

Vision 2032 Subcommittee Meeting #4

Remote Meeting
March 31, 2020
10:00am to 12:00pm

MEETING NOTES

Attendees

Laura Blake, Massachusetts (MA) Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Eric Boettger, Rhode Island (RI) USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Rachel Calabro, RI Department of Health (RIDOH)
Caitlin Chaffee, RI Coastal Resource Management Council (CRMC)
Alicia Eichinger, Salt Ponds Coalition
Ron Entringer, RI Save The Lakes
Richard Friesner, New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPC)
Walt Galloway, RI Rivers Council
Paul Gonsalves, RI Department of Administration, Division of Statewide Planning
Dave Janik, MA Office of Coastal Zone Management (MACZM)
Sue Kiernan, RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)
Anne Kuhn, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Atlantic Coastal Env. Sciences Division (ACESD)
Regina Lyons, U.S. EPA—Region 1
Paul Mathisen, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Jim McCaughey, Narragansett Bay Commission
Bill Napolitano, Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District (SRPEDD)
Ken Payne, Systems Aesthetics LLC/Rhode Island Agricultural Partnership/Charlestown Citizens Alliance
Warren Prell, Brown University
Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon
Karla Sangrey, Upper Blackstone Clean Water
Susan Sullivan, NEIWPC
Tom Uva, Narragansett Bay Commission
Jamie Vaudrey, University of Connecticut
Emily Vogler, Rhode Island School of Design
Caitlyn Whittle, U.S. EPA—Region 1
Julia Bancroft, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP)
Mike Gerel, NBEP
Courtney Schmidt, NBEP
Julia Twichell, NBEP

Introduction

The meeting began at 10:00am. Mike Gerel introduced all who joined the meeting. Caitlin Chaffee reviewed the meeting materials. The meeting notes from November 18, 2019 were approved with a motion and a second. The meeting materials and approved meeting notes will be added to the NBEP website here:

www.nbep.org/about/ccmp/. Mike added that the meeting schedule may change moving forward as we respond to the COVID-19 situation.

Plan for the Day

Mike walked through the agenda and plan for the meeting. The focus of the day will be on the new draft *Vision 2032 Blueprint* (“blueprint”) developed by NBEP staff over the last three months. Mike briefly summarized the purpose, organization, and content of the blueprint, as well as how it will be presented to the subcommittee today. He noted that the purpose of the blueprint is to describe the tenets and process NBEP will apply to development of *Vision 2032* (“the plan”). It currently includes the following sections:

- 1) Purpose of *Vision 2032*,
- 2) Aspirations that will underlie all aspects of plan development,
- 3) Specific tasks NBEP will undertake to ensure adherence to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) guidelines,
- 4) Matrix of preliminary goals, objectives, and action areas that lay the foundation for building the full plan in the future,
- 5) Engagement framework to guide outreach, and
- 6) Plan development timeline.

Mike added that the blueprint will remain a living document that staff will revise based on new learning, comments from the subcommittee, and input from the interested public.

Draft *Vision 2032* Blueprint

Mike next shared his screen and walked through the blueprint section-by-section. He offered highlights and then took input after each section. High points from the discussion are provided below, with general comments and those that apply to a specific section broken out.

Section C: EPA Checklist

- Heidi Ricci asked if other National Estuary Programs (NEPs) in the region and/or the Southern New England Program (SNEP) will coordinate on a monitoring strategy. Mike responded that right now there is no comprehensive or coordinated strategy for monitoring across the region—either among the NEPs or by SNEP. He distinguished between monitoring performance under *Vision 2032* and monitoring field conditions that may be the result of actions undertaken per *Vision 2032* and otherwise. NBEP will use a standard method for tracking and reporting *progress implementing Vision 2032*, likely via annual (or more frequent) updates that list work completed in the previous year and cumulative progress since plan launch. Mike noted that the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership has a great approach that we will emulate. NBEP plans to describe in *Vision 2032* what field monitoring will be required relating to ongoing efforts across the study area. Further details on NBEP’s monitoring plans are provided in Section C.6 of the blueprint. Mike also added that SNEP has discussed focusing future monitoring efforts on geographies over an extended period where they (and others) are focusing investment.
- Paul Mathisen suggested that NBEP identify potential sources of funding for field monitoring by partners so any included expectations in *Vision 2032* or related plans are more likely to be met.

Section D: Goals, Objective, and Action Area Buckets

- The bulk of the rest of the day’s discussion addressed Section D of the blueprint. The three bullets below capture the thrust of the conversation.

- Concern was shared by the subcommittee about the “bucket” approach used to categorize potential actions and the inclusion of potential actions in this draft. The intent of the buckets to organize potential objectives/actions made sense, but questions were raised about overlap and/or interrelationships across the four different buckets. In other words, the “walls” between the buckets are not as solid as they appear in the table provided in this section. Further, folks felt that the inclusion of the 37 action areas at this time was premature. There was concern that putting too much down on paper before engaging more partners was inconsistent with our stated desire to build the plan from the bottom-up. Mike acknowledged that some of the key challenges for comprehensive plans are how to organize actions and how much detail to provide early on (as context for building out the details of the plan later via partner input). He agreed that the level of detail could be cut back, perhaps to just broad objectives as means to retain some context yet not frontload too much detail.
- A related comment was that many of the listed actions deliver benefits across the buckets. For example, Goal 2B, Action Area #17 on culverts and dams has wildlife, water quality, and quality of life benefits. The subcommittee members stated that “multi-benefit” actions should be the emphasis of the plan, and thus prioritized for implementation. It was stated that NBEP’s unique role in the region is to work across issues (water, wildlife, etc.) and geopolitical boundaries—these in turn make *Vision 2032* uniquely useful. It was added that at this stage the focus should be on mapping out the best way to identify multi-benefit/cross-boundary actions and not on categorizing via buckets up front. Mike noted that the intent to emphasize multi-benefit actions was noted at Section B.9, but he agreed that better explaining the priority placed on multi-benefit/cross-boundary actions made good sense at this stage. He noted that objectives and action areas would be prioritized at later date by the subcommittee after greater input has been received.
- Mike obligated to work with staff to take a step back and explore how to better describe and visualize the process and interrelationships that will be used to ultimately identify, organize, and prioritize the objective/actions and desired results of the plan.

Section E: Engagement Framework

- Heidi suggested using engaging with other groups via their regular meetings to solicit input for *Vision 2032*. Mike noted that approach is included in the framework and agreed, especially with COVID-19, that tapping into existing venues (likely remote) was a smart tactic.

Public Comment

- Ken Payne noted that he liked the inclusion of quality of life in NBEP’s new mission and now the blueprint. He offered a distinction between ‘quality of life’ and ‘quality of place,’ feeling that quality of place is a broader more inclusive concept. Emily Vogler also agreed that distinction is important. NBEP staff obligated to consider how best to collect from different interest groups what constitutes their quality and sense of place, as well as what actions would help to enhance it in line with our mission.
- Ken also noted the importance of accounting for the magnitude, trajectory, and speed of change resulting from climate change. In this same context, Ken noted the clear connections between environmental health, public health/disease, and quality of life. Mike stated that he appreciated this comment and noted that in Section B.10 that NBEP would complete a climate vulnerability assessment for each proposed action to assure resiliency of actions to climate change is considered to the greatest extent possible. Further, Mike added that going beyond climate change to consider

the consequences of the many changes the region (i.e., shift in development density, energy development, growing human inequities) should also be considered.

- Mike clarified that the subcommittee membership is open, so anyone who attends is a member and can speak up at any time during the meeting. Eventually members of the public may decide to join the meeting and this time slot for Public Comment will be reserved for them in every meeting.

Next Steps

1. The next *Vision 2032* Subcommittee meeting will be held via Zoom on April 16, 2020 from 10am-12pm.
2. Subcommittee members are asked to provide any further comments on the current draft blueprint to Mike by April 2nd.
3. NBEP will revise the blueprint per comment and provide the blueprint to the subcommittee for review a week prior to the April 16th meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:07pm