

Urban Waters Federal Partnership – Delaware River Workgroup Location Call
November 4th, 2020 2:00 – 3:30PM

Attendees: Emily Baumbach, PDE; Megan Mackey, EPA Region 3; Krista Heinlen, Davey Institute/USDA Forest Service, Frank McLaughlin, NJDEP; Simeon Hahn, NOAA; Elizabeth Brown, Audubon PA; Catherine King, EPA Region 3

- Frank McLaughlin: We work in urban communities, and New Jersey just passed landmark environmental justice (EJ) work to give EJ communities power to make development decisions
 - The governor has been an advocate for EJ and equity, with the EJ Executive Order passed to require the state agencies to work together.
 - EJ will continue to be a huge priority with the inequities that we see. Lots of emphasis on youth engagement as well.
 - If PDE says that EJ activities are a priority to PDE, we should work on them in this group.
 - EJ projects are not going to be noncontroversial
- Simeon Hahn: With the Port of Wilmington project, we want to know how PDE can get involved with that and advocate for EJ
 - From the email response that PDE sent out about this, it would be unfortunate if PDE can't get involved since 20% of community is below the poverty line with a huge minority population.
 - Port expansion is supposed to be going on near a DuPont disposal site.
 - Traffic study that's also going to be major impact to EJ communities
 - There are concerns about access to the Delaware River, and how to improve community amenities
 - RiverKeeper and Sierra Club are involved in this, and this is an urban waters project in our location that we have to address
- Emily Baumbach: For the Port of Wilmington expansion project, I think we need to have some thoughtful discussion around this topic to determine if/how PDE and this Urban Waters (UW) location can even support this project, with PDE as the host of an NEP
 - In terms of the petition that was forwarded to PDE to send out for this UW location, from what I understand since we're a partner of the NEP as well as the host entity of the DELEP, we generally do not promote advocacy-oriented activities like petitions, especially if the petition and title of petition is pushing against one of our core partners
 - DNREC is one of our Core Partners in the Delaware Estuary Program as well as one of our funders, so I don't think we can be broadcasting this on our distribution lists and website what was outlined in that one specific petition that was forwarded
 - I think we can discuss the potential ways that this group can potentially get involved with this project if this is something we really want to do and agree on, but we can't post a petition like this one on PDE's website and send out in an email.
 - Megan Mackey and I will get some more feedback from other Urban Waters locations and their work on port expansion projects next week on the monthly ambassador locations call, so we can share that information with all of you after that call on November 12 (**Note: No feedback was received from other UW locations and involvement in port expansion projects in the November 12th call**)
- S. Hahn: One of the comments comes from Philadelphia and Camden, the future is that there are going to be more ports in this area, and port expansion is going to be an important item at our location
- Megan Mackey: The state of Delaware does have an EJ program with DNREC

- S. Hahn: This project has access to a very important part of the river and we should be really concerned about how this can affect Atlantic sturgeon, striped bass, shad, etc.
 - We're talking about protection sturgeon, and they'll be looking for some mitigation for the resource
- M. Mackey: For the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, I don't see an opportunity for us as an UWFP to identify the failures amongst these federal agencies with the projects that are already going on that they are leading
 - As important as I see what you are saying is, I don't know if we really fill this role
 - Are you saying that you want to set up a call with US Fish and Wildlife, and the other federal partners involved in this?
- S. Hahn: EPA is already involved in this right now from the EPA Office of Air
- F. McLaughlin: But shouldn't our body be promoting this work?
 - Early engagement and discussion of these projects is really important, so maybe this group needs to educate the community on what the losses are going to be to the ecological health of the area, and the additional environmental burdens
- S. Hahn: We as a group need to help educate these communities on these community benefits agreements
- Catherine King: Do these communities have representatives in the Urban Waters partnership right now?
- S. Hahn: There's the Delaware Community Benefits Agreements Coalition (DCBAC) comprised of members that I've been involved with and there have been meetings
- M. Mackey: For the federal agencies you've listed that are involved already, USACE, etc. are any of them not members already of the UWFP?
 - The way I see it, I could maybe envision us hosting a meeting for the City of Wilmington to inform the community on the different agreements, for permitting and environmental impacts, and try to identify next steps and bring them together
- S. Hahn: We have the capacity to increase the engagement, and this is something we've been talking about with the EPA Air Program
 - If EPA could provide a facilitator for a meeting that would be great
- M. Mackey: James Brunswick is the EJ coordinator for DNREC
- S. Hahn: EPA reached out to me about community engagement since I knew in the community, and their coalition is building
- F. McLaughlin: Related to climate and resiliency issues, the Trust for Public Land Green and Healthy Camden tool supports climate preparedness and open space planning resources
 - Since these tools are helping us in Camden, I wonder if these tools could assist in Wilmington, Chester, and Philadelphia as well
 - If this group is interested, we could try to get a presentation on this at an upcoming group meeting
- E. Baumbach: This Camden initiative could be a great future webinar topic as well that we could broadcast to the Urban Waters listserv and PDE contacts
- Krista Heinlen: EJ is important in our UW cities, and that's always been what's next in line for our next communities of practice
- F. McLaughlin: The communities want the same things that we want – access, more space, etc., and with big community projects, you can provide them these opportunities
- S. Hahn: Jeff Richardson of DCBAC has had conversations with the EPA EJ representatives, the folks at headquarters, and Reggie Harris
 - It's important that the community members know their rights and know how to communicate

- EJ is required under a federal executive order
- We are advocating for specific project EJ considerations, and that's why New Jersey felt the need to put legislation out there
- EPA also recognized they weren't engaging enough in NJ
- We need to work with undeserved communities to ensure that they have a seat at the table
- If the federal partnership is functioning to bring the agencies together, then that will increase effective advocacy and awareness
- F. McLaughlin: We need to have meaningful engagement and include these folks in part of the decision-making process
 - Now in Camden, this is possible with community members sitting at the table and people respecting everyone's position
- K. Heinlen: I completely agree and that we need to let other people know that we are listening with these types of projects, and inform them on where we are since we know it's more successful if conducted this way
- C. King: Has the DNREC EJ representative been engaged in this process?
- S. Hahn: He was told he was not allowed to be engaged
 - Facilitation, outreach, and getting information out and helping to organize is what I always liked about the UW partnership
- K. Heinlen: This type of sharing information for the purposes of engagement, and within the UW umbrella to do so, there might be an opportunity for folks in Wilmington to pursue that type of information and engagement
 - The ability to open bridges of communication with non-federal agencies to facilitate making that happen
 - Along the same lines, what I've been gleaning about the position of DNREC on this since DNREC is a strong partner, the point is to be more broadly encompassing that the agencies and nonprofits and local folks and others that are invested in these communities
 - We do not want to burn bridges with those partners
- S. Hahn: Being a part of this partnership is to have a commitment to it, and EJ is a priority here
- S. Hahn: A lot of the federal agencies are bad with addressing EJ, and they often saying that EJ is an EPA problem even though there is an executive order on this for federal agencies to be following
- M. Mackey: I do think that we have the ability amongst the federal agencies to create fair and accessible communication and information sharing as opposed to taking a position on this matter
 - We can connect people to their waterways through knowledge transfer rather than taking a specific position on this effort
- C. King: What's the next step on this project?
- S. Hahn: Having the agencies present on the project to the community
- C. King: What is the community interested in?
- S. Hahn: They want the jobs and safe access to the river
- C. King: Is it safe to say that the community is fairly well up to speed on what is taking place?
- S. Hahn: It's a big group, and some are more technical than others
- Elizabeth Brown: I'm not as well-versed with this specific project, but it seems like with these big decision points it needs to be comprised of organizations and agencies than can bring the community feedback to the table
 - If some agencies can facilitate advocacy and information sharing without engaging directly in the project, that would be great
 - Coordination among the agencies through this vehicle and see who may have the capacity in playing a leadership role in this community engagement

- M. Mackey: Who is the owner of the agreement with the community? If they were to get one, who would it be?
- S. Hahn: Delaware Community Benefit Agreements Coalition
 - This is a project that's been going on for a while, and COVID has affected communication
 - This partnership has always been project-focused
 - In the context of Wilmington, we've had the South Wilmington Wetlands project, brownfield effort, Shad 2020 on the Brandywine, but this is the new challenge and the new federal project for Wilmington in my mind
- F. McLaughlin: The Brownfields Community of Practice has been taking place several times over the years now, looking at places like Wilmington, Camden, and Chester
 - I think for 2021, we can build on EJ and equity as a group
- E. Brown: There's lots of good future project ideas in the document Emily sent out
 - Circling back to the great idea of the Urban Bird Treaty item and expansion to doing this in Wilmington since there's lots of overlap with UW and this project
- F. McLaughlin: Promoting local species (birds, butterflies) stormwater management, GIS-based applications, and can get us open space and improve water quality as well as habitat restoration in our urban areas
- C. King: The PA Horticultural Society has done some really great research on small green spaces in urban areas
- F. McLaughlin: Could have an UWFP seminar with the Open Space Institute and talk about this
- S. Hahn: We want to get the communities back together again
 - Talk about our ambitions in the workplan
 - We haven't had an UWFP federal partner meeting in a while
- M. Mackey: We could share a list of the potential future projects as a draft workplan that we want to get feedback on (at Science Summit or next federal partner meeting)
- S. Hahn: Annual partner meeting to come talk about specific projects and give updates, and have a more general meeting to get reinvigorated
 - Having PDE on this is a huge plus for us and EJ is something that we can't ignore any longer
 - Need to continue with communities of practice meetings and get other updates from the national level at the all partners meetings
- K. Heinlen: Feel free to touch base for brownfields
 - If you're planning on having something come January or February, it will most likely be virtual
 - For an annual meeting where we could all get together, we might want to aim for next summer.
 - If we don't want to wait that long to have a dialogue with the partners, we might be able to do something virtual, but having an annual full-fledged meeting for this group will most likely need to be later in 2021
- E. Baumbach: We might be able to see if there's a way to gather some feedback somehow at the Science Summit on potential new partners to engage in UW and also get some feedback on future priorities
- E. Brown: One of two steps on getting feedback on the workplan would be to first share with key partner and federal organizations and get technical feedback and then releasing it to a broader group of stakeholders in the area
- S. Hahn: We need to find a way to get involved with this Port of Wilmington project
 - I feel much more loyalty to my community to than my partners

- F. McLaughlin: For the Brownfields Community of Practice, should we aim for late March or April?
 - If we have an interest in reconnecting with the federal partners as a whole, would we want to do the brownfields meeting before or after?
- K. Heinlen: I don't have thoughts on going either way, but the advantage is you could do it sooner if you want to since we aren't going to be able to hold any full-fledged meetings until later
- F. McLaughlin: We can keep the brownfields meeting short at 90 minutes or so,
 - We're still working on some projects and big issues that we are still thinking about right now
 - Come Feb, we might have some ideas about what things will be moving forward
 - We will want to get the Climate Community of Practice out there again as well
 - Let's add the Brownfields Community of practice to the agenda for the next monthly call, maybe we can have each city talk about one issue to report out on for that meeting

Reminders:

- Urban Waters federal partner workgroup members are invited to PDE Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Training on Thursday, December 3rd 10:00 – 12:00pm
 - This is still scheduled to take place, and all UW workgroup partners are invited to participate
- Webinar Series on Connecting Youth to Urban Waterways
 - Had the first webinar in this series on Monday, November 2nd which went really well
 - Had a good list of speakers from John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, Discovery Center, and then Simeon helped pull a team together for Brandywine Shad 2020
 - The remaining 'Urban Waters: Connecting Youth to Urban Waterways' webinars are taking place 11/10, and 11/17 from 12:00-1:00pm (Register [HERE](#))
 - Webinar resources are posted here: <https://www.delawareestuary.org/save-the-estuary/urban-waters/>