

Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan Subcommittee Meeting #5

Remote Meeting
April 16, 2020
10:00am to 12:00pm

MEETING NOTES

Attendees

Julia Bancroft, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP)
Veronica Berounsky, University of Rhode Island (URI)
Laura Blake, MA Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Rachel Calabro, RI Department of Health (RIDOH)
Caitlin Chaffee, RI Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC)
Peter Coffin, Blackstone River Coalition
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
Mike Gerel, NBEP
Paul Gonszalves, RI Division of Statewide Planning
Dave Janik, MA Office of Coastal Zone Management (MACZM)
Sue Kiernan, RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)
Regina Lyons, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1 (EPA-Region 1)
Catalina Martinez, U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
Jim McCaughey, Narragansett Bay Commission (NBC)
Romell Nandi, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Headquarters (EPA-HQ)
Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon
Courtney Schmidt, NBEP
Julia Twichell, NBEP
Tom Uva, NBC
Emily Vogler, RI School of Design
Caitlyn Whittle, EPA-Region 1

Introduction

Caitlin Chaffee, Vice Chair of NBEP's Steering Committee and Chair of the Vision 2032 Subcommittee, called the meeting to order at 10:07am. Caitlin welcomed the group. Mike Gerel introduced all participants. Caitlin mentioned that we will hold off on approving March meeting notes; notes from the March and April meetings will be considered for approval at the next subcommittee meeting in June. Caitlin noted that since the March meeting, NBEP staff have done quite a lot of work to develop the Vision 2032 Blueprint ("blueprint"), including creating some useful visuals to guide thinking.

Framing the Day

Mike opened by acknowledging that we are all still learning how to host remote meetings. We are keeping meetings to 2 hours per remote meeting guidance, which means we are working with half of our usual meeting length. He welcomed participants to follow up with feedback about the meeting process. Next, Mike walked through the agenda sharing that the NBEP will share for discussion some new graphics and other additions to the blueprint during the first hour, and then the subcommittee will complete an exercise to test which objectives presented at the last meeting are viewed as highest priority. Given time constraints, participants were asked to reach to Mike if there was not time for their input during the meeting. Staff have really appreciated the volume and quality of input received from the subcommittee since the March meeting.

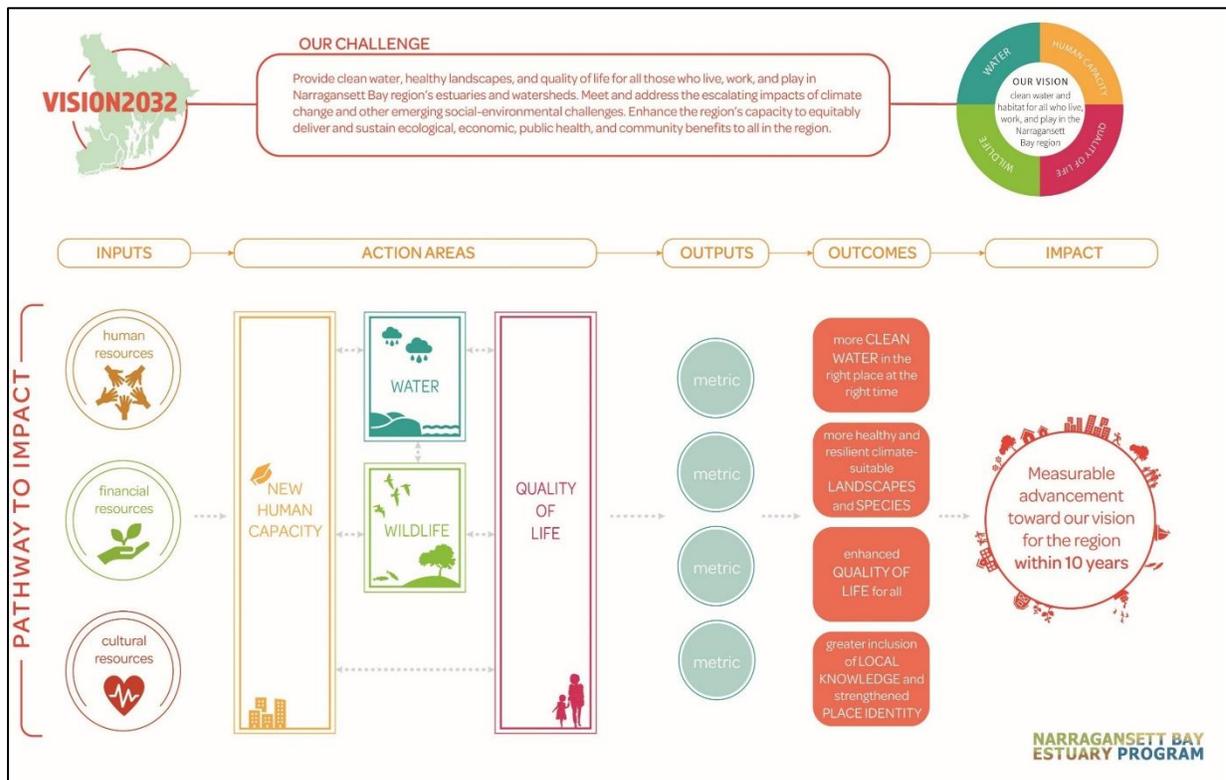
Vision 2032 Process Diagram

Julia Twichell introduced the new process diagram for the blueprint. She mentioned that one of the biggest themes discussed in the last meeting was the need to emphasize multi-benefit outcomes, the partnership's work in different geographies, and its emphasis on cross-disciplinary data. These are things that give NBEP and this plan a unique identity and contribution to the region. Julia noted that the challenge with these cross-connections is creating high-level structure to organize smaller working groups on subsets of actions and provide a way to communicate how all elements of the plan work together. It is also crucial to have structure that provides a clear and approachable format that invites the broader community to participate in this process. She added that transparency about our overall goals is paramount, as well as how people can contribute information.

Julia introduced the concept of "Water, Wildlife, Quality of Life, and New Human Capacity" as pillars of the work in *Vision 2032* that tie to NBEP's mission. She introduced the "10,000-foot level" logic model a visual that helps provide visual explanation and accountability for how we plan to move through the plan development process from its design, through feedback, to drafting, and ultimately, to advancing mission via execution of the plan. Two graphics are provided on the next page of these notes and are available in 11"x17" format in the draft blueprint. She note that we will need to specify inputs (human, financial, and cultural resources), our action areas (what we do), and the outputs of our actions (what results are delivered—must be measurable, using defined performance metrics). Eventually the blueprint will advance toward a set of outcomes, with the expectation that most actions will connect to multiple outcomes.

She noted that defining the four "Action Areas" was a step back from the previous use as "Goals"—this reflected a reframing more than anything else. These now represent our basic categories of work. Julia added that although there are still many grey areas and overlap, staff view this as a structure we can use to start filling in specifics via the work of the subcommittee and future input from the interested public. Julia added that in many ways, this plan at its base is about directing resources and building new capacity for action. That creates the pre-conditions for work toward water and wildlife outcomes, which also may convey quality of life outcomes. Julia stated that a key point in our last meeting was that multiple benefits may be a central criterion for including or prioritizing actions.

These graphics are intended to create a framework for explaining the interconnections, process, and priorities at play as *Vision 2032* is developed.



Heidi Ricci shared that she liked the diagram overall. She recommended we add “natural resources/the existing environment” to inputs. She also asked about adding “landscape” or “land use” to “wildlife.” Richard Friesner seconded, offering the term, “habitat” may be better than wildlife. Mike noted that wildlife was the chosen term based on new research that says ‘wildlife’ connects better with people. At this point, we view wildlife as inclusive of its habitat, but will consider further in the next version of the blueprint. Walt Galloway shared that he appreciated the attempt to back up from the more detailed Goals-Objectives-Action Areas matrix shared at the last meeting. He liked this visual and hoped that we eventually move toward a ‘hybrid’ diagram that captures process and priorities like those noted by Julia earlier.

Veronica Berounsky inquired what was meant by “NEW human capacity.” Mike clarified this meant both new and existing resources. He noted in many cases there are existing resources, which would benefit from being better coordinated, networked, and funded. NBEP’s Blackstone Watershed Needs Assessment project is exploring means to address this issue in that area. Julia added that “new human capacity” also included expanding new opportunities like workforce training, job opportunities, internships, and bringing in new staff. Mike mentioned the human capacity was appropriately both an Input (existing resources) and Action Area (to recreate new capacity). Dave Janik suggested instead of “New,” use “Enhanced.” Sue Kiernan also suggested we might call it “Enhanced Capacity for Action” because capacity spanned beyond human capacity to involve people, coordination, IT, technology, funding, etc. Mike noted he liked this new language.

Richard suggested adding “climate change” to the diagram. Mike responded that vulnerability to climate change will be evaluated for all proposed actions per EPA guidance, but that we should consider how to best represent this obligation. Catalina Martinez suggested editing the part of the Challenge that reads “other emerging social, cultural, economic, and environmental challenges.” She also suggested the addition of an inclusivity action area or outcome associated with broadening reach to a

more diverse constituent base. Julia noted this was a good catch—equity and inclusion did not make it into this visual because it was a concept that applied across all Actions Areas. Dave also suggested the concept of sustainability, from a development perspective, was missing. Mike noted that concepts like climate change, sustainability, and diversity, equity, an inclusion (DEI) are all “cross-cutting” considerations that we intend to emphasize across all aspects of the plan. Mike suggested that we could add an accompanying graphic that conveys how these key tenets will be emphasized and embedded across the plan. Heidi added that land use is another idea that is laced throughout—with impacts economically, culturally, and socially. Mike offered that potentially “sustainable resource use” would be inclusive of sustainability and smart land use.

Out of the preceding conversation, two possible ideas for additional visuals were suggested: a graphic of “cross-cutters” or key tenets of the plan and key criteria (e.g., multi-benefit) for prioritizing actions.

Moving on, Walt brought up language choices in the Vision and Challenge—he noted that use of “all those” is more human-oriented than “all.” Mike agreed—in the Vision, “all” was designed to incorporate non-humans. It was agreed that it will be important to think critically about the use of language and the messaging that comes with different word choices. Mike summed up this discussion with a commitment to make sure the language and examples used are inclusive. Members were asked to continue to keep an eye out for nuances in our language and visuals.

Caitlin Chaffee asked for clarification about the Clean Water outcome language. Mike offered that it included water quantity (e.g., altered hydrology, flooding, supply) and water quality. Ultimately, it is the right amount of clean water at the right place at the right time. Caitlin agreed that made sense but suggested a tweak in the language because the current wording indicates we might not want clean water everywhere. Instead of “clean water,” “water” might be better wording.

Mike closed the discussion by offering that this is a living document. The thoughtful feedback was highly appreciated, and staff looked forward to building on the blueprint and the new visuals.

Vision 2032 Blueprint Changes

Mike next ran through all other updates to the blueprint by order of appearance in the document, which include the following:

- **Add**: This process must balance including the broader community early with creating a process and framework that invites participation.
- **Change**: Update criteria for including an action area at Section B.8 in the plan from requiring a funding source to at least one “potential” funding source.
- **Add**: Prioritize multiple benefit and boundary spanning actions as discussed earlier today.
 - Tom Uva inquired if a project in one locality will be prioritized lower than a cross-boundary project? Mike clarified that this criterion was not meant to completely exclude an important localized action—it is just a guideline to assist the subcommittee.
 - Veronica asked if in the new visual the colors on the map were linked to the colors on the wheel. Julia clarified there was no link and committed to updating the colors.
- **Change**: Matrix of Goals, Objectives, and Action Areas created by NBEP staff moved to an appendix as a reference.
- **Add**: New emphasis on using visuals and graphics to communicate our work.
 - Mike asked Julia Twichell to screen share an early mock-up of an Action Plan. Julia noted that this mock-up was designed to show the visual connection with the logic model

graphic but was just preliminary. It showed the general content that would go into each of the final one-page Action Plans as a means to communicate what we are working towards.

- Julia T also displayed an example of Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREP) Action Plan one-pagers, which were the inspiration for this format. PREP's "Anatomy of an Action Plan" diagram will be used by NBEP as a resource for creating our own version. Caitlyn Whittle shared that PREP received some guidance from Nancy Laurson to update certain elements of their Action Plan format. Romell Nandi offered to share that guidance so NBEP could incorporate it when designing a template for Action Plans.
- Walt noted the difference between "actions" and "action plans." Mike clarified we will prioritize actions, and then we will create an Action Plan for each. Mike noted that "action plan" language came from EPA and that was a good distinction to make going forward.
- Caitlin Chafee noted a typo "include including" in one of the new updates.
- Sue Kiernan shared that she liked the idea of a template for the Action Plans. She noted we may not need the map for all actions as some of these may be of watershed-wide applicability.
- Add: NBEP will need to produce a status and trends for Little Narragansett Bay and Southwest Coastal Ponds watersheds, which were not included in the 2017 *State of the Narragansett Bay and its Watershed* report.
- Add: NBEP will keep the subcommittee together after *Vision 2032* is released to track progress, produce report cards/annual reports, pursue adaptive management, etc. It will be valuable to keep a team of people focused on accountability.
- Add: New description of the logic model diagram, including ideas for next steps for visually connecting from theoretical to concrete actions (e.g., an Anatomy of an Action Plan diagram)
- Add: Ideas for initial outreach during the COVID-19 situation. These include the suggestion to start with municipalities, the Rhode Island Municipal Resilience Program (MRP), and the Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP). We can start capturing those needs from those that are compelling most on-the-ground projects. City/town staff can help inform early work building *Vision 2032*.
- Add: Ideas for ensuring inclusivity in the *Vision 2032* process. Action item added to start a list of venues for engagement to ensure we meet constituents where they are, at existing meetings and events (even virtually). NBEP will create a short template presentation about NBEP/*Vision 2032* that can be presented to audiences at the right place at the right time.
 - Richard added we should think about who is doing the reaching out and presenting at meetings, noting it might be best to utilize committee members and partners, not only the NBEP. Mike agreed, noting that we plan to assign some volunteers at the next meeting.
 - Heidi added MassAudubon would be happy to assist with outreach to municipalities. She offered to host a meeting at Broad Meadow Brook when it reopens.
 - Walt mentioned we should be clear that the intention is this is a bottom-up, not top-down process. For example, we should list cities/towns before agencies to communicate that. Mike agreed and said that was why municipalities are a good place to start with external outreach.
 - Veronica added she would welcome a presentation about this at a future RI Rivers Council meeting, and Paul Gonsalves seconded.

- Courtney Schmidt inquired about a similar Rivers Council audience in Massachusetts. Heidi suggested we might start with the Blackstone and Taunton coalitions. Mike offered we would try to connect with other rivers organizations down that may view our work on this plan as supportive of their own.
- Caitlin Chaffee offered to reach out to Shaun O'Rourke at the RI Infrastructure Bank to connect MRP communities in RI (Caitlin is also a facilitator for MRP workshops). Mike shared NBEP had gotten some names of “all-star” MVP communities who may want to participate in this process as well.
- Mike concluded that staff will be carefully considering outreach strategies and tools over the next two months.

Public Comment

Mike noted no one from the “general public” were in attendance today. He emphasized that anyone who attends *Vision 2032* meetings is considered a member of the subcommittee and have full standing to offer their voice along with everyone else in attendance. A 10-15-minute time slot will be included in each meeting moving forward for public comment. The public will be given up to 3 minutes per person to offer comments. The hope is that members of the public do show up and participate when appropriate. Mike shared that the meeting location and time will always be posted publicly on the NBEP website.

Exercise--Introduction

Mike introduced the final exercise for the meeting. First, participants will be asked to review the initial objectives shared. These objectives were included in the Goals, Objectives, and Action Areas matrix at the last meeting. Additions or refinements suggested by participants will be recorded. Second, the group will be asked to complete do dot voting to capture highest priority objectives as of today.

Exercise--Part 1: Review Potential Objectives

Participants reviewed the preliminary list of thirteen objectives developed by NBEP staff and provided input and added new objectives. As participants made suggestions to add to or refine the objectives, Mike typed the changes onto the PowerPoint slide live. Input included the following:

- Heidi inquired about where future land use fit into the objectives. She mentioned that capacity for municipalities to implement land use plans and encourage sustainable development might fall under capacity. Mike added this as an objective, noting the need for development of strong leadership structures and technical assistance to address the challenges around land use. He agreed this fell partially under both capacity and nonpoint source pollution, but also deserved standing as its own objective. Sue Kiernan and Richard agreed with Heidi that promoting environmentally sustainable land use planning may merit its own objective. Further, Heidi suggested a separate objective related to making sure new development is done in a sustainable manner. She thought that would be a more relevant objective than just “sustainable land use planning,” as planning is only the first step - if the local land use regulations are not updated, plans will not have any effect. Dave Janik and Sue agreed.
- Both Emily Vogler and Caitlin Chaffee offered that resilience to climate change needs to be an explicit objective. Mike asked if this might be a “cross-cutter,” as discussed earlier in the meeting. Is it a higher level than objectives? This is an area that will connect through everything and we will need to think through how best to represent this. Mike noted that sustainability was also noted as a potential cross-cutting issue earlier today. Staff will give this some thought prior to this next meeting.

- Rachel Calabro added the objective of preserving natural capital—the ability for our forests to sequester carbon and support climate goals.
- Sue K. noted that the distinction between regulated and non-regulated discharges can be difficult to explain to the public. She thought it may be appropriate to have two objectives about reducing direct discharges (point sources) and other non-point sources but she suggested steering clear of referencing what is regulated and suggested leaving that interpretation to the bureaucrats.
- Tom Uva added that the objective to reduce regulated point source pollution in study area seems overreaching, as many pollutants may already be meeting water quality standards. Courtney Schmidt agreed it might sound as if we are asking for stricter standards when we are not. Tom suggested “strive to” meet water quality standards in the study area.
- Laura Blake commented that objectives 1,2, and 3 are all related and that the distinctions may be a little unclear. There was general discussion that objective 3 was more about water quantity, and 1 and 2 about quality. It was noted there were several balance areas for water: quantity and quality, drinking and other beneficial uses, regulated and nonregulated. Caitlin Chaffee added it would be helpful to further distinguish between water quality and quantity objectives more clearly. Mike made the change to combine objectives 1 and 2 into one water quality objective and leave 3 as a separate water quantity objective.
- Richard suggested an objective relating to coordinating water quality monitoring activities between states and partners, first as an important component for metrics and tracking progress but also as an explicit monitoring strategy. This monitoring strategy would be needed to ensure that pollutants are meeting standards. Mike offered that monitoring might also apply across all the actions.
- Rachel suggested that in addition to the fair access to benefits objective, we could add a specific objective relating to tree canopy and health equity.
- Richard suggested that more is needed about preservation of local heritage and culture. We should be clearer about what we are seeking.
- Sue inquired what was meant by permanently protecting riverine systems. Tom added that permanently protecting native ecosystems was overreaching. He suggested moving “permanently” to specific action items.
- Walt requested a diagram of the basic hierarchy of the plan (Goals-Objectives-Actions-tasks). Mike committed to create this before the next meeting. Tom added that we seem to be following the traditional strategic plan model but noted he did not see the performance measures. Richard and Veronica agreed that performance measures will be important. Mike screen shared the logic model again to show where we will add metrics. He also promised that the Anatomy of an Action Plan diagram we plan to create will help illustrate what elements will be required.
- Dave inquired what was meant by wildlife management. Mike referred to the previous 2012 CCMP and added detail to the slide help illustrate this.
- Caitlin Chaffee inquired about including an objective about inclusivity for traditionally underrepresented groups in the plan, in strategy development, during decision-making, etc. Richard agreed, but also asked whether that should be an objective or if it belongs in a different location. Mike added it to the list to be voted on, also agreeing that it is also likely one of the higher-level cross-cutting issues but worth voting on today.
- Walt also suggested that perhaps the group was getting in the weeds before figuring out overall, what it is we were wanting to address. Mike noted this is a balance or tension that we have

noted—we do not want to go too far as to become top-down but want to provide enough of a framework to advance discussion.

- Caitlin Chaffee suggested we allocate more time in the next meeting to discuss the objectives before moving on to actions. Walt seconded. There was general agreement on this approach.
- Mike noted many of these objectives make more sense with example actions specifying what those objectives mean. He offered for the next discussions of objectives we could provide example actions.

Exercise Part 2: Dot Vote on Objectives to Gauge Priorities

Mike next introduced the voting exercise. All participants were allowed seven dots (Zoom annotation stamps) to post on the shared screen next to the objectives they see as a priority. The objectives span to slides. Mike noted that the new objectives and changes offered in Part 1 of the exercise were added so they can be voted upon as well. The results of the voting are provided below.

Results of Objective Voting

Objective	Votes
1. Water quality (PS and NPS).	15
2. Water quantity (for beneficial uses).	10
3. Protect native ecosystems.	1
4. Restore ecosystem health and resilience from sea to headwaters.	13
5. Improve wildlife management.	0
6. Create conditions that empower connections and fair access to the benefits of abundant, healthy, and resilient natural resources.	11
7. Improve human well being in local places across the region.	7
8. Preserve local heritage and culture.	7
9. Gather, organize, and share information necessary to create baseline information, answer question, and inform future actions.	10
10. Develop and sustain strong leaders and sound governance structure among those implementing <i>Vision 2032</i> .	9
11. Acquire funding to sustain NBEP and its partners implementing <i>Vision 2032</i> .	9
12. Provide technical assistance to those executing Action Plans.	2
13. Resilience to climate change (potential cross-cutting).	13
14. Promote environmental sustainable land use regulations, planning, and development (potential cross-cutting).	8
15. Preserving natural capital (potential cross-cutting).	1
16. Monitoring (potential cross-cutting).	10
17. Include traditionally under-represented communities (potential cross-cutting)	15

Action Items

1. NBEP staff will update the blueprint per the input provided at this meeting. Special attention will be paid to how best to categorize, describe, and visualize the relationships between goals, objectives, and actions and address actions that may be cross-cutting.
2. Subcommittee to provide any further input on the blueprint to Mike prior to the next meeting.
3. Members invited to send emails to Julia Bancroft with any updates or announcements that they would like to share with the subcommittee.
4. NBEP staff and subcommittee members to be to compile a list of partners/venue for external outreach.

Next Meeting

Julia Bancroft shared that the next meeting will be June 18th from 10am-noon via Zoom. The next meeting may include:

- Review revised blueprint.
- Explore best structure for building out the plan, including smaller working groups.
- Discuss potential new outreach strategy and tools.
- Volunteer specific outreach tasks to subcommittee members.

The meeting adjourned at 12:09pm.