

Science and Technical Advisory Committee
WebEx Meeting
October 14th 2020
9:00 am

Attending STAC Members: Dr. Steven Yergeau (Chair, RCE-Ocean), Dr. Elizabeth Lacey (Vice-Chair, Stockton University), Alena Baldwin-Brown (NJDEP), Linda Brennen (MCPD), Amber Mallm (MCDP), Barbara Spinweber (USEPA-R2), Charles Caruso (PPA), Gregg Sakowicz (JCNERR), Rick Bushnell (RCTB), Robert Karl (BTMUA), Keith Marcoon (OCUA), Dr. Swarna Muthukrishnan (COA), Dr. Peter Rowe (NJ Sea Grant), John Protonentis (OCHD), Keith Hanson (NOAA), Maggie Sager (NOAA), Rob Tunstead (NRCS), David Steinmann (NRCS), Joseph Smith (USFWS), Christine Raabe (OCSCD), Becky Laboy (OCSCD), Dr. Jim Vasslides (BBP)

Attending Guests: Nicole Leaf (OC Planning), Sheri Shifren (NJDEP/WMS), Karen Argenti (SBB), Britta Wenzel (SBB), Gabriel Mahon (NJDEP), Steve Mars (USF&W), Rob Parr (BTMUA), Ed Wengrowski (PC), Matt Czik (NJAW), Lynette Lurig (NJDEP), Avery Lentini, Murray Rosenberg (BBP Citizen Representative – Alternate)

Staff Members in Attendance: Dr. Stan Hales, Martha Maxwell-Doyle, Karen Walzer, Nicole Petersen

Welcome and introductions—S. Yergeau

Meeting called to order at 9:03. Introductions were made, and Dr. Yergeau discussed recording Mr. Mahon's presentation.

Review of June 10th Meeting Minutes and draft agenda—S. Yergeau

Draft agenda and meeting minutes accepted unanimously.

BBP Programmatic Update—S. Hales

CCMP: Dr. Hales reported that the last round of comments had arrived, including comments from EPA headquarters. There were two pages of minor edits and corrections, which would be finished by Oct 31st. Afterward, the CCMP would continue to the final approval process. Dr. Hales was also arranging production via an outside contractor. There are no plans at this time to hold a virtual event to roll out the CCMP.

Program Evaluation: Dr. Hales reported that a committee was to be put together this fall, but there are no official dates yet. Additional details should come soon.

NJ Stormwater Rule Amendments—Mr. Gabriel Mahon, NJDEP

Mr. Mahon gave a presentation on the changes to the state's stormwater management rules for new construction. He outlined various permits for projects, the timeline for municipalities to implement the new regulations, and changes to the rules text. The new requirements for major developments included anything with at least 1 acre of cumulative disturbance, ¼ acre of impermeable surface, or ¼ acre of regulated motor vehicle surface. These would be in comparison to area cover at the time of the statute's adoption (Feb 2, 2004 for the original two,

Mar 2nd, 2021 for the third). The nonstructural stormwater management section was replaced with a green infrastructure requirement. Green infrastructure measures were defined as any stormwater management measure that treated runoff using infiltration, filtration, or stored runoff for reuse. The subchapter contained tables detailing BMPs for small scale (<2.5 acre drainage area), large scale, and non-GI measures. Other changes included prioritizing multiple small-area BMPs, clarifications to CSO requirements, and applying for variances. The presentation was recorded and is available upon request.

Questions:

- Dr. Yergeau asked if education programs counted as nonstructural components under this revision. Mr. Mahon said education wasn't included in these construction regulations but was still part of the MS4 permits.
- Mr. Caruso asked where the 1-acre disturbance standard came from, and if the requirement could be reduced to ¼ acre. Mr. Mahon replied that the 1-acre requirement came from the federal minimum standard, but that a reduction for urban areas was a good idea and could be implemented for specific areas.
- Mr. Caruso also asked about the status of the stormwater utility guidance. Mr. Mahon replied that the guidance would be published as a website, with a draft posted for public comment in the coming months. The guidance would be completed March 2021.
- Mr. Wengrowski asked about requiring a minimum distance from seasonal high water tables for ponds. Mr. Mahon replied that the department plans on reevaluating that requirement.
- Mr. Mahon requested that anyone with further questions contact him via email.

Working Groups' Updates

Shellfish—Dr. Vasslides

- Rutgers procured funding via NJ Sea Grant and the National Sea Grant program to purchase market-sized oysters from aquaculturists for restoration. Stockton University received 25,000 oysters last month for the Tuckerton reef. The OCSCD also received a grant for Ms. Kristen Adams to work with aquaculturists on implementing NRCS best-practices. Ms. Adams also joined the shellfish workgroup and will eventually replace Dr. Vasslides as the chair. The workgroup will meet again this fall and will have more announcements in the coming weeks. Dr. Yergeau asked if the workgroup was involved with the NJDEP's seafood app. Dr. Vasslides replied that the workgroup wasn't involved, but the BBP did distribute the link.

Pathogen Working Group: Ms. Shifren

- There were three beaches with exceedance events this season in Ocean County. Beachwood and Windward Beach were repeat offenders, but 5th Ave Bay Beach in Seaside Park was a new location, and failed for over 2 weeks. The Ocean County Health Department conducted additional monitoring, including a 15-day cycle. DEP chemical analysis of 5th Ave samples found nonhuman bacterioides and antibiotic resistant pathogens from wildlife. Seaweed clusters had the highest quantities of bacteria, which in conjunction with warm weather and low mixing could have resulted in vegetation incubating bacteria from foraging animals. These exceedances had no correlation with rainfall. The DEP will do storm related studies at 5th Ave, as well as other investigations with high seaweed and eelgrass concentrations.

- Work on the Barnegat Bay REPS projects are underway, including source tracking studies started with Clean Ocean Action, Save Barnegat Bay, and MATES.

Stormwater—Mr. Caruso

- The Stormwater Working Group will meet after the STAC meeting. The agenda includes an update on the stormwater utility legislation from the League of Conservation Voters and Flood Defense NJ. Second is a follow up discussion on Mr. Mahon’s presentation and additional measures for the Barnegat Bay or CAFRA region, followed by Chris Obrupta’s green infrastructure proposal. The Working Group plans on commenting on the stormwater utility guidance in March.

Monitoring Plan—Dr. Vasslides

- Since the last STAC meeting the work group met to discuss implementation of the monitoring plan and decided to create an ESRI Hub site to allow for a more interactive document. The website would explain what monitoring was occurring, why, what data was being collected, and how it related to CCMP goals. It would also include the monitoring inventory as a geospatial database, allowing users to look at a map of all current monitoring projects and filter it by different variables, such as which CCMP targets they’re associated with, etc. It would also be a living document that could be updated as new projects began. At the end of August, Dr. Vasslides sent out a form to partners about their monitoring projects. He received information on 36 programs from the original 64 in the 2003 inventory. Another round of emails went out, requesting responses by the start of November, when the work group would reconvene. After the inventory, the work group would produce recommendations on data gaps, mismatches between ecosystem targets and the project inventory, and future plans. The recommendations would go on the website, ideally in time for the State of the Bay report in June 2021.

Reinstatement of a Wetlands Shoreline work group—Ms. Maxwell-Doyle

- The Program Office would like to assemble a wetlands shoreline work group in order to coordinate restoration and enhancement efforts, especially post-Sandy. There will be a presentation at the December STAC meeting on the group’s vision and possible deliverables. Volunteers should email Ms. Maxwell-Doyle.

2021 State of the Bay Report – J. Vasslides

Dr. Vasslides reported that the QAPP for the SOTB had been submitted to the DEP and EPA for review and that he had begun receiving comments. The QAPP would be completed by end of October/beginning of November. The next step was to form the work group to review the report and advise on the various ecosystem-based targets. Dr. Vasslides has finished an outline for the SOTB report as a starting point and requested volunteers. Volunteers from the call included Alena Baldwin-Brown, Rick Bushnell, Charles Caruso, Barbara Spinweber, Lynette Lurig, Swarna Muthukrishnan, and Elizabeth Lacy. Rick asked if a brief public friendly handout (*a la* “Coast Card”) could be prepared for the general public. Dr. Vasslides said that the work group could collaborate with the CEC to produce an abridged version, which could be discussed alongside the publishing format. Ms. Spinweber asked if anyone from US EPA Edison office had been contacted yet. Dr. Vasslides asked if she could do so.

Permits/Projects of interest – S. Hales

Lighthouse Center: Dr. Hales reported that the BBP comment letter had been received by the USACE and that no further comments were anticipated until the USACE made their decision on the pending permit.

USACE 1122: The public notice and draft environmental assessment were out for public comment. The BBP's draft letter was underway but delayed due to computer issues on Dr. Hales's end. He apologized for the holdup and indicated that the letter includes concerns regarding a vague purpose, and the lack of needs, success metrics, or a monitoring program. The letter encouraged the Corps to step back and consider the project more holistically. There was a need for more information on the material in the system, as well as a better picture of the project's timeline and scale. The letter would be submitted tomorrow.

Fieldwork in the time of COVID-19–S. Yergeau

Dr. Yergeau – Rutgers has begun returning to full research capacity in the Fall, approving many proposals for restarting projects. COVID testing guidelines are in place for investigators and researchers, as well as guidelines for social distancing. At present, only labs and clinicals for medical students are happening in person. The administration is considering 25% of classes and/or students being on campus, or a different hybrid model. Funded projects are moving forward for 2021.

Ms. Baldwin-Brown – NJDEP is back at 100% with socially distanced monitoring fieldwork and bench work. They are trying to make up the backlog in fieldwork projects.

Dr. Lacey – Stockton is operating at reduced capacity. There are students in the dorms, attending classes online or in-person at the discretion of the faculty member. Students know which classes are remote or in-person when registering, and Dr. Lacey has a few students who attend her class remotely. Fieldwork is continuing as usual, with reduced capacity on vessels. Winding down for the season and looking to a busy 2021 with everything that got delayed.

Mr. Sakowicz – Monitoring work back at 100%, with no data gaps from August onward. Focusing on SWMP work and core research projects. The staff is reduced as no students or interns are on staff this year. The current plan is to be at 50%-75% capacity soon. Taylor Armstrong, a research fellow, has been doing work with HABs and toxic species since September using NJDEP's water monitoring stations. She'll present her work to the group for an orientation.

Ms. Maxwell-Doyle – Wetlands work has remained on schedule despite COVID and mechanical issues.

Mr. Joseph Smith – Edwin B. Forsythe Refuge's work is going smoothly, with critical work proceeding as usual. However there were no interns hired this year.

Partner Updates

Dr. Steve Yergeau – Dr. Yergeau reminded members that his term as STAC Chair ends in June 2021, and Dr. Elizabeth Lacey would take over as chair. He recommended that any interested members consider if they wanted to take the vice chair position.

Dr. James Vasslides – Dr. Vasslides relayed information from John Protonentis (on the call but having technical issues) about the bathing beach bacteria studies. The Windward Beach study showed failures on the furthest west point, west of Route 70, which suggested possible failure points further upstream that need to be investigated. The regions upstream of Beachwood Beach also need to be considered during future sampling regimes.

Ms. Christine Raabe – Ms. Raabe reported on the OCSCD's work on the aquaculture grant and a proposal for the NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Under the RCPP funding would be set aside for conservation purposes, 70% of which goes directly to aquaculture producers. The applications are due November 4th, with a possible deadline extension. The funds also have a required 50% match for a possible \$1 million, which will take some planning and coordination, but matching funds can be drawn from federal sources.

Dr. Pete Rowe – Dr. Rowe reported on the virtual Ocean Fun Days event, thanking members who contributed videos. The event continues until Oct 26th. He will also be issuing a call for research priorities for the stakeholder advisory to review. The RFP report will be released in December.

Dr. Swarna Muthukrishnan – Dr. Muthukrishnan reported on the 35th annual Fall beach sweeps on Oct 24th. They will be implementing COVID safety protocols, including mandatory pre-registration and attendance limits. They have had good turnout so far.

Ms. Alena Baldwin-Brown – Ms. Baldwin-Brown reported on the DEP's interactive HABs map, which gives the status of all currently investigated blooms in the state. It is a [Hub site](#) and is updated every day at noon and has a new tutorial on how to use the map and site tools.

Mr. Rick Bushnell – Mr. Bushnell reported that 2020 was a good growing year for the clams and oysters. ReClam the Bay also experimented with growing scallops from AIC. Friends of Island Beach State Park gifted a giant painted clam to the IBSP interpretive center. Virtual outreach and education sessions have had good attendance, and RCB is working on a virtual shellfish in the classroom program. Dr. Bushnell asked for resources from partners that could support classroom activities for students from 5th grade to high school. RCB is also trying to organize a directory of partner websites so users can find information more easily.

Mr. Joe Smith – Mr. Smith reported on the beneficial use project at Good Luck Point. They have been restoring the marsh with dredge material and also supplementing the shoreline with sand.

Ms. Britta Wenzel – Ms. Wenzel requested an update on the dye test from the Ocean County Utilities Authority. Mr. Maroon replied that the test was taking place in a single pipeline at the central plant and that final results would be broadcast later in the day. The test is not the result of any water quality concerns, it is just a routine maintenance test.

Mr. Ed Wengrowski – Mr. Wengrowski reported that the Pinelands Commission have been revising their own set of stormwater management rules as a result of the DEP's revisions to theirs. Revisions were taken to the policy committee last month, with final adoption slated for April 2021. The NJ Register will publish a version for public comment on December 21st.

Adjournment
Adjourned at 11:23.