

December Management Committee Meeting

December 13, 2022

In Attendance:

Steve Couture, Cory Riley, Jon Balanoff, Rayann Dionne, Annie Cox, Peter Kinner, Erik Chapman, Katie Ambrose, Melissa Paly, Brianna Group, Erik Beck, Dea Brickner-Wood, Addie Halligan, Todd Selig, Regina Lyons, Jessa Kellogg, Russ Hilliard

and PREP staff: Kalle Matso, Abigail Lyon, Trevor Mattera, Fay Rubin, and Sierra Kehoe

Link to Zoom Recording:

https://media.unh.edu/media/Kalle+Matso%27s+Personal+Meeting+Room/1_eilfegwd

Welcome and Roll Call | Group

The group was welcomed as asked to state their name, organization, and an aspect of the Piscataqua Region that they were thankful for. The meeting recording did not begin until after the ice breaker was finished.

Accept Previous Meeting Notes | Steve Couture

The September Management Committee meeting notes were accepted unanimously.

EPA Update | Regina Lyons and Eric Beck

- Similar position as we were previously, continuing the Biden administration priorities of climate, DEIF, and environmental justice. NEP's are receiving additional BIL funds for the next five years, Erik Beck is processing the first of those awards. We're excited to see what PREP and partners do with those funds. This BIL funding more than doubles the budget of PREP.
- The Justice40 initiative calls for 40% of the benefits of funds be realized in disadvantaged communities; we'll be working with PREP to develop an equity strategy regarding Justice40.
- The one to one match is being waved for the BIL funds. The waiver is in place for the next two years, and the following years are contingent on the equity strategy.
- Cory Riley inquired about the justice strategy that Fay Rubin and Kalle Matso are working on. The response is included under the Fay's 'Staff Updates' section.

Nomination Committee Update | Erik Chapman

- The nomination committee met to discuss the interest of the Management Committee as a networking body that has geographical and organizational distribution that reflects the types of connections that serve the interests of PREP. There's interest in connecting to municipalities,

folks up-watershed, and Hampton-Seabrook Estuary in addition to Great Bay Estuary as we look at the composition of the MC.

- Kalle Matso: PREP is developing the Network Project. This project is aimed at understanding the Piscataqua Region Watershed and the dynamics within it. In terms of the nomination committee, we're focused up filling in some of the places where there are 'dark' areas in the watershed.
- Additionally, someone will become Annie Cox's successor as she cycles out of her chairmanship within the next year.
- The Management Committee composition is as follows: The MC will be comprised of up to 28 representatives of federal, state and local government agencies, non-governmental organizations, user groups, citizen groups, business and industry representatives, and research institutions.
- The three nominees are Brianna O'Brien of the Town of Hampton, Rayann Dionne of Seabrook-Hampton Estuary Alliance, and Brianna Group of the Nature Conservancy. Candidate bios can be found here: <https://prepestuaries.org/02/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/MC-Committee-Member-Candidates-dec-2022.pdf>
- Todd Selig moved all three candidates join the committee, and Cory Riley seconded the motion. All three candidates were unanimously approved. The motion was passed to accept all three candidates onto the Management Committee.

State of Our Estuaries Conference Approach | Kalle Matso

- In previous years, the SOOE conference was all in plenary and primarily a scientific presentation that goes through the report indicator by indicator. The invitation list was open to all and first-come first-serve.
- PREP is suggesting the following as a modification:
 - o Roughly half of the day is a kickoff for the Network Project to understand who we are in the watershed and what some major steps are that we can endeavor to do in response to the status and trends of the report.
 - o We envision the first part of the conference in the morning to be a high-level reflection of the report with the second half of the day being a resource management response. We envision breakouts by topic/geographic range in the afternoon.
 - At what point should we release the report? A pre-release to those who are coming to the conference? We are thinking one week ahead of time.
 - o Furthermore, we suggest that the guest list is not open invite; we would selectively invite key people to have a valuable conversation about the management response. Maybe 100 seats are selective invite and the remaining 150 would be open invite.
 - We could discuss the possibility of a stipend for folks who would like to attend but are not financially able.

Response to PREP's suggestions:

- Cory Riley: Could you say a little more on the second half of the day? What are your goals for the afternoon as a staff? What are you happy walking away from in the second half of the day?

- Kalle: The second half of the day would be a review of things we know we have to do and prioritize goals that aren't currently happening. What are some first initial steps that we should take to ensure we're reaching the goals we set for the watershed?
- Annie Cox: Are there logistical constraints with the space?
 - Kalle: There might be some issues. I believe the room can be divided for breakouts, but I will look into that.
- Katie Ambrose: Can you clarify when the official release would take place? What group would have access to the pre-release?
 - Kalle: Looking at the idea of pre-releasing it to the 250 people that signed up for the event. Maybe a week or two early? I imagine we'll form an ad-hoc group to organize this event to figure out these logistics.
- Peter Kinner: Are you intending in the plenary session to discuss some of the effective things that have happened in the past five years? So people know what worked and what didn't as a baseline?
 - Kalle: That sounds like a great idea.
- Dea Brickner-Wood: I'm not clear on the outcomes of the smaller groups. If it's a conversation around the findings of the results vs input that will then change the report, that's not clear. I think there has to be the assumption that people won't read the report and do their homework. The size of the groups would matter tremendously in terms of what kind of engagement you're hoping for.
 - Kalle: The goal is not debate the science, but rather to discuss what the science is showing. There would be a review of what we want to do and analyze our progress on those goals. We would come away with a consensus on what we can do better to achieve our goals.
 - Dea: Will the report be amended due to that conversation?
 - Kalle: No. The discussion about what to do about these problems will not change the status and trends of the science. We envision about a year-and-a-half roll out plan to discuss the report with people. As we have these conversations, seeds will be planted regarding future reports.
 - Dea: With those conversations, it needs to be clear where those suggestions will be used and how they'll be used.
 - Kalle: Great point. It has to be clear that this isn't sitting around and talking about what PREP is going to do; it's going to be an opportunity to improve collaborations as a community towards our mutual goals.
- Regina Lyons: What you described is essentially the CCMP which is meant to be a guiding document for the watershed. I do think we need to be really clear about the timing of the SOOE (science) and CCMP (management actions). I would caution about that. We set off on a CCMP update rather than a full revision under Rachel's directorship. It would be a conversation on whether we're updating the 2010 CCMP, or taking a pause and deciding if we want to make this an engagement opportunity for a revamped CCMP. In the latter case, we would be able to take municipal suggestions into account when working on the CCMP.

- Todd Selig: I would suggest providing the report a week before the event so that attendees can look it over before attending. I agree that many will only give a cursory look. Therefore, I suggest that, at the event, we review what we've learned, what action steps we need to take, and then allow for folks to ask questions. I'd love to see the breakout be: this is how YOU can help and what you can do. If we can accomplish that we'll be in good shape. I want to avoid a conversation in the afternoon where nothing is accomplished. Let's give the tools for resource managers to march forward and complete these things.
- Erik Chapman: Is there going to be a new CCMP that is going to be produced as a result of trends that emerged in SOOE? If yes, what is the timeline?
 - o Trevor: Currently we've received feedback from EPA HQ on the latest revision. We need to schedule time to go back through and implement the changes necessary for the next version. Hoping for something along the lines of fall 2023.
 - o Abigail: We have been working on that update for quite some time. We've had really great conversations with partners on this topic. In terms of roll out, I want to be careful that there's enough distance between SOOE and CCMP to avoid confusion between the two documents.
 - o Erik: Is there a way that the second part of the SOOE conference can lead into the CCMP?
 - o Abigail: Yes, I think so. We'll have to have more conversations about how the SOOE conversations can provide insight into the CCMP.
 - o Erik: Could the draft CCMP be used in that afternoon conversation so that people could start to see themselves in the plan?
- Regina Lyons: I agree, if we are not opening the conversation up to changing the CCMP, I do think that as part of the conference, adding context about PREP and how parts of SOOE line up with CCMP sections would be beneficial. Could tie in increased funding through BIL here. The funding might be another piece to help organize the conversation.
- Todd Selig: I want to make sure that we are poised to move forward and get things done!
- Trevor Mattera: It might be a change of perspective, but we would be trying to bring in folks who aren't the usual suspects. We want to hear their limitations, not just press onto them what they should be doing. In a lot of cases, it's starting to talk about PREP but also hear from people about what they need in order to get work done.
- Todd Selig: We shouldn't assume that people know about the estuaries... even what eelgrass is or why it's important.
 - o Kalle Exactly, a lot of up-watershed folks don't care about eelgrass or estuaries.
- Erik Chapman: I think I'm hearing that one of the goals of the afternoon is to bring in new people, is that correct?
 - o Kalle: Yes, absolutely. The strategic invite process is part of the Network Project.
 - o Erik: We should think about structuring the afternoon around what sort of things would be interesting to each subgroup. (For example, toxic contaminants group vs oyster group)
 - o Kalle: Good point.

- Steve Couture: Could there be a short webinar for these new folks that we would like to be at the table... an Estuary 101 so they have the context to participate in the conference effectively.
- Cory Riley: If you want a productive conversation that brings new things, we need to be really selective on what the new things are that we need to work on.

Kalle requested that attendees give thought to how they, as an individual, want to interact with PREP on two fronts: help PREP with ideas on how to manage the afternoon, and who PREP should invite to the conference (i.e. unusual suspects) and to share those ideas in the chat. **The verbatim chat is included at the end of these notes with each attendees' suggestions.**

Staff Updates | PREP Staff

Fay Rubin, Special Projects Manager:

- As Regina mentioned, we are required to prepare an equity strategy by next June. We're grateful to EPA for sponsoring a series of workshops and discussions about what the equity strategy should look like as well as providing a template. We're just not diving into what the PREP version of the strategy would look like. If your organization has done some work in this area of identifying disadvantaged communities, please send me that information. Fay's email is: fay.rubin@unh.edu

Sierra Kehoe, Communications Coordinator:

- I'm working on mapping out the organizations within the Piscataqua Region Watershed as part of the Network Project. I've created a list of organizations and an informal map to see the spatial orientation of the network. To make this map more useful, organizations will be color coded: green indicates an organization that PREP has a great relationship with, yellow indicates an organization that need more attention, and red indicates an organization that is new to PREP's network. Additionally, different layers can be added to understand the different facets of the watershed. For example, layers can be added for relevant businesses, schools, religious organizations, etc. Please send Sierra any ideas relating to the Network Project: sierra.kehoe@unh.edu
- Sierra also mentioned her capacity as Communications Coordinator to amplify the communications efforts of partners.

Abigail Lyon, Community Engagement Manager:

- We're looking for folks who are interested in a training regarding the Diversity, Equity, Justice, Inclusion act.
- Related to septic system expert panel: in partnership with DES we're going through a RFP process to bring on a consultant to help lead and facilitate an expert panel process. This will build on the Clean Sweep project. This one is a little more focused and will use an expert panel comprised of regulatory folks but also people with expertise in retrofit technologies with a focus on nitrogen and phosphorous removal. If there are people you know who could sit on this panel, please contact me. Abigail.lyon@unh.edu

- Through the BIL funding, we have an unprecedented amount of money to support community technical assistance projects (PREPA grants). We're increasing funding amount and awards. We have engaged the management committee in the past to review PREPA grant proposals; this is something to consider. We can set up a committee to think through the PREPA grant process and serve on a reviewing committee if folks are interested.
- In addition to bringing Sierra Kehoe on to assist with communications, we hired Roca Communications to conduct a communications audit. The information they gather through their interviews will help us build a robust communications program.

Trevor Mattera, Habitat Manager:

- As many of you know, there's been a lot of work happening within Great Bay 2030 within the past few months. I co-chair the habitat restoration workgroup and sit on the steering committee. There's one million dollars on the table for many awesome projects.
- We've wrapped up our second year of pilot eelgrass restoration. Things looked better this year! We're seeing some expansion in a lot of the beds. We planted at three sites: two in the early summer and one in the fall. The MAAM has been working on acquiring NOAA funded grants to do eelgrass and oyster restoration. We're working with Dave Burdick and Ray Grizzle on that project.
- We've brought on a short-term coordinator for the Hampton-Seabrook Estuary Collaborative. Liz Durfey has been acting in that position as a backbone for SHEA. PREP will be using BIL funds moving forward to continue the funding of that position.
- Peter Kinner: Do you have any data on oyster recruitment?
 - o Brianna Group: We have a monitoring report that is coming in at the end of the month for the farmed oysters for the past few years. Fish and game has dive surveys on all the wild reefs.

Roundtable Updates

- Todd Selig:
 - o Durham is moving forward with the removal of the mill pond dam on the oyster river. We received a couple grant opportunities; we are currently focused on a NOAA grant that focuses on removing fish barriers. We expanded our application to also include a feasibility analysis and installation of a fish ladder at the UNH dam. We're expecting a formal announcement about this in the next few weeks.
 - o We have a new land stewardship coordinator: Sarah Callahan. She's been involved in land conservation efforts for many years.
 - o The Municipal Management Association of NH did a joint conference with ME. Several folks spoke about climate and conservation; thank you to Abigail for presenting.
- Brianna Group:
 - o TNC's proposal to National Fish and Wildlife Federation was accepted to support oyster aquaculture and restoration. We have about four and a half million across seven states in the US over the next four years. We will be working with farmers on oyster restoration and addressing challenges with sustainability across the industry.

- Erik Chapman:
 - o NH SeaGrant just released an RFP for projects. The projects will start in a year and run for two years with about \$100,000 with 50% match requirement. Please start thinking about submitting your project proposals!
- Katie Ambrose:
 - o The MAAM just met to approve the 2023 monitoring budget. Big thank you to Kalle for all of your work!
 - o The oyster and eelgrass restoration project is kicking off in partnership with PREP, CLF, UNH, and TNC. We'll be releasing a press release soon on this project.
- Jon Balanoff:
 - o AWWA just got approved for another 319 grant. We just finished helping Pine River Pond create a watershed management plan. This grant will help us to fund our septic-system cost share program to help replace outdated septic systems on the lake in addition to our Youth Conservation Corps projects and renovating an old boat launch. We were also able to hire a full-time program coordinator for 2023.
- Jessa Kellogg:
 - o Kittery was recently awarded a grant from Maine DEP to update the Spruce Creek watershed management plan. Also recently awarded a coastal communities grant to estimate nutrient loading into that estuary. We will estimate nutrient loading by collecting nutrient samples and performing flow analysis to key tributaries. We're also wrapping up a PREPA grant for looking at coastal hazard overlay zone based on sea level rise related to Maine Climate Council recommendations.
- Addie Halligan:
 - o Looking forward to working with Jessa and PREP folks on the Spruce Creek Watershed plan. We are wrapping up a project in Bonnie Bay Lake and are starting a project in Sanford doing an in-stream restoration work in addition to outreach. We will be updating our non-point source priority list so if there is any knowledge or data on any of the waterbodies on the Maine side, please let us know.
 - o We are also required to spend 40% of our funds on environmental justice. We have some steps outlined: 1. Sending out an RFP shortly to create an interactive GIS map that will be used as a screening tool to determine gaps where we may need additional work, 2. Hoping to decrease match requirement for projects, etc.

Feedback on SOOE Conference from chat:

Cory Riley: I think the SOE, CCMP and PREPA all should be linked - and this workshop/conference is a good opportunity to do that in a tangible way.

Cory Riley: People will be engaged if there is money being offered- so if you can tie people's ideas to funding at PREP or ways we as an MC can connect people to funding ideas

Annie Cox: provide guiding questions/probing qs to help individuals think thru the report and come to the conference with ideas

Erik Chapman: Identify (at whatever scale makes sense) who you'd like to engage in the SOE who haven't in the past.

Steve Couture: 1. Break outs by geography---mix of new folks with old for some --but others maybe be mostly new (upper watershed). Rally people around the waterbody's they care about.

Peter Kinner: the breakouts need structure for each topic, questions to guide conversations.

Cory Riley: People: Agency wise I think we need to engage drinking water, lakes, septic types.

Annie Cox: another idea is to have focus groups that \$ upper watershed folks to learn about the CCMP and get their ideas, rather than invite them to the conf/workshop

Erik Chapman: Focus group a bit to identify things they are interested in learning about or participating in, to inform structure and content of the afternoon session.

Cory Riley: transportation, big developers that might shape what happens in the watershed in the future

Addie Halligan: In identifying who we'd like to engage, perhaps discussing with a subset of these individuals and determine what their interest level is, what they want to get out of this conference, what kind of preparation can they do, what kind of background information are they coming into this conference with, and what are they hoping to get out of it. Essentially doing our homework to understand what the audience wants to get out of this, as much as what PREP wants to get out of this

Steve Couture: Groups identified under the Justice 40 work...

Russ Hilliard: People: Teachers, community leaders (heads of chamber of commerce), community influencers (local social media people who have a following), town selectmen and women. People who would carry the message to the general public

Todd Selig: I'd like to see "beautiful evidence" as part of the presentations by staff/experts who speak. In other words, the slides/illustrations we show should not just be clunky data-filled images that cause eyes to glaze over, but rather informative and easy to understand information that is made more so visually by the image/slide shown.

Todd Selig: Four segments: 1) Findings - what we've learned/progress (or lack thereof) observed (plus Q&A); 2) Innovations/Actions steps recommended based on what we've learned (plus Q&A); 3) Create common frameworks/understandings as part of 1+2 above; 4) This is how you can help, get involved, make a difference...

Steve Couture: I like Addie's suggestion of talking to people to see how they feel it would be most productive. Instead of imposing our "good ideas" let's ask some new folks that we are interested in what they think.

Jessa Kellogg: Something that stood out to me from the last conference was the use of live polling through an app, I believe it was used for social issues if I'm remembering correctly. Are there questions we should be asking attendees to gauge level of awareness or idea generating questions to get feedback from them in this way? I remember sitting in the audience looking forward to seeing the results from others in the room participating, it may be a way to get participation from folks who don't like to speak up.

Katie Ambrose: In addition to inviting alliances etc. extend an invitation to each of the municipalities with information on what to expect and ask them to self-select a representative (or 2). We should also be asking (both in the invitation process and at the conference) "who isn't at the table that should be a part of the conversation?"

Dea Brickner-Wood: The first part of the conference should provide comprehensive review of the SOE (get all attendees on same page, and assume report not read in advance). breakout session clarifications: What background / information will be presented, and then what question will to be asked of the participants - is it to respond proposed & known actions, and solicit new ideas? clarify what we want as outcomes. Who to invite: municipal reps (conservation commissions, planning boards, select-councils; staff and volunteers), NGOs - land trusts, watershed organizations; county conservation districts; state and federal agency staff;

Peter Kinner: If we want good feedback there needs to be advanced notification on the topics for breakouts and the type of feedback desired. Not sure a week with the report is enough who have another jobs or responsibilities. finding ways to reach out to people or groups in advance who will provide the feed back you want to receive is critical.

Annie Cox: a 1-hr highlight of the report webinar a week before

Brianna Group: With bringing in new groups, possibly some sort of interactive activity or directory where participants could lay out priorities/opportunities/funding to help with making connections/collaborations that haven't been made yet - I'm thinking of the Great Bay Research Symposium

Jon Balanoff: A conversation between PREP and new people coming to the table is a great model for the afternoon. This should be a two way conversation. There are many organizations/municipalities in the upper watershed that are not aware that they fall in the CCMP and those people should be invited to discuss their connection to the water quality and the estuary, and how PREP can help them achieve their shared goals. This will include determining what these shared goals are. I like the idea of this being a conversation as opposed to needing immediate outcomes. Much of the upper watershed is defined by lakes and rivers. AWWA represents a small cluster of lakes and rivers, perhaps having groups that do similar work to AWWA on a larger scale such as NH LAKES and New Hampshire Rivers Council would be a benefit, as well as municipal representatives from, if not every town, towns that are responsible for these freshwater resources (i.e. Nottingham, Barrington, Strafford)

Peter Kinner: How can we use PREP organizations to spread the word for to people you want to show?