

## Estuary Implementation Committee FY23 Work Plan Call

Thursday, March 24, 2022

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

10am-Noon

### Notes

**Meeting Attendees:** Kelly Anderson (PWD), Haley Burns (PDE), 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 meeting started at 10am. This meeting's primary purpose was to discuss changes to the FY23 base funding work plan so PDE can prepare a draft to send to the Steering Committee (SC) by April 8.

### FY23 Work Plan

- Karen Forst presented an overview of the proposed FY23 work plan, identifying changes from prior years. She noted that with this funding and the BIL funding coming down the pike, it is increasingly important for PDE to look at things together to be sure to plan appropriately for staff capacity, timelines, etc.
- For FY23, base funding is \$750k, an increase of \$50k over FY22. Through addendums, in FY22 PDE also received \$50k to support the Urban Waters Federal Partnership Delaware River Location/ambassador, as well as \$25k for the Seabin program. Karen said that PDE has not yet received confirmation from EPA about whether that additional funding will also be available for FY23, but we are moving forward with the work plan as if it will be coming. With the two potential addendums, total funding for FY23 would be \$825k.
  - The increase in funding will require us to increase our match. Over the next few weeks, Karen and Haley will reach out to confirm FY22 match commitments and see what can be committed for FY23 since that will be included in the draft work plan.
- *Program Office Services:* The proposed FY23 work plan will see a slight increase in this section, primarily due to where the Operations Director's time appears. This category includes Kathy, Angela, and Haley's work to support the operation of DELEP and coordination of the EIC and SC, financial management, grant writing, database management, and IT services.
- *Education and Outreach:* the overall amount for this category is staying level from FY22. There is a slight increase in funding for engagement events; the engagement team is currently re-evaluating PDE's event participation and how we can engage with the public in more focused, impactful ways.
- *Marketing and Communications:* the overall amount for this category is staying level from FY22. Added to this section will be portions of costs for website redesign and a new email distribution system.
- *Coordination of Science and Management Needs:* this category has a slight increase from FY22, as hours were added for additional staff involvement in Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) coordination. PDE's science and technical staff fall under this category and need the hours for STAC as well as support for staff time that is used to represent PDE and DELEP on committees, outside work groups, etc.
- *State of the Estuary:* this includes a slight increase from FY22. Completion of the State of the Estuary is targeted for June 2023. The workload now primarily shifts to engagement, with time for Science staff and Directors to review.

- *2023 Delaware Estuary Science and Environmental Summit*: remains level from FY22, with \$5k in support for contractual costs.
- *Addendum: Urban Waters Federal Partnership (not confirmed)*: remains level from FY22. This includes increased staff time for partnership building and project identification, but funding for community project implementation was removed for FY23 since it was included in the plan for BIL funding.
- *Addendum: Seabin Aquatic Trash Collection (not confirmed)*: remains level from FY22. At this time it is unclear what PDE's role will be and what all this project will entail in FY23- additional input from EPA is needed.
  - Kelly Anderson said that her team is working on an informational packet on management of the Seabin project, and asked if anyone had any factsheets or other documents that could help inform this effort. Megan Mackey said that they have some things at EPA that might be helpful; she will send them to Kelly and copy the full EIC on the email.
- Karen shared that she, Kathy, and Angela have been looking at ways to revise how PDE allocates staff time components of the work plan, since most staff members are somehow involved in representing PDE and DELEP through things like community groups, technical workgroups, and review panels across the region. This relationship building is critical to grant funding and CCMP implementation, so Karen said there might be a slight shift in how we allocate time for everyone.
  - Kathy agreed that this is important that we have funding for staff to do this work. It allows us to connect with other groups, leverage funds, and to spread awareness of DELEP, as well as how the work of other groups helps implement the CCMP. Many stakeholders do not have a good sense of how their work connects to DELEP/the CCMP, or the value of sharing reporting information.
- Kathy also mentioned that something that was not factored in to the FY23 work plan or budget is that PDE's office lease is up June 30, 2023. There is a chance that instead of reconfiguring the current space, the office may be moving, which would bring added costs.
  - Cathy Magliocchetti said that hoteling will be a big component of EPA Regions 3's new office workspace, and offered to share feedback on how this works over the next several months as folks start retuning to the office.
- No EIC members expressed concerns or questions about the overview of the proposed FY23 work plan as presented today, so PDE will continue the process of preparing the draft work plan.

### **BIL Funding Update**

- Kathy shared that she and Karen provided EPA with comments on the draft BIL guidance. She said that she has since had some conversations with folks suggesting that EPA is looking at requiring some type of match for BIL funding, which received pushback from ANEP. She has not heard anything more about that or timing for further guidance.
  - Megan said they got some great feedback on the draft interim guidance. The guidance mentions that match has been waived, but there was a comment along the lines of "match has been waived for FY22, to be determined for years 2-5." It might not be that they don't want to waive it, but rather, are not ready to commit to waiving it for all five years up front. Megan said that they provided the feedback that waiving match for only the first year would require NEPS to immediately start working on finding match for FY23, which would take away time from project implementation.
  - Regional management sent messages to Office of Water reiterating the importance of waiving match and how that will empower NEPs to use the funding as intended, and underscoring how compelling match could affect the most underserved communities.

- Megan said recent messaging suggests that mindsets are moving in the right direction when it comes to match.
  - The goal is to have another draft sent out to NEP directors within the next two weeks, which should be able to be shared more widely as well.
- Kathy noted that if another draft comes out for review, submission of the BIL work plan may closely align with the timing for the base funding work plan. Assuming EPA is not increasing capacity in the grants office, she asked whether one of these would take priority for the review process.
  - Megan said that folks at EPA recognize the increased effort both internally and externally, but that she has not heard of any prioritization.
- PDE is now essentially developing two work plans, two budgets, and the reality is that much more staff time is being spent on this work than was budgeted for. Kathy asked everyone to keep in mind that this all leads to higher staffing costs and said that we will need to find a way to cover that moving forward, especially since this is not a one-time occurrence.

### **Spring Steering Committee Meeting Agenda**

- The spring SC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Kathy and Haley will prepare and send to partner agencies a request for their priorities for this year. We will then send these out to the SC ahead of the meeting.
- The FY23 work plan will be one of the main agenda items.
- Kathy said that there are a few substantial initiatives taking place that she thinks warrant a small presentation from PDE: the hatchery, Urban Waters, TREB, and the Seabin project. She would like to get the SC thinking about how their agencies can get involved and help broaden the scope of these projects.
  - Chad Pindar said that he thinks an overview of these items would be worthwhile. He also suggested trying to get some feedback from the SC regarding BIL/NFWF projects for next year. This discussion would provide an opportunity to get them involved earlier on in the process.
- Kathy recommended a discussion around how we can add value and help the SC/partner agencies implement CCMP strategies. Rachael liked the idea of discussing mutual assistance.
- During the fall meeting, the SC agreed on looking into whether U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) would be interested in joining the DELEP Management Conference. Cathy Libertz (EPA3) said that she and Javier Laureno (EPA2) could reach out to their counterpart at USFWS to figure out the best way to move forward. Cathy requested some information on the benefits and role of USFWS serving on the SC, which Kathy recently sent to her. We are not sure if they will be able to report on this during the SC meeting next month.
- Kathy and Steve Tambini (DRBC) are still exploring the possibility of geographic program legislation for the Delaware Estuary & Bay; Kathy asked for input from the EIC about whether this should be discussed with the SC.
  - Kelly thinks that it would be worthwhile for the SC to hear from Kathy and Steve about this.
  - Irene and Megan agreed that it would be valuable to share this information to ensure that the SC is aware and appreciative of the conversations, efforts, and forward-thinking endeavors taking place.

### **Action Items**

- Karen and Haley will reach out to confirm FY22 match commitments and see what can be committed for FY23.
- Megan will send Kelly (and cc: full EIC) informational documents pertaining to the Seabin project.
- PDE will prepare the draft FY23 work plan and send out to the SC and EIC on April 8.

- Haley will send out a request for this year's partner priorities.

**Upcoming Important Dates:**

- April Monthly EIC call: Thursday, March 7, 10am-Noon
- Draft work plan will be sent to the EIC and SC for review: Friday, April 8
- Feedback on draft work plan is due from the EIC and SC: Friday, April 22
- Spring DELEP Steering Committee Meeting: Tuesday, April 26, 1-3pm.