

## Steering Committee Meeting

Zoom Meeting  
September 15, 2022  
1:00pm-3:00pm

### MEETING NOTES

#### MEETING MATERIALS

[Agenda](#), [PowerPoint](#)

#### ATTENDEES

Regina Lyons, Chair, US Environmental Protection Agency Region 1  
Walter Berry, Rhode Island Rivers Council  
Eliza Moore, Narragansett Bay Commission (NBC)  
Rob Johnston, Clark University  
Walt Galloway, Public member  
Allen Hance, Roger Williams University (RWU)  
Donna Williams, Blackstone River Coalition, Blackstone River Heritage Corridor  
Richard Friesner, NEIWPCC  
Sue Kiernan, RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)  
Catalina Martinez, U.S. National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)  
Caitlyn Whittle, US EPA Region 1  
Stefanie Covino, Blackstone Watershed Collaborative  
Kate Michaud, Town of Warren RI  
Cristina Kennedy, MA Division of Ecological Restoration (MADER)  
David Monti, No Fluke Fishing, RI Saltwater Anglers Association  
Caitlin Chaffee, Narragansett Bay Estuarine Research Reserve (NBNERR)  
Nathan Vinhateiro, URI Coastal Institute  
Allison Hamel, RI Department of Transportation (RIDOT)  
Hillary King, MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (MAOEEA)  
Steve Silva, Taunton River Watershed Association (TRWA)  
Gina DeMarco, Northern RI Conservation District  
Ben Greenstein, RWU  
Rachel Calabro, RI Department of Health (RIDOH)  
Gloria Bancroft, Taunton River Watershed Association (TRWA)  
Karla Sangrey, Upper Blackstone Clean Water  
Richard Carey, MA Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)  
Alicia Lehrer, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council  
Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon  
Bill Napolitano, Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD)  
Mike Gerel, NBEP  
Darcy Young, NBEP

## MEETING OPEN

Committee Chair Regina Lyons, EPA, called the meeting to order at 1:05pm and summarized the meeting agenda. *DECISION: The Steering Committee (SC) meeting notes from June 16, 2022 were approved by a motion (Richard Friesner, NEIWPC) and a second (Nathan Vinhateiro, URI Coastal Institute). Kate Michaud (Town of Warren RI) and Gloria Bancroft (TRWA) abstained.*

## FINAL FY2022 BIL WORKPLAN AND BUDGET

On July 26<sup>th</sup>, the EPA released guidance for the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) (BIL) and [Justice 40 Initiative](#). In short, BIL will provide \$909,800 in funding to NBEP annually over the next five years. NBEP's provisionally approved workplan is consistent with the guidance. Given the timeline to release the guidance and funds, EPA is packaging Year 1 and 2 monies together (FY2022 and FY2023, using EPA language). No match is required for these funds. This required a change in NBEP's BIL Workplan by adding a request for proposals (RFP) to subaward all Year 2 funds (\$909,800). The Year 2 RFP would award from \$50,000-\$200,000 per project, 5-15 projects would be supported. The total budget for the BIL Workplan is now \$1,891,600. Thank you to SC members for your approval of the Year 1 Workplan.

NBEP plans to track all projects developed through implementation. The anticipation is by Year 5, projects stemming from the Year 1 BIL Workplan are at or advanced close to construction. Depending on the topic, the proposed Year 2 RFP could be open to the same groups who received funds in Year 1, or new organizations and projects.

## NBEP QUARTERLY REPORT

NBEP is in good financial standing. All the money left at NEIWPC when we moved to RWU is now spent. Of the money awarded to RWU last year, we expect to have about \$700,000 remaining at the end of the fiscal year. Our initial plan is to re-budget these funds so half can be used for NBEP personnel costs and the other half subawarded to external projects. More discussion on this topic is planned to close this meeting.

NBEP's new staffers are on board. Mariel Sorlien is NBEP's Geospatial Analysis and Design Manager responsible for NBEP's data and visualization work. Darcy Young is NBEP's Watershed Outreach Manager who leads outreach, Vision 2032 drafting, and social media.

NBEP submitted to EPA its [FY2022 Section 320 and SNEP Workplan](#) and budget (totaling \$1,000,000). All required match was received for this workplan. We also submitted our the [FY2022-2023 BIL Workplan](#) and budget (\$1,819,600). Note that no match is required for the first two years of BIL funds. Our hope is to receive both awards by the end of calendar 2022 at the latest. Thanks to everyone for your work to review and approve these this summer.

On July 13<sup>th</sup>, NBEP hosted a Science Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting highlighting the work of two members: [Baylor Fox-Kemper](#) (Brown University) and [Candace Oviatt](#) (URI). Baylor shared his work on the most recent IPCC report, while Candace provided a discussion on nitrogen reduction in Narragansett Bay with a look towards the future and understanding the best mix of nutrients for a dynamic ecosystem. The SAC discussions today (and past Executive Committee [EC] feedback) emphasized the need for a model that represents the system's hydrodynamics, has been validated with sufficient data, and is ultimately, useful to managers. The potential for NBEP staff to assemble people/data to compile the existing models, identify what we have and what we need, and then fund further research (hack-a-thon, hire a contractor) that advances the ball toward an open source user-friendly model was discussed by the group.

In June 2022, NBEP released an update on use of a water clarity indicator Narragansett Bay. The *State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed* included multiple types of data for water clarity. In 2020, NBEP formed a Water Clarity Working Group to explore how best to communicate and use these data. The update describes changes in water clarity, the reasons for the changes, and tools used to measure it. The [update](#) hopes to stimulate discussion about how to advance the use of water clarity in management and identify areas for research.

Mariel is working on a [StoryMap](#) that tracks the actions and resulting water quality improvements from 1995-2020 that led to the Providence River being opened for quahogging in 2021 for the first time 75 years. The aim of the map is to communicate in plain language real world results of water quality improvements. This update should be released by late fall.

The addition of Darcy to the team and a desire to meet in-person has reinvigorated the Vision 2032 process. Sketch plans (the first 5 pages of our [Action Planning Worksheet](#)) for the [30-50 proposed actions](#) are being drafted. The reboot meeting has been scheduled for [September 21<sup>st</sup> at RIDEM in Providence](#). Darcy has been reviewing materials and developing activities to hone the actions as a group and set the stage for NBEP staff to lead completion of the Action Plans this winter. We expect to complete the Vision 2032 document by the end of calendar 2023.

Finally, NBEP staff have been busy conducting outreach, on-boarding new staff, and showing up in the news! Check out an article on Courtney from the [GSO Alumni Magazine](#) and Mike and Stefanie Covino of the Blackstone Watershed Collaborative were interviewed for [EcoRI](#) about the Blackstone River Expedition.

## COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

[Stefanie Covino, Blackstone Watershed Collaborative](#) - Upcoming workshops: [Integrated Water Management Plan workshop with EPA on 9/22](#) and [Creating Practitioners for the Blackstone Watershed: Bridging Academia to Community Partnerships for Climate Resilience on 10/20](#)

[Dave Monti, No Fluke Fishing/RI Saltwater Anglers Association](#) – Has a new Executive Director, Greg Vespe, who is interested in speaking to the SC. Discussed a citizen science app in development to encourage anglers to report their catch.

[Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon](#) - Planning another workshop for bylaw review for climate resilience with SNEP Network and SRPEDD; working to streamline salt marsh restoration permitting to be able to take advantage of funding coming down the pipe

[Sue Kiernan, RIDEM](#) - Conditionally opened previously-closed 180 acres of Greenwich Bay for shellfishing (represented a 10% increase in the conditionally managed acres across Narragansett Bay), credits improvement to sewerage and stormwater work

[Gloria Bancroft, TRWA](#) - Provided an overview of TRWA's water quality and terrapin volunteer monitoring programs, new education programs, and funding needs.

[Donna Williams, Blackstone River Coalition and Blackstone River Heritage Corridor](#) – Commented on recent CSOs events in Worcester and efforts to publicize their impact and seek change.

## FORM DEIJ SUBCOMMITTEE

NBEP requested that the SC approve the formation of a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Subcommittee. *DECISION: Creation of a subcommittee was approved with a motion (Stefanie Covino, Blackstone Watershed Collaborative) and a second (Bill Napolitano, SRPEDD)*. SC members are invited to join NBEP's DEIJ Subcommittee, to be convened in early 2023. Please email Darcy Young at

[dyoung@nbep.org](mailto:dyoung@nbep.org) if you would like to join. In the context of the future work of the subcommittee, SC members provided input on NBEP developing a land acknowledgement, which is a task in our FY2022 320 and SNEP Workplan.

#### **FY2021 FUNDS RE-BUDGET INTRODUCTION AND EXERCISE**

As noted earlier in the meeting, NBEP is projected to have approximately \$700,000 of FY2021 funds unspent at the close of the fiscal year on September 30, 2022. EPA has requested that this unspent total be reduced. NBEP plans on holding \$350K for personnel costs and putting out \$350K as subawards to partners this fall. Splitting 50/50 provides a cushion for personnel costs to respond to any federal budget changes. The subawards could be provided directly or via an RFP process.

NBEP staff led an exercise to obtain project ideas from SC members. A sheet was shared that was seeded with ideas staff have compiled from partners over the last six months. This list included mostly habitat planning projects, with some targeted capacity-building and research needs. SC members were invited to identify additional possible project ideas. The significant input received is available here in [Google Slides](#). NBEP staff obligated to review the compiled ideas and come to the EC in November and SC in December with a definitive plan for subawarding FY2021 monies.

#### **ACTION ITEMS**

1. Vision 2032 Subcommittee meeting will be September 21<sup>st</sup> IN-PERSON at RIDEM, from 10am-4pm.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00pm.