

**Science and Technical Advisory Committee Meeting  
Technology Building (Rm 107), Ocean County College  
April 10, 2019; 9 am–12:00 pm**

**Attending STAC Members:** Dr. Steven Yergeau (Vice-Chair, RCE-Ocean), Dr. Jim Vasslides (BBP), Alena Baldwin-Brown (NJDEP), Linda Brennen (MCDP), Charles Caruso (PPA), Dr. Elizabeth Lacey (Stockton University), Dr. Swarna Muthukrishnan (COA), John Protonentis (OCHD), Dr. Pete Rowe (NJSGC), Gregg Sakowicz (JCNER), Robert Shertenlieb (OCUA), Christine Wieben (USGS), David Steinmann (USDA-NRCS), Amber Mallm (MCDP alt)

**Attending Guests:** Sheri Shifren (NJDEP),

**Barnegat Bay Partnership Staff in Attendance:** Dr. Stan Hales (*ex officio*), Tina Barreiro, Martha Maxwell-Doyle

**On the phone:** Barbara Spinweber (USEPA Region 2)

***Welcome and Introductions. S. Yergeau***

The meeting was called to order at 9:08 AM and introductions were made.

***Review of Draft Agenda and STAC minutes of February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019.***

There were no changes proposed for the Draft Agenda. A correction to the Draft STAC minutes from February 13<sup>th</sup>: the Ocean County Planning Department does not intend to create a Stormwater Utility plan in response to the recently passed Stormwater Utilities Bill. A motion to approve the amended minutes was made by Mr. Caruso, seconded by Dr. Lacey and approved by consensus.

***CCMP and Needs Assessment Updates. S. Hales***

- Update on Draft Final CCMP Draft Progress: Dr. Hales indicated that the draft Final CCMP document will be released to the STAC this month for two-week review.

At the last NEP meeting, Dr. Hales learned that any actions approved in the CCMP are eligible for state revolving funding. This funding does require a sponsor and adds a potentially significant funding stream. Dr. Hales added that while Ocean County currently may not be strongly embracing the Stormwater Utility Bill, the CCMP is a 20-year plan – this has potential to evolve into a funding stream for TMDL-related projects.

The CCMP signing event at Ocean County College is aimed for September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019. This date has been provided to the EPA Regional Administrator and NJDEP Commissioner. More information on this event will be provided as the date nears.

- CCMP Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment: Dr. Hales expressed appreciation for the input the STAC members provided for this report. The report is still on schedule, and once the appendices are finished, the report will be distributed for review. This will be a standalone report available on the website.

- Needs Assessment: Karen Greene sent Dr. Hales the Draft Revised Needs Assessment report. Dr. Hales values the help of members of the steering committee, and thanked everyone for their patience and support.

### ***Habitat and Monitoring Plans. J. Vasslides***

The development of Habitat and Monitoring Plans are required as part of the CCMP process. However, these will be separate standalone documents to be distributed in subsequent years to the CCMP. Dr. Vasslides also noted there is a small amount of funding left from EPA to put towards contractor support for the development of these plans.

#### Habitat Plan

The Program Office and STAC Chairs are seeking the STAC's input on the Habitat Plan. Tentatively, the Program Office is suggesting that the STAC's role would be to develop an outline of the habitats to include in the plan, and a contractor would assemble the document from there. Once finished by the contractor, the document would be issued back to the STAC for comments and feedback. The intent would be to ensure that all major habitats of interest are captured in this document, and that habitats/sites within the watershed that are the most vulnerable and need protection should be highlighted.

Mr. Sakowicz asked if the Habitat Plan will include a comprehensive habitat map. Dr. Hales believes that this would be of interest, but it is not clear if that would mean pulling disparate maps/data into a single place, or if new mapping/data would be required.

#### Monitoring Plan

The 2003 Monitoring Plan needs to be updated as part of the CCMP revision. The original plan was the result of multiday workshops, and includes a list of primary and secondary indicators as well as metadata for each monitoring project identified by partners. In order to efficiently update the current Monitoring Plan, Dr. Vasslides suggested taking a similar approach – coordinating a collaborative one- or two-day workshop wherein each organization can combine their metadata, discuss routine monitoring, and then distinguish any areas where monitoring efforts are lacking. Once identified, this monitoring can be tied back to the ecosystem targets detailed in the CCMP. The STAC's role will be to help organize the workshop and help with crafting the document.

Once updated, the Monitoring Plan has the potential to influence the 2021 State of the Bay Report. Updating the Monitoring Plan will help to identify any gaps in monitoring indicators and provide opportunities to address indicators that are needed. Broader commitments, such as outreach opportunities, can be reexamined and explored as well.

### ***STAC Composition. S. Yergeau***

- a) Develop recommendations to AC regarding composition of STAC.

The STAC is currently comprised of 33 members from varied organizations – 26 of which are recognized as active (inclusive of organizations that do not attend meetings regularly, but are not vacated), and 7 that have vacated. Dr. Vasslides informed that of the 26 active members, on average 13-14 members attend per meeting, consistent with

previous years. The organizations that have vacated seats are CWF, JCAA, LBIF, MTANJ, OCC, OCSCD and the Trust for Public Land. These organizations either currently do not have staff available to regularly attend meetings or never have. Some of the organizations that cannot regularly attend meetings still offer technical advice when they are able to, but have vacated to not affect quorum requirements (ex. OCSCD). Other organizations are on the AC and thus automatically hold a standing seat on the STAC, regardless of if they expressed interest in being part of the STAC (ex. LBIF).

The STAC would like to grow its technical expertise and they recognize that some of the current MOU might be limiting. Amending and updating the current Charter language to provide more flexibility could help to achieve this goal and resolve membership engagement and quorum issues. The following sections of the current STAC Charter were discussed.

*Membership composition.* Suggested revisions were that representatives present on the AC are not automatically required to have a seat on the STAC. The organization will have the option to join the Committee of their preference (STAC or CEC).

*Number of members and vacancies.* Members discussed removing the current membership cap, and updating the Charter to include vacated seat procedures. The Charter would need to define the conditions of a vacated seat, address the formal method of vacating a seat, and how to reactive a vacated seat (should an organization choose to do so).

Dr. Yergeau asked members if there are specific groups the STAC would like more engagement from. Dr. Vasslides reminded members that if the STAC would like to open nominations for new elected representatives, there is room for four more under the current membership cap.

Ms. Spinweber recommended to continue reaching out to USACE, especially the staff involved with the Back Bays Coastal Storm Risk Management Study, stating that the STAC has invaluable knowledge to contribute to a study of this magnitude. Continuous communication between both parties would be beneficial. Mr. Caruso furthered this idea and suggested the USACE Back Bays Coastal Storm Risk Management Study be a standing agenda item, with updates being discussed at each meeting. Members of the STAC agreed.

*Member attendance, voting and quorum.* As written in the current Charter, if a member does not attend more than one meeting per year, the STAC Chair or Program Director can petition to have the member replaced. However, the Charter is silent on a mechanism for removing an organization that does not regularly attend meetings. Members questioned whether the removal of an individual would result in a vacated seat. As an alternative, Mr. Shertenlieb suggested that, in this case, the representative could lose the ability to vote rather than completely replacing the organization.

Quorum requirements were also debated, with members proposing to reduce the current minimum to various degrees.

*Conclusion(s).* Ms. Brennen made the following motion:

- 1) Revise the composition of the Charter – organizations present on the AC are not automatically required to have a seat on the STAC.
- 2) Revise the quorum requirements – Reduce the quorum size to 12.
- 3) Remove the cap on number of members.

Mr. Caruso seconded this, and made a friendly amendment: to reduce quorum to 10.

Ms. Brennen accepted this amendment. The motion as amended was approved by consensus. Dr. Hales abstained.

Action(s): Dr. Vasslides will work with the Chairs to prepare revised language to the current Charter and send it to the STAC for any additional input. Once these revisions are finalized, it will be recommended to the AC for approval.

- b) Update regarding Vice-Chair nominations period. The nomination period is open. At this time there is one nomination, which was accepted. This vote will take place at the upcoming June meeting.

***Working Groups. S. Yergeau***

- a) Updates from standing working groups.

The shellfish working group is hopeful to have a recommendation document finalized by the June STAC meeting. They discussed establishing a regular meeting schedule and the progress of projects. The NJDEP Division of Fish & Wildlife Bureau of Shellfisheries has a new fulltime employee tasked with shellfish restoration along the Atlantic coast.

Member organizations of the pathogen working group will begin their pathogen sampling and beach monitoring programs again soon. Sites which exceed the seasonal geometric mean standard will be targeted with continual source tracking. The group is optimistic that NJDEP REP funding will aid in remediation projects such as source tracking and stormwater retrofitting.

The State of the Bay working group will be reinstated started in 2020.

- b) Discuss potential new working group(s), including charge, composition, etc.

Mr. Caruso proposed a stormwater working group with the following charges:

- 1) Monitor progress on actions already in the CCMP in regards to stormwater.
- 2) Monitor implementation of the new DEP stormwater rules and stormwater regulations.
- 3) Serve as a central information gathering place, allowing municipalities to form local stormwater utilities plans and assemble best management practices similar to ones that have already been adopted by other states.
- 4) Monitor what larger cities are implementing and provide any other appropriate advice.
- 5) Examine damaging flood potential and participate with the Flood Defense of

NJ - NJ League of Conservation Voters.

The duration of this group would be continuing. Mr. Caruso will send Dr. Vasslides more information on this group to be discussed in greater detail at a future meeting.

**Action(s): Mr. Caruso will send Dr. Vasslides more information on the proposed stormwater working group.**

NJDEP representatives will be at the June STAC meeting to present information on a sediment management internal group they currently have. Following this presentation the STAC will discuss the need/potential of starting a sediment management working group.

***Model Evaluation Project. J. Vasslides***

The BBP has been contracted to assemble an external peer review of a coupled hydrodynamic-water quality model developed jointly by USGS and NJDEP. The model, once validated, would be used in the creation of TMDLs for the bay. For the model evaluation the BBP, USGS, and NJDEP will develop a timeline and reference questions for the external review panel to discuss. Some of these topics include, but are not limited to: best practices in regards to data, effectiveness of the models' outputs, functionality of the linkages produced between the models.

At this time Dr. Vasslides asked members of the STAC to submit to the Program Office a list of any colleagues with expertise in hydrologic and water quality computer modeling that would make for good external reviewers. The Program Office will send out an email with the qualifications/experience that they are looking for. The BBP will compile brief synopses on each potential reviewer that will then be generated into an online poll for the STAC to individually rank. From this, the most qualified pool of individuals will be contracted.

***Waters of the US Comment Period. S. Hales***

The draft comment letter was circulated last week and received minor annotations. The comment period ends April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The BBP is one of two NEPs submitting comments on this. Mr. Karl will be cosigning the finalized comment letter. Dr. Hales informed that the NJDEP is also submitting a comment letter, if any partners would like to submit as part of that. The comment submission process is available online.

***Partner Updates.***

**USDA-NRCS:** Mr. Steinmann updated that the NRCS is purchasing six specialized pontoon boats to begin subaqueous work, one of which will be given to the northeast region. They are collaborating with JCNERR and sampling at their SET sites along the Tuckerton Peninsula. These sites are the most likely to be heavily affected by sea level rise. The DEP Division of Science and Research and BBP provided funding to hold a workshop and assess the potential of implementing long-term monitoring in NJ. The network is currently in the process of creating a general Charter, with an agreement to share marker horizon data. Mr. Steinmann and Mr. Tunstead have asked for input regarding additional locations to do this work.

**NJSGC:** Dr. Rowe acknowledged that Dr. Hales is now a member of the NJSGC Stakeholder Advisory Board. He stated that the Consortium's Request For Proposals had great participation with many qualified preproposals received. Full proposals will be due in June and candidate

projects will be selected by November. The Consortium's quadrennial cycle review has been moved to November. Ocean Fun Days events will be held Saturday and Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, at IBSP (Sat.) and Sandy Hook (Sun.). NJ's annual favorite beaches survey will be starting in May.

MCDP: Ms. Brennen informed the group that the MCDP has identified a flaw in the categorization of coastal lakes in the USACE Back Bays Coastal Storm Risk Management Study, and have submitted this in a formal comment letter to the USACE and DEP. She explained that the study places lakes in categories with the lowest category deemed as having no hydrological connection to the ocean. Monmouth County has proved several of the lowest category lakes do have connection to the ocean, some of those are located within Ocean County. She also provided an update on the Raritan Bay Coastal Resiliency Plan. At their last technical advisory committee meeting, they set up a way to prioritize potential sites for adaptation projects. This model has helped to generate an interactive map, which is viewable on their website. The Monmouth County Environmental Council is holding an annual round-table event on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019 titled "Ticks and Mosquitoes in Monmouth County: Resources to help you protect your family and pets". Ms. Mallm informed the group that this free event is intended to help educate the public about the impact of ticks and mosquitoes and will have guest speakers including a vet, a professor from Rutgers, and staff from the Monmouth County Mosquito Control. Monmouth County will also be releasing an educational brochure regarding ticks and mosquitos.

NJDEP: Ms. Baldwin-Brown updated that the awards for the Barnegat Bay Restoration Enhancement Strategy RFP may be announced on Earth Day.

JCNERR: Mr. Sakowicz informed that JCNERR telemetry equipment was affected by a nationwide computer issue on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019. If anyone is looking for particular data from that timeframe, he asked they please be patient.

USEPA: Ms. Spinweber announced that the BBP had received a supplemental grant of \$25,000 for rapid storm response wetlands monitoring.

BBP: Dr. Vasslides updated that the BBP water quality monitoring sensors have been redeployed and are being transmitted in real time on the DEP website. He also informed that Dr. Mike Kennish retired from Rutgers University on March 31<sup>st</sup> and has taken on *Emeritus* status.

### ***Adjournment.***

The meeting adjourned at 11:45am.