

Science Advisory Committee Meeting Program Report February 19, 2020



HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Staff shares kick-off topics for the year
- ✓ Staff provides updates on 4 indicator updates with timelines including SAC review
- ✓ Emily Shumchenia to present an update on benthic habitat



NOTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The SAC approved the Co-Chair job description and nominated Sue Kiernan and Jamie Vaudrey as Co-Chairs unanimously. These appointments were confirmed at the December 2019 Steering Committee meeting. NBEP thanks Sue and Jamie for their work with the SAC and looks forward to working closely with them in the future.

NBEP has progressed towards formalizing its internship program. We have shared a framework document with URI's MESM and Marine Affairs programs, and Bristol Community College (BCC). This initial program will focus on interns who will be working for college/university credit. To fully formalize those relationships and responsibilities, we have created an agreement for incoming interns. This framework, a list of potential projects, and a copy of the agreement are being shared with URI and BCC. We will expand our internship contact list this winter/spring and hope to have at least one intern in place by June 2020.

The SAC encouraged NBEP to pursue four indicators for potential updates – Land Use; Benthic Habitat; Water Clarity; and Social Science Workshop. As part of this discussion, Julia and Mike led a discussion on audience and messaging for each of the presented indicators. The audience will be the foremost consideration as Staff and partners develop the indicator updates. The SAC agreed that messages need to be science based and keep from advocating a position. This meeting will discuss current updates, and a detailed timeline so the SAC knows approximately when the NBEP will be requiring review for the updates.

Finally, Nate Merrill with the EPA presented research on remote sensing of coastal water quality. This research produced an interesting discussion on water clarity in the region, sources of data, and how best to use remote sensing to augment the work our SAC and partners already do. The results of the November discussion have been incorporated into the update presented later in the meeting.



NBEP STAFF RAPID KICKOFF TOPICS

Mike Gerel will kickoff 2020 by reviewing the SAC's responsibilities taken from NBEP's [Guiding Principles](#). The SAC provides a forum to examine, discuss, and exchange scientific findings and technical information. As such, the SAC needs to have the expertise among its members to fulfill that obligation. Courtney will

preview a discussion about how best to add new committee members to the SAC. This discussion will take place at a future meeting. Please think about an appropriate process (keeping the SAC's responsibilities in mind) and potential candidates.



CCMP Preview

NBEP has begun the process for updating its Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), titled *Vision 2032*. The initial meetings have been with the CCMP committee to analyze the previous plan and review the actions for completeness or relevance. Part of this process was inviting current and former NEP directors to the meetings to share their processes and vision for their region's CCMPs.

Following those meetings, the staff internally worked through the notes and organized thoughts into four goals: water, wildlife, quality of life, and capacity to implement the CCMP. Thus far, these goals have been further refined to 13 objectives and 37 actions (this refinement needs to be vetted through the CCMP committee before it is shared with wider audiences). These goals, objectives, and actions are draft, however, we would like to discuss how the SAC can best support the *Vision 2032* plan – from creation to implementation. Part of the SAC's support would be to align its members with the four goals to provide expertise to the CCMP and Steering Committees, as well as for any future meetings with the public to discuss this plan. This alignment would mean nominating experts to the SAC to fill any remaining gaps.



INDICATOR UPDATE

As part of the previous meeting, the SAC approved four indicators to be researched for a 2020 update of the 2017 Technical Report. These are:

- Benthic Habitat (see below)
- Water Clarity
- Land Use
- Social Science Workshop

Following the previous meeting, Courtney and Nate Merrill (EPA) met to further discuss water clarity data, and uses for the data NBEP already has on hand. During the meeting, Courtney and Nate agreed to investigate all available water clarity data to suit both EPA's and NBEP's needs. From there, they will convene a working group of the data collectors and experts to discuss how best to move forward with water clarity – as an indicator, and uses for the data outside of the status and trends process.

NBEP suggests the land use update could be handled by an intern. Not only would the intern be responsible for updating the data available, but also research some pressing questions that were generated by the SAC during the November meeting. We hope to have an intern in place in June to tackle this project.

Staff researched social science indicators in use by other NEPs, and compiled a list of actions and items [here](#). NBEP found that many NEPs are on the path to reporting on social science indicators, but many have not developed robust indicators and methodologies as of yet. The Puget Sound Partnership and the Tampa Bay Estuary Program are example groups who have started down this pathway. Many NEPs do report locations of public access points and devote website space to encourage volunteering and working with the public to enhance access and a sense of place.

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Additionally, Julia T. and Courtney held a phone call with Rob Johnston to brainstorm potential topic areas and partners for a Social Science working group. Following that meeting, Julia and Courtney refined their thoughts to develop the framework for a working group. Julia and Courtney plan to coordinate one-on-one meetings with regional experts in all aspects of social science, and will invite those that are interested and willing to join the work group. The group will provide input to the objectives and actions of *Vision 2032*, as well as discuss and strategize methods and metrics to implement *Vision 2032*.

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BENTHIC INDICATOR UPDATE

Emily Shumchenia, E&C Enviroscene, will update the SAC on the benthic habitat indicator. She will begin her presentation with an overview of the benthic habitat indicator from the 2017 *State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed*. This [chapter](#) explored the status and trends of the benthic habitat as it relates to the nutrient reductions of the 1990s to early 2000s. The chapter included data from Sediment Profile Imagery (SPI), available from 1988 and 2008. Emily will add to this dataset by presenting results from the 2018 SPI. The 2018 update revisits sites from the previous two datasets and expands imagery further into the Taunton River. She will then explore how these data are informing current work in the upper portions of Narragansett Bay, particularly addressing improving and increasing fish habitat.



UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

NBEP is pleased to announce the upcoming opportunities for staff and our partners to present their work:

- Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC), February 29, 2020
- Land and Water Summit, March 7, 2020
- New England Estuarine Research Society (NEERS), June 4-6, 2020
- Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) and Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP), October 2020
- New England Estuarine Research Society (NEERS), October 2020

As you find out more opportunities, please share them with NBEP.



KEY DISCUSSION TOPICS

- ✓ SAC membership process and potential candidates
- ✓ Vision 2032 preview
- ✓ Indicator(s) to update by summer 2020