

Executive Committee Meeting

Zoom Meeting

November 9, 2022

1:00pm-3:00pm

MEETING NOTES

ATTENDEES

Richard Carey, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)

Caitlin Chaffee, Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NBNERR)

Allen Hance, Roger Williams University (RWU)

Sue Kiernan, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)

Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon

Mike Gerel, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP)

MEETING OPEN

Mike Gerel with NBEP called the meeting to order at 1:07pm on behalf of the Chair and Vice-Chair, summarized the meeting agenda, and asked for feedback on the August Executive Committee (EC) meeting notes. *DECISION: The EC meeting notes from August 9, 2022 were approved without edits by a motion (Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon) and a second (Allen Hance, RWU).* The presentation for this meet is available [here](#).

NBEP QUARTERLY REPORT

Mike first walked through the NBEP Quarterly Financial Report. NBEP's financial standing remains solid. Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funds for EPA FY2023 (which starts October 1, 2023) have already been received. We expect to have over \$2M on the streets as subawards by early next year, and NBEP staff are hard at work with RWU Sponsored Programs and Finance staff getting paperwork in place. 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 down the road.

Mike next moved on to the Programmatic Report. NBEP had an excellent Vision 2032 Subcommittee meeting on [September 16th](#), essentially a "re-boot" of the work we paused a year ago. 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 4 Vision 2032 goals for the public, action plans for those that pursue conservation work, and appendices that address more inside box-check requirements. Through early next year, staff will be building action plans and hiring consultants to assist with the document. Mike encouraged folks to share with him any story topics or people who would be good subjects for stories.

He continued that NBEP's inaugural Annual Science Event on [plastics](#) went very well, with 75 attendees and excellent speakers that have stimulated lots of follow-up discussion how to advance plastics work in this region. Members are encouraged to send idea for next year's science event to Courtney.

We also have been developing a host of new data tools, including a new [Clean Water and Quahogs Story Map](#), 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

Richard Carey, MassDEP: Richard noted that his title is ‘Director, Watershed Planning Division,’ as he is no longer acting.

Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon: Heidi shared that they are organizing a land use planning workshop with SNEP in Middleboro. Blackstone Collaborative, SRPEDD, Mass Rivers Alliances are involved). They expect about 30 participants. She also added that regulatory/permitting hurdles for wetland restoration projects are substantial. Low impact development work can be exempt in RI. Conversations with MA and RI regulatory agencies to find easier pathways for beneficial projects are warranted. Mike suggested Heidi talk with his colleagues at [Sustainable Conservation](#) in California that have regional and now state-level streamlining for habitat restoration projects.

Sue Kiernan, RIDEM: [Events](#) were held in RI and MA to announce the [SNEP Watershed Implementation Grants](#) (SWIG) for this year. Also, she noted a watershed assessment underway for the Lower Blackstone River in Central Falls. RI/RIDEM receipt of new federal funds will be challenge considering current capacity for existing granting and permitting programs.

Caitlin Chaffee, NBNERR: The [Rhode Island Coastal Habitat and Estuary Trust Fund](#) is open for pre-proposals due by November 18th. Leah Feldman at CRMC (lfeldman@crmc.ri.gov) is the contact. She also noted that NBNERR has a formal agreement in place with NBEP/RWU to undertake the Succotash March restoration work approved by the Steering Committee (SC) as a part of NBEP’s base workplan for 2022. A stakeholder kick-off meeting has taken place.

FY2021 FUNDS RE-BUDGET DISCUSSION

Mike reminded the group that while hosted at NEIWPCC, NBEP was required to keep about 1 year of funds in reserve. NBEP and EPA agreed when the program moved to RWU to re-budget FY2021 monies left over as of the close of the fiscal year. We have discussed splitting the estimated left-over funds of about \$600K between future staff salaries and subawards. NBEP began informally soliciting project ideas in June and obtained a long list of ideas from a Steering Committee exercise in [September](#). Most of the ideas were for habitat planning, with a few capacity-building and research projects. With the number of excellent project ideas on the table, staff felt direct awards would not be appropriate, so an RFP would be best. Thus, NBEP proposes to seek SC and then EPA approval to re-budget the final FY2021 left-over balance of \$563K to retain \$338K for future salary and shift \$225K to support a future habitat planning RFP. Richard inquired what type of habitat projects would be covered. Mike responded that we state what we are seeking in the RFP, but we expect to fund pre-project steps (like studies, conceptual designs, permitting) for upland, coastal, and estuarine restoration projects that offer co-benefits like public access. Heidi echoed the need for habitat funding. She also emphasized the importance of monitoring to guide project need/selection and assess project success. *With a motion from Allen Hance with RWU and second from Caitlin, the EC recommended sending this re-budgeting request to the SC for review approval.*

Mike shared the idea of adding \$450K (half) of the Year 2 BIL money we have already received to augment the \$225K discussed above, to create a larger pot of money of \$675K for the habitat planning RFP. He noted that the SC has already approved subawarding all Year 2 BIL funds to CCMP consistent projects, so this approach is consistent with plans and no further approvals would be needed. The thought is we would be more efficient by getting more money out sooner via a single request and give more money to fewer projects (perhaps 3-4) that are ready to go. There was broad support for this approach, so Mike obligated to bring the idea to the SC in December.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP DISCUSSION

Sue noted that the NBEP Nominating Subcommittee met in October to consider reappointments and new members for the SC. Mike added that Sue, Walt Galloway (public), and Kate Michaud (Town of Warren, RI) currently sit on the subcommittee. Specifically, the subcommittee considered reappointing 12 members whose term was to expire at the end of calendar year 2022, removal/replacement of two existing members, and potential new members and officers. Page 17 of the meeting presentation includes a table that lists all those under consideration and the subcommittees recommendations. The table below summarizes those being appointed at this time:

Member	Organization	Recommendations
Walter Berry	Public	Appoint as new member
Rachel Calabro	RIDOH	Reappoint
Joe Callahan	Taunton River Watershed Assoc	Reappoint with Steve Silva as backup
Caitlin Chaffee	NBNERR	Reappoint
Molly Allard	Northern RI RCD	Appoint to replace Gina DeMarco
Walt Galloway	Public	Reappoint
Sue Kiernan	RIDEM	Reappoint
Catalina Martinez	NOAA	Shift to DEIJ Subcommittee
Kate Michaud	Warren, RI	Reappoint
Dave Monti	Charter Captain, Saltwater Anglers	Elect as Vice Chair when new Chair in place
John O'Brien	TNC	Reappoint
Heidi Ricci	Mass Audubon	Reappoint
Nate Vinhateiro	URI	Reappoint
Donna Williams	Blackstone Coalition	Reappoint

EC members supported the recommendations of the subcommittee. *With a motion from Caitlin and a second from Allen, the EC recommended sending this list of nominations to the full SC for consideration.*

2023 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Mike proposed that the EC meet the second Tuesday of February, May, August, and November in 2023. These meetings will be all virtual. The EC members in attendance agreed with this schedule. Mike promised to send out Outlook calendar invites for these meetings.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Members to send Vision 2032 story topics and 2023 annual science event topic ideas to NBEP staff.
2. Mike to send calendar invites to EC members for all 2023 meetings by January.
3. The next SC meeting is December 15th from 1-4pm via Zoom.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00pm.