

Notes

Meeting Attendees: Haley Burns (PDE), Elizabeth Butler (EPA2), Kim Cole (DNREC), Karen Forst (PDE), Kathy Klein (PDE), Danielle Kreeger (PDE), Megan Mackey (EPA3), Catherine Magliocchetti (EPA3), Kristina Peacock-Jones (PADEP), Rachael Phillos (DNREC), Chad Pindar (DRBC), Irene Purdy (EPA2)

Welcome/Introduction

- The focus of this meeting was BIL funding and the projects that have been suggested for consideration.
- There is still no set guidance or timeline for BIL funding. Kathy Klein said that the expectation is that there will not be a match requirement, and that it is not yet known whether this money will be tacked on to the usual grant and work plan or whether it will require its own work plan. Megan Mackey confirmed that there are various discussions happening on these matters but no definitive answers yet.
- Kathy thanked EPA Regions 2 and 3 for organizing meetings of the NEPs within their regions. This allowed for discussion and sharing of ideas about how to use BIL funding, and also initiated some additional dialogue between NEPs offline.

BIL Planning

- When looking at how to use this influx of funding, Kathy said that she thinks we need to be as nimble as possible since there are still so many unknowns. She also referenced an email from EPA HQ that she had previously forwarded to the EIC, which mentioned the expectation that NEPs show progress by the end of the fiscal year. The extent to which that can be done will depend somewhat on when we actually receive the money.
- At the previous EIC meeting we discussed putting together a list of possible projects for BIL Year 1. PDE did this, and DRBC proposed some projects as well. These were all combined onto the DELEP BIL Planning spreadsheet, which was sent out to everyone ahead of this meeting.
- The total for all prospective projects exceeds the \$914K-\$950K anticipated amount through the BIL, however, depending on the guidance and when the funding is actually received, some of the listed projects may fall off the list for Year 1 and be moved to Year 2 and beyond.
- Kathy explained that during this meeting, the full list of projects would be presented. If there are any projects that people feel should fall off the list, please speak up. We also need to think of a way to prioritize the projects so that they can be presented to the SC for their input and approval as efficiently as possible, as we will need to have a work plan prepared and ready to be adjusted once the funding amount is finalized and available.
- Danielle added that what we have is a good starting list, especially given the short amount of time in which it was prepared. In future years, it will be great to have more time to plan and engage other partners, including the SATAC, to assist in identifying needs.
- Kim Cole noted that we put together a lot of information very quickly, and said that she thought having the full list is good and helpful as we may need to mix and match what projects actually get completed in the first year depending on the details that remain outstanding. While she understands the need to prioritize, she recommended not removing anything from the list. She agreed with Danielle that in future years we could be more deliberate, include even more options,

and everyone could probably come to the table with more items ready to go. Kim also mentioned that BIL funding coming into their Coastal Programs needs to go to habitat preservation/conservation, and they were told that a small amount could be set aside for capacity building; if the NEPs receive guidance allowing only a percentage of funding to go to capacity building, then that section of the list could get scaled down to meet the requirement.

- Chad Pindar asked if there would be an effort to prioritize the full list before sending it to the SC. Karen Forst said that she and Haley will be working on something to send out to the EIC to get feedback on how they rank each proposed project. We will ask each partner organization to send their recommendations.
- Chad also mentioned that some of the submitted projects may be more or less amenable to scaling up or down. Danielle suggested adding columns to the planning spreadsheet to note each project's scalability, any timing or logistics constraints. (Haley took notes on this during the meeting and will update the spreadsheet.)

Proposed Projects

- The remainder of the meeting was spent reviewing and discussing all of the projects and initiatives listed on the BIL DELEP Planning spreadsheet. Before beginning the presentation, Karen asked everyone to also think about the future and to let us know if anything sparked ideas for something that might be missing and could be included in other years. Karen then shared a slide deck that summarized the projects under each CCMP theme and goal and, with input from others, provided additional details and thoughts behind each of the listings. Below are notes taken on projects where there was more detailed discussion and/or questions raised.
 - For project #1, *Hatchery Construction*, Kim asked what we would be demonstrating as completed if the capital campaign goal is not reached and how that would impact the expectation of showing progress with year 1 funding. Megan noted that there is anticipation that some things will be done in phases, so the goal is to have a portion, not necessarily all, of the funding used to show some level of completion. Danielle also said that she doesn't think it would be difficult to spend the \$350k in the first year, and just showing that additional funding would lead to more capital campaign success.
 - *Evaluation of Funding Sources / Mechanisms for Estuary WWTP Improvements for D.O. Increases* (#2): Chad said that this is likely the least concrete of the four projects that DRBC submitted. In the future, they expect the wastewater dischargers in the estuary will need to significantly upgrade their treatment processes, and the concept is to create a report of possible funding options that the dischargers could use to help secure funding for upgrades. Chad said that the funding would be subbed out to environmental finance centers.
 - *Enhanced Monitoring for Nutrients (incl. tributaries)* (#3): DRBC is many years in to an Eutrophication Model which will have major implications for wastewater dischargers. This enhanced monitoring would be focused on tributaries, including the Schuylkill River, to provide additional information to solidify understanding of the Eutrophication Model. Chad said that this would likely be scalable, and would build upon an existing relationship with the Academy of Natural Sciences. He expects that it would be ready to go as soon as funding is in, and sees it as a one growing season concept with beginning and end points, but will follow up with others at DRBC to see if the timing of funding would affect the project viability or budget.
 - *Enhance the Estuary Eutrophication Model* (#4): This project concept is to further evaluate the role that sediment plays on D.O., particularly in urban areas. Chad said that this is likely less scalable than the other projects since it is paying for people's time, and is envisioned as a two-year concept. He will check on whether the budgeted amount listed is intended to cover work over two years.

- *Delaware River Festival* (#11), is included because there is a need for funding for more targeted outreach to underserved communities. Last year many folks in Chester did not even know the event was happening. Kim asked if this project could be scaled up to include DE as well, and Kathy said more money would be needed for that but that it is a great idea to look into.
- *Schuylkill Story Corps* (#12), is a new initiative that could serve as a pilot to then be implemented elsewhere in the estuary as well. Irene Purdy and Kim mentioned liking the Story Corps idea and that it's good to be able to tell stories. We would need to check on the term "Story Corps" for any copyright issues, may need to change name.
- *MACWA* (#13): Karen noted that monitoring is one of the most difficult things for us to find funding for. Requested funding for this project includes staff time plus a sub award to BBP, and would provide the opportunity for public engagement. Danielle said that they expect to ask for additional money for this in future years.
- *DELEP Capacity Building Projects*, #22-27, also include items that it are difficult to find grant money for.
 - (22) *Accounting Software*: Karen said that the estimated \$100k for year 1 covers the purchase and set up; there would likely be some licensing costs in subsequent years, which can be built into the indirect rate in the future. This would ultimately reduce the current staffing costs for accounting tasks in Admin and Development departments. Kathy also stressed the importance of this new software to enable us to be more efficient and put an end to invoicing backlogs.
 - (23) *HR Support*: to help keep costs under control, and since CIB has similar needs/is looking for someone to handle similar functions, we are looking into staff share with CIB for additional HR support.
 - (24) *BIL Funding Administration*: BIL funding will bring additional requirements that current staff does not have capacity for; so someone will need to take the lead on managing the data, progress, sub awards, etc.
 - Kathy noted that while the programmatic side of PDE has grown, the support systems have not kept up and as this additional funding comes in we need to address these needs through these capacity building measures.

Next Steps

- Haley will make any necessary edits to the project spreadsheet. Early in the week of 1/31/22, something will be sent out requesting each partner agency's feedback on prioritizing the suggested projects for year 1. A copy of the slide deck will be shared as well.
- We will need to determine how to present the projects and all of this information to the Steering Committee.