

**Southeast New England Program (SNEP)
Steering Committee Meeting 12/06/2021 1:00-3:00PM
Focus: Fiscal Year 2022 Program Budget and Annual Priorities**

Notes:

Roll Call:

- Army Corps of Engineers – Larry Oliver
- Association to Preserve Cape Cod – Andrew Gottlieb
- Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program – Joe Costa
- Cape Cod Commission – Kristy Senatori and Erin Perry
- EPA Office of Research and Development – Tim Gleason
- US Fish and Wildlife Service – Suzanne Patton
- Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management – Adrienne Pappal
- Mashpee Wampanoag Natural Resources Department – Dale Oakley
- Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection – Gerard Martin
- Narragansett Bay Estuarine Research Reserve – Caitlin Chaffe
- Narragansett Bay NEP - Mike Gerel
- NEIWPC - Richard Friesner
- Rhode Island Natural Resources Conservation Service – Leah Feldman
- Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management – Sue Kiernan
- Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development - Bill Napolitano
- The Nature Conservancy – Allison Bowden
- University of Massachusetts Boston – Bob Bowen
- US Geological Survey – Jeff Barbaro
- Wampanoag of Gay Head (Aquinnah) - Beckie Finn
- Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve – Tonna Marie Rogers
- Restore America’s Estuaries – Tom Ardito and Dan Hayden
- SNEP Network – Martha Shiels and Phaeng Southisombath



Welcome:

- The Federal Government will be under a continuing resolution until February 18, 2022.
 - SNEPs budget will remain at FY2021 levels until a budget is passed
- EPA Region 1 is still waiting for the appointment of a Regional Administrator.
- Since our last Steering Committee meeting in March SNEP has:
 - [Completed our Five-Year Strategic Plan](#)
 - Engaged the public through newsletters and webinars
 - Selected Restore America's Estuaries to continue running the SNEP Watershed Implementation Grants program
 - Conducted a grant competition to select four entities for the new SNEP Pilot Watersheds Initiative
 - Continued to work towards a State of the Region Report through the new Monitoring Synthesis Framework
 - David Morgan, our ORISE Fellow, has moved on to a new position in the environmental field

Innovative /Alternative Septic System Discussion:

Recap of the June 2021 EPA Innovative/Alternative Workshop:

- Workshop impetus: Innovative/Alternative (I/A) septic systems are a tool to combat our nitrogen issues, but are not in widespread use
- EPA hosted a three-day workshop to learn from practitioners about the current state of technology, barriers to widespread use, and how to breakdown those barriers
- Key take-away suggestions from workshop:
 - Support states and municipalities in the development of responsible management entities
 - Assist with incentives and grants to adopt the systems
 - Establish data-sharing agreements
 - Host more workshops
 - Elevate the importance of I/A in addressing water quality issues
 - Define and communicate positive impacts of the technology

Discussion:

- Some members felt there may be an opportunity for SNEP to help with getting open-source I/A technologies from pilot to general use
 - Design can be used by anyone, but there isn't a company or developer to push the testing process forward
- Some members felt Responsible Management Entities (RME) were going to be a key aspect to the successful expansion of I/A use



- Responsibility for operation/maintenance, system failure, shouldn't be on homeowners
- SNEP may have a roll to play in moving RMEs forward
- Some members felt that more research was still needed on I/A systems in terms of longevity, performance, and cost vs. centralized sewer system
- Some members felt I/A systems are comparable or cheaper than centralized sewer and provided the added benefit of groundwater recharge
- External documents provided by members related to RMEs:
 - [Bain RME ppt 2/21](#)
 - [Bain project case studies 9/21](#)

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Discussion

Overview of Bill:

- \$1.7 billion additional funding for EPA geographic programs over the coming five years
- SNEP will receive \$3 million/year for the next five years on top of the base budget
 - Potential to waive/reduce match
 - No fund expiration
 - There will be recessions for overhead, so exact amount to get to SNEP is unknown
- \$132 million in additional funds will go to the National Estuary Programs over the next five years
- \$11.7 billion additional funds will go to the Clean Water State Revolving Fund over the next five years

SNEP's Proposed Strategy for BIL Funding:

- Proposed goals
 - Focus on large scale projects
 - Try to show immediate impacts
 - Synergize with other groups, especially other federal entities, where possible
 - Encourage innovative technologies
 - Emphasize return on investment
 - Incorporate environmental justice and climate change
- Proposed general themes
 - Innovative/Alternative (I/A) systems
 - Salt marsh retention, migration, restoration
 - Stormwater control measures
 - Increases to SNEP staffing numbers
- First year BIL funding (2022)
 - Focus on getting I/A systems installed across MA and RI. Both states would receive the same funding. would get the same amount of funding to get more I/A systems installed



- Fund the development of RME in both states
- Future years
 - Plan to put out a roadmap for spending and projects
 - Plan to keep the Steering Committee and Federal partners in the loop

Discussion

- Members stated that fish passage projects are something to think about as they relate to climate change
- Members felt that public access projects in EJ areas – getting people to resources in an equitable way
- How were I/A septic systems chosen to be the focus?
 - In the next coming years there will be a lot of installations on the Cape, so we wanted to get ahead of the curve and make sure that the technologies that achieve better nitrogen reduction are the ones that get installed, and there is a structure in place to support them - strike while the iron is hot
 - Looking for big projects – and if we can get many systems installed, we'll have a big impact
- How will SNEP choose an I/A septic system vendor?
 - Through competitive proposal
 - Need transparent public process to choose a vendor
- Some members were concerned that the public may not buy-in to I/A upgrades
 - Three to five thousand new title five systems go in on Cape Cod yearly, so if there is an incentive to pay for the installation, there will be enough homeowners that would want to do it.
- Reference Information:
 - [Bain RME ppt 2/21](#)
 - [Bain project case studies 9/21](#)

SNEP Watershed Implementation Grants

- Completed 4 grant rounds since program establishment
 - Over 50 sub-grant awards
 - Over \$10 million dollars total
- 2021 grants
 - 14 new grant awards
 - \$1.75 million SNEP funds
 - \$3.6 million total with non-federal match
 - Implemented an online application process
- 2022 – 2026
 - RAE was re-awarded the cooperative agreement to manage the SWIG grants
 - Approximately \$2.6 million per year in grants
 - Developing a program implementation plan
 - Maintain diversity in awards – to be reflective of SNEP strategic plan and goals



- Developing meaningful metrics
- Annual Program Review
- Annual Program Report
- Increase outreach and information sharing
- Increase QAPP support
- 2022 Request for proposals
 - Similar process to 2021
 - Expect to have \$1.8 million

Discussion

- Some members expressed that as more federal funding becomes available in the coming years, preparing smaller community organizations, especially environmental justice groups, should be a priority for SWIG.

SNEP Network

- The Network has been working to identify the needs for capacity building throughout the region, as well as identifying capacity building opportunities.
 - Funding and grant writing assistance are significant needs. As such, the Network has been working with quite a few communities to assist their grant writing techniques by providing grant writing webinars and workshops.
- The Network will continue to provide workshops and technical webinars, funding and financing trainings.
 - In 2021, the Network offered municipal scholarships to train municipal representatives to get climate resilience training.
- For FY22, the Network will select 5 communities, develop stormwater training programs, and help municipalities identify areas to guide the cohort through stormwater design prioritization and improvement.
- The Network has selected nine communities as recipients for Network Community Projects
- The Network has been supporting regional initiatives that are anticipated to have a broad regional impact:
 - The completion of the stormwater retrofit manual
 - The completion of the Stewardship mapping initiative
 - BMP Tracking and Accounting/HRU Mapping (2 RI and 2 MA communities)
 - Sustainable financing
 - LID/Bylaw review and next-generation watershed management tool
 - Riparian buffer restoration toolkit.
- Network Opportunities for FY22
 - Increase collaboration with SWIG



- Better engage EJ communities in partnership with the Network's Advisory Council, which is in the process of being redeveloped.
- New partner in the Blackstone Watershed Collaborative

Discussion

- Some members felt that grant writing assistance should be a focus in future years
 - The Network grant writing webinar was open to wider than the SNEP region and had high attendance.

FY2022 Plans for SNEP Base Funding:

- We are under a continuing resolution until at least mid-February. As such, the SNEP budget for FY22 is still unknown.
- Public Outreach
 - SNEP Symposium is scheduled for May/June 2022 (virtual)
 - Two future SNEP Workshops: March (HABs) and July (TBD)
 - Quarterly webinars (continued)
 - Newsletter – new format. EPA, Network, SWIG, and partners will produce a streamlined and more frequent newsletter
- Reinvigorate SNEP subcommittees
 - Joint workshop scheduled for December 8th
- Increased federal agency coordination
- Increased EJ initiatives
- Continued work on Monitoring synthesis framework – groundwork for the state of the Region report (SOR).
- Continued partnership with USGS
- Shasten Sherwell (ORISE Fellow) continues her work on HABs in the SNEP region.
- Flow duration curve phase II – working to operationalize the flow duration curve for municipal use/planning.
- Pilot watershed monitoring strategy is under development for FY22
- Continued partnership with RAE, NE-EFC, Buzzards Bay NEP, Narragansett Bay NEP
- SNEP presented a few potential future projects for Committee feedback:
 - HAB Cyanoscape for Community groups
 - Additional RI pilot watershed
 - Contractor support for Subcommittee Needs
 - I/A septic contaminants of emerging concerns study
 - Capacity building
 - AquaQAPP Expansion to RI
 - Some members felt the timing of this proposed project is not ideal for RI.
 - Small Grants Program focused on meeting EJ concerns and capacity building



- SNEP Research Grant program specifically dedicated to funding innovative, applied research
 - Some members felt this program would fill an important gap in the region

Straw Poll:

	First Choice	Second Choice
Cyanoscope		
RI Pilot	2	
Subcommittee		
IA Septic CEC	5	
Capacity Building	2	1
AquaQAPP		
EJ Small Grants	1	4
Research Program	1	5
Expand projects		1
Coordinate stormwater tracking and accounting		

