

**Minutes**

**Meeting Attendees:** Haley Burns (PDE), Karen Forst (PDE), Kathy Klein (PDE), Dorina Frizzera (STAC), Lynette Lurig (NJDEP), Megan Mackey (EPA3), Catherine Magliocchetti (EPA3), Martha Maxwell-Doyle (PDE), Rachael Phillos (DNREC), Chad Pindar (DRBC), Irene Purdy (EPA2), Sue Weaver (PADEP) Will Whalon (PWD)

**Steering Committee (SC) Meeting Touch-base**

- Kathy noted that PDE sent out a revised agenda for the SC meeting since the draft FY24 Work Plan is now ready for review. The goal is to have SC approval, but if that's not possible, to get feedback on anything that needs to be reworked.
- Kathy asked if any questions or concerns have been raised during briefings with SC members – none were reported.

**Partner Update CCMP Implementation Report Out Template**

- Haley shared the spreadsheet template on the screen and Kathy reminded the EIC that this is a suggested new method for collecting partner updates to share with SC members in advance of SC meetings as has been done in a more informal manner in the past. We have also been talking about how to revise the CCMP tracking process and believe that this the template could be part of that process. The goal of the new template is to help collect more consistent information that more directly connects the work DELEP partners are doing to CCMP implementation.
- Chad mentioned that in the past for the priority updates they would do maybe the top 3 high level items, but this seems like it is asking for more of an in depth inventory that would require a lot from their agency. There was agreement that this could potentially take more time than past methods because it is asking for more detail. It was suggested that this would likely be an annual activity instead of before each of the two annual SC meetings.
- Megan suggested that this different level of detail could be a better approach because some of the previous report outs were possibly too high-level. She added that being more pointed about work in the estuary would be helpful for PDE and all of their reporting requirements. Rachael said that it is nice to have a rubric to follow, which will help with consistency, as long as we are not reinventing the wheel and not looking too deep at the project-level.
- There was discussion about the goal of this exercise and some concern about whether it will lose its purpose for the SC if there are so many projects reported. The group agreed that this can and should still be looked at from a priority perspective; agencies do not need to include every project or fill every row or column. While this is still intended to be used as a tool to let partners know what other partners are doing, we hope that it may also help us as a planning and tracking tool – something that will show us where work is being done, and what CCMP strategies are or are not being addressed.
- Kathy stressed that this is not intended to be burdensome and asked the EIC to give this method their best shot to see what we can collect. A two-month timeline was set so that agencies have time to work through it (deadline June 15). If any questions or suggestions arise during the process, let Kathy and Haley know – it will take time to refine the process and we are happy to work through it together.

### **NEP Spring Meeting**

- At the end of March the Coastal Management and EPA NEP Spring Meetings were held in Washington D.C. Kathy and Martha attended in person from PDE and saw some other partners there. They also did a few Hill visits with Lisa Blunt Rochester, Senator Carper, and staff of Senator Coons.
- Kathy said that there were a lot of meetings and a lot of talk about this being a transformational moment because of the amount of new funding. However, there seems to be a disconnect, as many NEPs feel that there is pressure from EPA HQ to go after certain SRF and NOAA funding when it is unclear whether all of that money is really there and accessible. Headquarters does not seem to understand the realities of running an NEP and the requirements and time that it involves, especially with the additional BIL funding.
- Based on conversations with other programs, it seems that many NEPs are spending all of their money on just a few projects, which is very different from our approach. Spreading it out like we are doing certainly complicates the process, but will hopefully help build capacity and create and strengthen partnerships. Kathy noted that we might want to think about this for funding years 4 and 5 though.
- Rachael was in D.C. for the Coastal Sections meeting and said it was nice to bring everyone together but in the future, it would be nice to have more time to talk to each other, maybe in regional groups.
  - Megan said that there was similar feedback from many folks, with a desire for more discussion-based meetings in the future.
  - Kathy said that this is something that has changed over the years; there used to be more sharing of information among NEPs and now they are primarily presented to.
- Kathy expressed her gratitude to our regional EPA partners and said that we are lucky, as many NEPs do not have such a great relationship with their representatives.

### **DELEP Deliverables**

- It recently came to our attention that both the NEP Program Evaluation (P.E.) and 5-year CCMP Update are scheduled for 2024. Given the time and effort that goes into the P.E., which includes a spring site visit along with a lot of reporting, PDE will request a 1-year extension for the CCMP update.
- Kathy noted that she did not hear back from any EIC members interested in being involved in the State of the Estuary. We plan to produce a virtual, online State of the Estuary, along with a 2-4 page summary in Estuary News. This should be completed in time for a press release or celebration to coincide with National Estuaries Week in September. There will be opportunities for the STAC and EIC to weigh in on the report, and Kathy will share the Work Plan that lays out that timing. Dorina suggested that the final product be shared with libraries so it has a wider reach and lives somewhere other than the PDE website.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

- There is currently an “extra”/BIL and Work Plan-focused EIC call scheduled for Thursday, April 20, as well as a Monthly EIC meeting scheduled on Thursday, May 4. Since we hope that the SC approves the BIL project list and FY24 base funding work plan next week, we may not need the April 20 call – we will decide after the SC meeting. There are several scheduling conflicts for May 4, so Haley will create and send out a Doodle poll to help us reschedule the May meeting for a different date.

### **Partner Updates**

- In regards to the DELEP Agreement, Sue said that it is on her to-do list to begin the process of routing the LOU for approval through PADEP. They have new attorneys in place but are not sure when the new Secretary will be confirmed, and the acting Secretary has indicated that he prefers to not sign off on the agreement. Haley asked Sue to provide her with the new name and any other information as soon as it is available so their signature page can be updated and submitted as quickly as possible. Sue estimates that once initiated, it will take a few months to get through the approval process.
- Chad shared that DRBC had their [Water Quality Advisory Committee Meeting on March 23](#). There was an emphasis on recreational use and joint presentations by DRBC and EPA.
- On behalf of DNREC Rachael shared that Delaware Coastal Programs hired a new Research Coordinator who will start soon and take the place on any committees that had previously been held by Kari St. Laurent
- Kathy provided the following updates from PDE:
  - PDE has an internal DEIJ workgroup that meets monthly – if anyone on the EIC is interested in participating please let Kathy know.
  - There are many events coming up (most, if not all, should be on the upcoming events list that was shared with SC meeting materials). Let Kathy know if you are interested in tabling with PDE at any of these events.
  - The annual dinner will be October 12 at a new location, The Switch House (a former PECO plant), which is run by Cescaphe, the same event company that operates the previous dinner venue. The site is not yet finished but they have guaranteed it will be ready for our event. This year’s dinner will have less talking and formal programming, and instead focus more on highlighting our work through interactive activities.
  - Since early 2023 PDE has been looking to fill an Operations/Business Director position and recently hired someone. Brian Yerger will start on April 24. He comes from a finance background and we hope his experience will help PDE as we grow and need to implement new business practices.
- Karen reminded everyone that Haley will soon be sending an email about the FY23 match confirmations and FY24 match commitments.
- Cathy shared that Kelly Somers (EPAR3) is on the river doing micro plastic sampling through a Department of Energy Grant. They look forward to seeing results of this work.

### **Action Items**

- Kathy will share the State of the Estuary Work Plan.
- Haley will create and send out a Doodle poll to reschedule the May EIC meeting. A new calendar invitation will follow.

### **Upcoming/Important Dates:**

- ECI BIL Deliverables and FY24 NEP Work Plan Call: Thursday, April 20, 10am-12pm \*Tentative\*
- City of Wilmington Earth Day: Friday, April 21, 11am-2pm
- Christina River Cleanup: Saturday, April 22, 8am-12pm
- Lambertville Shad Fest: Saturday April 22/Sunday April 23, 11am-5pm
- University of Delaware Ag Day: Saturday, April 29, 10am-3pm
- May EIC Meeting: TBD
- White Clay Creek Fest: Saturday, May 6, 12-4pm
- Chester River Festival: Saturday, May 6, 11am-2pm
- PDE Board of Directors Meeting: Thursday, May 18, 2023, 9am-12pm