEIWPCC's 501(c)3 letter and annual financials would have been required to be submitted as part of the application. The people that Mike spoke to were clear that the revenue included in the financials would far exceed what would enable NBEP to compete for this "catalyst" funding opportunity designed for smaller non-profits. If NBEP was able to be represented by its own budget and current restricted, at-risk funding portfolio, we would have qualified. Future opportunities from this fund may be a better match.
- This catalyst fund experience highlights a rising issue about how to represent NBEP's 'true' financial position and explain how our relationship with NEIWPCC provides stability, and is in fact, a reason to support NBEP. At pre-proposal, the level of engagement with the funder is rare, and only occurred this time because Mike had a connection. Perhaps use of a standard short memo to cover NEIWPCC financials that explains the host relationship would help. Further discussion of this important issue will be scheduled for a future meeting.

Convening

- *Blackstone River Workshop.* The Blackstone Workshop took place on Monday, April 29th at the Blackstone Heritage Corridor Visitor Center in Worcester. The event was a huge success. There were 70 attendees, strong and diverse opening speakers, two exceptionally interactive panel discussions, and an inspiring closing. Presenters and participants included a great mix of NBEP/NEIWPC and Steering Committee representatives; federal, state, and local agency staff; regional and local nonprofits, and local river advocates and citizens. The atmosphere at the meeting was collaborative, forward-looking, and created a family-like vibe around the shared goal to improve the watershed's ecology and community. At the end of the meeting Mike was able to announce that NBEP would be engaging more deeply via the Blackstone Needs Assessment, creating a perfect bridge from this workshop to a future where every will be able to collectively follow-up on the day's discussions. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Special kudos to Julia Bancroft, the NEIWPC onsite crew (including Heather and Kathleen Kolva), Nick Wildman, and Peter de Jong for contributing to a great event. The final agenda, speaker bios, and photos have been posted on the NBEP website: <http://nbep.org/blackstone-watershed-workshop/>. There were about 10 overall outcomes from the workshop, informed by attendees.

Data Synthesis and Management

- *Synthesis Manuscript.* As noted under the Synthesis Subcommittee update, Courtney completed the draft synthesis manuscript for the technical report. The document provides background on the watershed, offers case studies on specific water quality/habitat improvement successes described in the report, and offers some future considerations to stimulate continued thinking. Courtney will respond to comments from the subcommittee and then send the manuscript to the SAC and key partners for further vetting by around July 1. The plan is to submit the manuscript to peer-review in early August and to a journal by the end of the fiscal year. Kudos to Courtney for persevering and achieving this important milestone.
- *Indicator Update QAPP.* Courtney and Mike completed a new QAPP that is designed to cover the range of future status and trend updates NBEP may pursue based on data availability, emerging conditions in the watershed, and thinking of how updates can have the most impact. The document is currently in NEIWPC and EPA review.
- *GIS Infrastructure Upgrade.* Several activities are ongoing to update our GIS “shop,” including hardware, software, and attendant data organization, analysis, and storage procedures. Julia and Mike met with GIS experts at URI's Environmental Data Center to explore options and future opportunities for NBEP in the GIS space. Julia has also spent considerable time engaging NEIWPC's IT consultant All Covered, ESRI, and others to collect input for our next steps. Replacing our current single laptop storage (with back-up) with a more efficient and safe storage solutions—a local computer, in the cloud, or both—is paramount. Once the new GIS/Watershed Specialist is on-board and up to speed final decisions will be made.

- *New Photos.* Mike spoke to the International League of Conservation Photographers (ILCP) about bringing National Geographic photographers to the Narragansett Bay. The ILCP was very interested in the region and would welcome a proposal. However, the devil is in the details. Despite being told that the effort was free when it came to the Chesapeake Bay, the actual cost was upwards of \$40,000 and would likely be \$15,000-\$20,000 for the Narragansett. Upon sharing this information with Steering Committee members during the two special work planning meetings, consistent feedback was provided that this cost was too high, we should use local photographers, and there were options that were less expensive and supportive of NBEP's brand. The idea to hire freelance photographers in the region, hold a photo contest, or partner with RISD were suggested. NBEP staff will further consider and bring forward a definitive plan for completing this task early this summer.

Outreach

Below is a summary of NBEP's outreach efforts since the April 3rd Executive Committee meeting. Note that one-on-one partnership-building meetings by the Program Director are described in the Program Management section above.

April 4 th	Esri GIS User Seminar, Boston, MA (Bancroft)
April 10 th	Rhode Island Rivers Council meeting (Gerel)
April 10 th	Bryant University Student Visit on NBEP and GIS (Bancroft, Gerel)
April 11 th	NBEP Grants Subcommittee meeting (Bancroft, Gerel, Schmidt)
April 12 th	Leadership Rhode Island, Government Day (Schmidt)
April 16 th	RI Sea Grant Lecture: Harmful Algal Blooms (Schmidt)
April 17 th	Meeting with Hundred Acre Cove SNEP Project Team (Bancroft, Gerel)
April 19 th	Clean Ocean Access Beaches project update (Schmidt, Gerel)
April 23 rd	RI Environmental Monitoring Collaborative meeting (Gerel)
April 24 th	RI EC4 Meeting (Schmidt, Gerel)
April 24 th	Graphic Facilitation Workshop (Bancroft)
April 25-27 th	New England Estuarine Research Society Meeting, York Harbor, ME (Schmidt)
April 29 th	Blackstone Watershed Workshop, Worcester, MA (Bancroft, Gerel, Schmidt)
April 30 th	SNEP Monitoring Workshop, Fall River, MA (Gerel, Schmidt)
April 30 th	RIDOT Road-Stream Crossing Manual Stakeholder meeting (Bancroft)
May 1 st	SNEP Ecosystem Services Workshop, Fall River, MA (Schmidt)
May 2 nd	NEIWPC EC&C meeting, Providence, RI (Gerel)
May 7 th	Meeting with URI EDC team, Kingston, RI (Gerel, Bancroft)
May 7 th	ANEP Board of Directors meeting (Gerel)
May 8 th	Rhode Island Rivers Council meeting (Gerel)
May 10 th	Resilient Taunton Watershed Network meeting (Gerel)
May 14 th	MassDEP public meeting on the DO Criteria, Worcester (Schmidt)
May 15 th	Leadership Rhode Island, Basic Needs Day (Schmidt)

Implementation Support

- *STORMTOOLS in Mt Hope Bay and the Taunton River.* Mike confirmed with MA CZM that they support CRMC extending this RI-based tool into Mt Hope Bay and Massachusetts water up to the salt line near Taunton. Once completed, this project will extend STORMTOOLS to all Narragansett Bay estuarine waters. Mike has a meeting with CRMC on May 28th to kick-off this project that has been stalled for some time.
- *Save The Bay/NBEP Hundred Acre Cove Project.* Julia and Mike met with Save The Bay staff to catch up on the status of the project and identify next steps. Julia is working with Kate McPherson on downloading the data collected by TNC and will bring it into ArcGIS Pro to begin analysis in the coming weeks.
- *Habitat Restoration Mapping Tool.* NBEP plans to help TNC complete the Taunton River-specific pilot of this tool. Julia has a phone call scheduled with Sara Burns (TNC MA), Bryce Dubois (RISD), and Helen Zincavage (SRPEDD) on May 21st to discuss next steps on this project.
 - In the same context of this pilot, Heather shared text with EPA from the Information Collection Request (ICR) prepared for the broader NEP that appears to say that NEPs, like NBEP, may collect data under this ICR for NEPORT reporting and gathering information on ‘restoration activities.’ EPA’s lawyers provided some initial feedback that this data collection ability does not “flow” to NEPs, but they have promised to give it a second look.
- *Story Maps.* The story map that EPA Office of Research and Development (ORD) in Narragansett has had on the backburner for some time is now active and progress has been made. They have promised to have the pilot map complete by August 2019, with an absolute deadline of the close of this fiscal year. Julia will continue to work with ORD to ensure progress and learning from this effort.
- *Research Grant Status.* Progress reports were received from Clean Ocean Access on their marine beaches project on April 3rd, from URI regarding their high resolution salt marsh mapping project on April 9th, Dan Codiga on his Bay DO, chlorophyll, and temperature analysis and synthesis study on April 9th, and URI on their benthic habitat study on May 1st. All projects are showing excellent progress, with final reports expected through August 2019.
- *Task Amendment.* As noted in the table on page 2 of this document, further work on story maps, the habitat mapping tool, and envisioned restoration strategy mapping tool tasks will no longer be pursued. This is consistent with feedback from the Steering Committee and EPA that these projects are not viable or useful at this time. An amendment of JCC: 338 is planned to formally pull these tasks and realign contractual dollars to other tasks.

Upcoming Meetings

- Our next scheduled meeting will take place on June 6th (10:00am – 12:00pm) at Sweets Knoll State Park River Center, 1387 Somerset Ave, Dighton, MA – parking is available in the driveway in front of the building and on the grass.
- As requested by the Executive and Steering Committee, a revised NBEP committee meeting schedule for the remainder of 2019 is provided along with this report. A handful of meetings have rooms listed as “TBD,” because the venue doesn’t schedule a specific room out this far from the meeting date. A specific room will be provided ahead of the meeting date.
- NBEP plans to develop and share a 2020 meeting schedule by the end of June, which includes meeting dates, time, cities, and potential locations.