

Long Island Sound Inventory and Blue Plan Advisory Committee

December 7, 2016

10:00AM – 12:00 PM

Fort Trumbull State Park

New London, CT

MINUTES

Advisory Committee Attendance:

Robert Klee, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Chair

Sylvain De Guise, Connecticut Sea Grant

Catherine Finneran, Eversource, Gas and electric distribution industry representative appointed by Governor Malloy (by phone)

Nathan Frohling, The Nature Conservancy

David Carey, Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Aquaculture

Christine Nelson, Town of Old Saybrook Town Planner

Evan Matthews, Connecticut Port Authority, Commissioner Redeker's designee

Jason Bowsza, Connecticut Department of Agriculture, Commissioner Reviczky's Designee

Garrett Eucalitto [ABSENT], Connecticut Office of Policy and Management, Secretary Barnes' Designee

Melanie Bachman, represented by Christina Walsh and Fred Cunliffe, Connecticut Siting Council

Leah Schmalz [ABSENT], Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound

William Gardella, General Manager and Dockmaster, Rex Marine Center, Norwalk

Bruce Beebe [ABSENT], Beebe Dock and Mooring Systems, Madison

Mike Theiler [ABSENT], Commercial finfish industry representative

Alicia Mozian [ABSENT], Town of Westport Conservation Director

Sid Holbrook [ABSENT], Westbrook, recreational fishing/hunting community representative

Other attendees:

Peter Auster, Mystic Aquarium

Tom Robben, CT Ornithological Assn.

Phil Mikan, US Coast Guard

Katie Lund, CIRCA

Syma Ebbin, CT Sea Grant

Anthony Morales, independent scientist

David Blatt, DEEP

Mary-beth Hart, DEEP

Kevin O'Brien, DEEP

Mike Sullivan, DEEP

Brian Thompson, DEEP

Welcome and introduction

Robert Klee, Commissioner, CT Department of Energy & Protection (DEEP)

Commissioner Klee welcomed the Advisory Committee members and others present, introducing the Fort Trumbull facility and Superintendent Henry Alves. Klee also introduced the new Advisory Committee members, Catherine Finneran, Director of Environmental Affairs at Eversource, representing gas and electric distribution industries, and Evan Matthews, Executive Director of the Connecticut Port Authority, designated by the Department of Transportation, which has transferred its maritime functions to the Port Authority.

There was a discussion of the Blue Plan public outreach event held on November 16, 2016 at the Norwalk Maritime Aquarium, which featured a screening of the Ocean Frontiers II movie about marine spatial planning, particularly in Rhode Island. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-sound-future-an-open-forum-for-shaping-the-long-island-sound-blue-plan-tickets-28374669400#> Nathan Frohling showed slides of the event, which drew over 200 people and 14 co-sponsoring organizations. State Senators Kennedy and Hwang were present, and there was enthusiastic participation by the attendees. Common themes brought up included the need for stakeholder representation and bi-state cooperation, but many people brought up water quality issues, watershed management, and other topics that are not within the scope of the Blue Plan. While acknowledging that Long Island Sound is an ecosystem, DEEP staff will prepare fact sheets and responses to public comments that will clarify which LIS issues are within the purview of the Blue Plan and which are dealt with by other programs.

Brian Thompson provided an update on the progress of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Plans. The Northeast plan was recently approved by the National Ocean Council <http://neoceanplanning.org/plan/>, and the Mid-Atlantic plan would be approved in the near future: <http://midatlanticocean.org/ocean-planning/updates>. Kevin O'Brien described Connecticut's application for a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR), which would serve as a federally-supported center for research and education on the Sound's estuarine resources. <http://www.ct.gov/deep/nerr>. Connecticut is one of only two coastal states that do not have a NERR, and it has been a longstanding goal of DEEP to establish one. The NERR site selection process is a complementary, but separate, effort to the Blue Plan and this will be pointed out in future FAQs and fact sheets.

There was a discussion of holding some Advisory Committee meetings in the evenings, since several members have on-the-water jobs that do not allow them to easily attend during the day. It was agreed that some evening meetings would be appropriate, and will be scheduled so as to alternate day and evening sessions.

Vision and Goals

Nathan Frohling discussed the draft vision and goals statement that was distributed at the Norwalk event, and noted that comments following that event were generally supportive and would not significantly change the statement of goals. The schedule remains for the Advisory Committee to finalize the Vision & Goals Statement at the June 2017 meeting. Several Committee members highlighted the goal of bi-state cooperation, and Brian Thompson and Sylvain De Guise discussed several aspects of New York's participation in the Blue Plan process. They pointed out that New

York scientists and agency staff have worked with DEEP staff and Connecticut partners on compiling a resource inventory of Sound-wide data.

Subcommittees and Work Teams Update

Leaders of the Subcommittees and Work teams provided updates and led discussions of the work of their respective groups. Brian Thompson noted that the Plan Development Team was essentially the entire Advisory Committee at this stage, and had not had any separate meetings as such.

Sylvain De Guise described the work of the Inventory and Science Subcommittee. He presented a PowerPoint depicting the iterative process of distilling data into maps, leading to spatial narratives used in the ultimate plan. Stakeholders and experts would be encouraged to become part of the process and help resolve any data gaps. De Guise described ongoing progress in the Subcommittee's work plan in evaluating existing datasets and uploading them to the New York Gateway, correlating resource categories with potential map products. There was a discussion of data scales, in that datasets from the Northeast Ocean Plan could be used as a guide to obtaining finer-scale LIS-specific data. Some regional map data is based on models, while others are collected data. While time series data is important in accounting for changes in resources, De Guise stated we are not there yet in terms of data collection, but narratives as well as maps can account for changes, and the Blue Plan is required to be updated every five years. The data inventory is an ongoing process, as is the identification of experts/stakeholders to consult on the data. At present around 120 scientific experts have been identified, and 444 entries in a table of user groups. The Committee discussed how to start reaching out to these "interested parties," working through a process to be determined. We hope to start generating map products in February 2017 to be reviewed by experts/stakeholders.

The Subcommittee is not yet ready to start identifying ecologically significant areas as called for by statute, and this will be a significant challenge. In looking at examples of similar efforts such as the Northeast Regional Baseline Assessment and the Massachusetts and Rhode Island Ocean technical reports, it is apparent that we will need some help. Evan Matthews, who had experience with the RI Ocean SAMP, noted that Rhode Island had a \$3 million budget for their project and conducted considerable original research directly for the SAMP. De Guise noted that seafloor mapping projects were ongoing, but would not cover the entire Sound. We will have to match our effort to our capacity, but there are opportunities for assistance from graduate students and a potential NOAA Coastal Fellow.

Nathan Frohling described the work of the Stakeholder Engagement Subcommittee, which has adopted a work plan (Attachment 1). He noted that fisheries concerns had become apparent in that certain misunderstandings about the Blue Plan had been expressed by a few fishermen. He hopes to be able to do outreach to the fishing community in the near future. The Committee discussed the connection between the Stakeholder Engagement and Data & Information Subcommittees, and Klee suggested leveraging the expertise and resources of the Advisory Committee for stakeholder engagement. Resources for stakeholder engagement efforts are limited, and we were fortunate that Green Fire Productions was able to sponsor the Norwalk event, since they provided the Ocean Frontiers movie and much of the logistics. The Nature Conservancy is still spending a \$50K grant from the Moore Foundation for stakeholder engagement, but there will be no more funds after that.

Brief updates regarding the Plan Development Work Team, Policy Subcommittee, Ecological Characterization Work Team, Data and Mapping Work Team, and Human Use Characterization Work Team were interspersed with audience and Committee member comments on a variety of issues. Peter Auster of Mystic Aquarium stated that the Blue Plan website was confusing in its discussion of the Plan's impact on designating special areas and imposing new regulations, and Commissioner Klee advised the Policy Subcommittee to ensure clarity regarding final Plan products. Katie Lund of CIRCA pointed out that the Regional Ocean Planning Bodies had a strong focus on important ecological areas, and suggested that the Blue Plan build on the ROP process. Opportunities are available for coordination, such as Auster's membership on the Ecosystem-Based Management Work Group of the Northeast RPB. There was considerable discussion about leveraging stakeholder resources and reaching out to experts, although it was noted that data gaps should not prevent us from moving forward.

Public Comment Period

During the official public comment period, Peter Auster suggested that climate change and rising temperatures should be mentioned in the Blue Plan goals, since some existing uses would be disappearing as a result. He suggested that Plan products should emphasize predictions so as to reduce future conflicts. Anthony Morales, an independent scientist, expressed frustration at the lack of an environmental standard for Long Island Sound, and asked how much is business allowed to impact the estuary. He is worried about a Tragedy of the Commons situation, which was addressed by Frohling and Auster, who suggested that the Resource and Use Inventory would aid in understanding cumulative effects. Katie Lund of CIRCA emphasized that stories help people understand the process of planning, and suggested that the Blue Plan create a narrative about management challenges and story maps. The Northeast ROP Data Team could be a resource in this respect.

The meeting adjourned at 12:04 pm.

<http://www.ct.gov/deep/lisblueplan>

Attachment 1

Blue Plan Stakeholder Engagement Subcommittee Draft Work Plan - Detailed September 13, 2016

Public and Stakeholder Engagement – Purpose

The Blue Plan is anticipated to play a significant role in how decisions are made regarding future uses of Long Island Sound and as such it has the potential to affect the interests of many stakeholders. The purpose of public and stakeholder engagement is to assure that the Blue Plan reflects the interests, needs and contributions of the public and stakeholders who care about Long Island Sound and who may be affected now or in the future by decisions regarding its use. Public and stakeholder engagement is also critical for the Blue Plan to be a success. For the Blue Plan to come to fruition and function effectively, it must receive the political support of the interests it may affect. Those same interests are also critical for providing input and information needed to make the Plan robust and useful. Both informative input and political support rely on a minimum of public and stakeholder awareness, participation and ownership in the process. A pro-active effort to engage the public and stakeholders is necessary to achieve that level of involvement.

Stakeholder Engagement Subcommittee – Role

The role of the Blue Plan Stakeholder Engagement Subcommittee is to develop, oversee and implement a stakeholder engagement process in coordination and consultation with the full Blue Plan Advisory Committee that achieves the purpose of public and stakeholder engagement (noted above). This role is anticipated for the duration of the Blue Plan development process and potentially in some form after the Plan is adopted and implemented. The Subcommittee may form work teams, recruit additional members and/or partners and work with any party on behalf of its role and purpose.

Stakeholder Engagement Subcommittee - Work Plan

The Act calls for a minimum of 3 public hearings, public comment opportunities and consultation with identified groups. It also calls for “sufficient stakeholder engagement.”

This following presents a set of proposed work plan steps with many specifics of actual engagement to be decided by the process. It is noted that a Stakeholder Engagement project re the Blue Plan was completed in April 2016 and offers informative reports and guiding information to augment this work plan outline.

Detailed Work Plan follows:

- I. **Develop Public and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (*September 2016 – March 2017*)**
 - A. Form Stakeholder Subcommittee

(September 2016)

1. Define committee role, basic operation and agree on general work plan
2. Determine if add'l members or work team(s) are needed in first phase
3. Review recent stakeholder project reports & who was involved

B. Clarify Stakeholder participation re Blue Plan *Issues, Vision and Goals*

(September – November 2016)

1. This is an immediate stakeholder question to be addressed in partnership w/ the Ad Hoc Vision and Goals team
2. Clarify stakeholder approach sufficient to be suitable for first events (approach provides needed structure yet flexible to allow honest input)
3. Initial proposal for discussion:
 - a. 2 public/stakeholder events in each State to provide coverage over geography, time and phases of the process
 - b. Pending event results, hold limited but representative stakeholder sector interviews including Advisory Committee members before completing stakeholder input.

C. Address and advance New York stakeholder and public engagement

(September – December 2016)

1. Identify questions, approach and next steps in order for NY stakeholder engagement to proceed on par w/ CT.
2. Identify specific NY stakeholders for potential outreach

D. Conduct Introductory Public/Stakeholder Events

(September 2016 – February 2017)

1. Hold CT event November 2016 and NY event in January 2017
2. Include “Listening Session” re Blue Plan Issues, Vision and Goals along w/ providing introduction to MSP and Blue Plan
3. Consider November 2015 LIS MSP event in planning events

E. Produce Public and Stakeholder Engagement Plan

(September 2016 – March 2017)

1. Refer to Stakeholder Engagement Options Report for guidance/options
2. Consider need to be adaptive in response to implementation
3. Address stakeholder engagement in review of data, data sufficiency, etc. and coordinate w/ Inventory & Science Subcommittee re stakeholder inputs (e.g. input on useful data formats, review of prelim map products)
4. Assure minimum requirements of the Act
5. Complete NY stakeholder portion of the plan including any special considerations
6. Consider Sector focused stakeholder sessions to better understand issues and advance information and policy work.
7. Develop plan to use available but time-limited Moore Foundation Funds (\$20k - \$30k) for contractor to complete a focused project or provide general support
8. Anticipate need to gain new data & information from Stakeholders to fill critical data gaps (e.g. what spatial areas are important to stakeholders?)
9. Integrate feedback from preliminary stakeholder meeting(s)

10. Consider need, benefits, costs and feasibility of developing interactive web-site to enhance opportunities for a wider audience to participate.
11. Gain Advisory Committee consensus for the plan/approach.

II. Implement the Public and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (*October 2016 – June 2019*)

- A. Identify entities to oversee & carry-out stakeholder and public engagement (*October 2016 – March 2017*)
 1. In addition to Blue Plan officials, consider consultants, subcommittees, Bi-State Working Group, etc.
- B. Align stakeholder engagement activities w/ available capacity (e.g. Moore Fndn) (*October 2016 – June 2017*)
 1. Assure time-limited, available, Moore Foundation funding is effectively employed to serve public and stakeholder engagement goals/plan.
- C. Secure funding beyond the Moore Foundation to support stakeholder and public engagement activities (*October 2016 – September 2017 (annual)*)
- D. Carryout full Implementation of the Public and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (*October 2016 – June 2019*)
 1. To be composed of multiple activities and parties – yet to be determined