

## Executive Committee Meeting

Zoom Meeting

February 17, 2021

10:00am to 12:00pm

### MEETING NOTES

#### ATTENDEES

Laura Blake, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)  
Caitlin Chaffee, Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve  
Richard Friesner, NEIWPC  
Sue Kiernan, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)  
Regina Lyons, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA—Region 1)  
Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon  
Jonathan Stone, Save The Bay  
Susan Sullivan, NEIWPC  
Jamie Vaudrey, University of Connecticut Marine Sciences  
Caitlyn Whittle, EPA—Region 1  
Mike Gerel, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP)  
Julia Bancroft, NBEP

#### INTRODUCTION

Regina Lyons, the new Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:03am and asked everyone to introduce themselves. ***The Executive Committee meeting notes from the November 10, 2020 were approved with motion and a second from Sue Kiernan and Heidi Ricci.*** Mike Gerel reviewed the agenda. Regina then turned it over to Richard Friesner and Mike Gerel for the Program Report.

#### PROGRAM REPORT

Richard Friesner gave an update on NBEP financials. By the end of the fiscal year in September 2021, there will be about 9 months of salary and fringe for staff. Travel is way under budget due to the pandemic. Subawards and contracts are generally proceeding as expected. There are some delays with the Aquidneck Island project, and there is a meeting next week to get the project on track.

Next, Mike highlighted 10 activities pursued by staff since the last meeting. The table below provides an overview of these accomplishments.

## Activity Highlights

<p><b>1. Steering Committee Nominee Slate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All 5 existing members accepted reappointment.</li> <li>Formal invite letters went out to 9 new nominees.</li> <li>7 of 9 new members have formally accepted so far.</li> </ul>	<p><b>6. New Coastal Visitation Story Map</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Published new Science Update as a Story Map titled, "How Do We Use Our Coasts?" that uses mobile phone technology to provide insights into patterns of use along the shores of the region.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Science Advisory Committee Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 nominees before you later today.</li> </ul>	<p><b>7. Working Groups Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social Science: Met on 2/1, contracted facilitator support, new meeting framework and plans for Meeting #2 under development</li> <li>Salt Marsh: Met 11/18 and 1/14, partner work debrief and discussed revision of Restoration, Assessment, and Monitoring Program framework.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Grants Committee Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two new members with expertise in habitat were added to this subcommittee: Caitlin Chaffee, NBNERR and John O'Brien, TNC.</li> </ul>	<p><b>8. Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contracting to begin to hire Impact by Design (IBD) to complete an Organizational JEDI Assessment of NBEP to begin in March 2021.</li> <li>IBD seeks group of 5-6 staff/committee member volunteers to join planning group to guide kick-off of process—Mike will be in touch.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Vision 2032 Progress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fast-track ICR materials sent from EPA HQ to OMB—a decision is expected very soon.</li> <li>Draft Action Planning Worksheet complete that will be used in Focal Area Working Groups in March.</li> </ul>	<p><b>9. Blackstone Fish Passage Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participated in 2 meeting with RIDEM staff to lead creation of new team to pursue fish passage on the lower four Blackstone dams.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Blackstone Watershed Needs Assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>33 local stakeholders joined Meeting #5 on 11/19.</li> <li>Draft Needs Assessment complete and in internal review.</li> </ul>	<p><b>10. Subaward and Contract Management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued to provide day-to-day management of 16 ongoing projects.</li> </ul>

### SCIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE NEW MEMBER NOMINATION

Jamie Vaudrey, Co-chair of the Science Advisory Committee (SAC) presented the new member nomination process used by the SAC. She gave brief bios on the five potential new members: Kenny Raposa, Kate Mulvaney, Danielle Perry, Matt Griffin, and Baylor Fox-Kemper. This new slate was presented by staff to the SAC in January 2021 for discussion. Jamie asked the Executive Committee to approve the slate for review and approval at the April 1st Steering Committee meeting. ***The slate was approved and sent to the Steering Committee for consideration with a motion and a second from Jonathan Stone and Susan Sullivan.***

### NBEP HOST DISCUSSION

After review of the new EPA Funding Guidance (issued in October 2020), EPA and NEIWPC have agreed it is an appropriate time NBEP to investigate new host options. Regina Lyons addressed the first step in this process is to set up an Ad Hoc Host Search Subcommittee to lead the search and selection process. also noted that NEIWPC has been a great host and has offered some unique support and certain functions to NBEP that should be replaced. This subcommittee will have to identify the specific services that NEIWPC provides that will need to be taken on by the new host or NBEP staff. Mike Gerel noted that the core services that NBEP must have from a host are bookkeeping (accepting and paying out money) and human resources (employing staff and managing benefits). Heidi Ricci asked Regina and Caitlyn to provide a list of host criteria. Regina noted a document will be prepared by the subcommittee to formally solicit a new host. ***Formation of an Ad Hoc Host Search Subcommittee was approved and sent to the Steering Committee for consideration with a motion and second.***

## NBNERR OVERVIEW

Caitlin Chaffee gave a [presentation](#) on the NBNERR. The office on Prudence Island is available for meetings, retreats, events and venue space. The NERRs system also provides science collaborative funding. Although NBEP and NBNERR are different programs, they complement each other in the region and plan to meet this spring to look for way to colaborative and integrate programs.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Heidi Ricci: Mass Audubon has a new VP for Policy and Advocacy, Michelle Manion. <https://www.massaudubon.org/news-events/press-room/2021/michelle-manion-named-vice-president-of-policy-and-advocacy>
- Jonathan Stone: Save The Bay is getting a new shallow draft landing boat designed for school programming to land students on beaches/rocky shores and for transporting habitat restoration equipment. He mentioned it would be useful to connect with the New Executive Director at RAE to discuss collaboration on federal issues that impact NBNERR and NBEP.
- Richard Friesner: NEIWPC has added a DEI statement to the employee handbook. And the NEIWPC State summaries are out on the website <https://neiwpc.org/2021/01/04/a-year-for-the-ages-serving-our-states-in-2020/>. The NEIWPC Wetlands Workgroup is reviewing water quality standards for states. Lastly, he mentioned the upcoming NEIWPC meetings listed here: <https://neiwpc.org/calendar>.
- Sue Kiernan: RIDEM has made upgrades to data sharing from the monitoring network in Narragansett Bay. Improved equipment at some sampling sites now allows data download in real time on the New England Regional Association of Coastal Ocean Observing Systems (NERACOOS) website for 7 stations ([www.neracoos.org/erddap/index.html](http://www.neracoos.org/erddap/index.html)). Note that that this real time data is raw (no QA/QC) and is geared toward the research community not the public. All QA/QC data and metadata can be downloaded in annual files from RIDEM ([www.dem.ri.gov/programs/emergencyresponse/bart/netdata.php](http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/emergencyresponse/bart/netdata.php)). Data sets are also available from network partners operating monitoring stations, including the Narragansett Bay Commission (<http://snapshot.narrabay.com/app> [[snapshot.narrabay.com](http://snapshot.narrabay.com)]) and Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (<http://cdmo.baruch.sc.edu/pwa/index.html?stationCode=NARTBWQ> [[cdmo.baruch.sc.edu](http://cdmo.baruch.sc.edu)]). Also, RIDEM closed the public comment period on the freshwater wetlands regulation and working feedback will take longer than expected.
- Regina Lyons: EPA is waiting for a Regional Administrator to be confirmed and appointed. Deb Szaro is the acting administrator for now. The ocean pollution theme is continuing from the last administration.
- General: RI Election on March 2 – \$74M Environmental Bond <http://www.dem.ri.gov/greenclean/pdf/beach-clean-green-bond-proposed.pdf>.

- General: NBEP's new Coastal Vision Story Map was featured in the local news outlet What's Up News: <https://whatsupnewp.com/2021/02/new-report-uses-cell-phone-data-to-provide-insight-on-patterns-pollution-along-the-shores-of-rhode-island/>.

## ACTION ITEMS

1. Regina Lyons will ensure members get a copy of the host solicitation materials (including selection criteria) when EPA/Ad Hoc Host Search Subcommittee has developed these materials.
2. Members should contact Regina Lyons ASAP if interested in participating on the new subcommittee.
3. Mike Gerel will share the Impact by Design JEDI proposal via email with the full Steering Committee prior to their April 1<sup>st</sup> meeting.
4. Members should send Julia Bancroft a short bio before the next Executive Committee meeting on April 8<sup>th</sup>.
5. Mike Gerel will share his National Estuary Program (NEP) host spreadsheet and SAC nomination matrix via email to the Executive Committee ASAP.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Steering Committee, Thursday, April 1, 2021 from 10:00am-1:00pm.
- Executive Committee, Thursday, April 8, 2021 from 10:00am-1:00pm.

Meeting adjourned at 12:02pm