



Watershed and Embayments Workgroup Meeting Notes
Wednesday May 31, 2023
Meeting conducted remotely via Microsoft Teams
Joint Meeting with Environmental Justice and N Coordination Workgroups

Attendees:

Kelly Streich, CT DEEP (Co-chair)
Mary Arnold, NYSDEC/NEIWPC (Co-chair)
Bessie Wright, EPA
Jordan Bishop, NEIWPC
Vivian Felten, FPAC-NRCS
Sarah Healy, NYSDEC/NEIWPC
Sue Van Patten, NYSDEC
Peter Linderoth, Save the Sound
Sarah Deonarine, Manhasset Bay
Leah O'Neill, EPA
Casey Abel, EPA
Esther Nelson, EPA
Nikki Spiller, Harbor Watch
Eric Swenson, HHPC

Paul Stacey, Footprints on the Water
Denise Savageau, CT- CSWC
Kate Knight, CT DEEP
Erin Holmes, NHDES
Shauna Kamath, NYSDEC
Harvey Pine, NHDES
Della Campbell, NYS DEC
George Hoffman, SHTF
Mary Beth Hart, CT DEEP
Jeffrey Gill, CT DEEP
Jim Ammerman, NEIWPC/LISS
Judith Houston, NHDES
Heather Johnson, Friends of the Bay
Richard Friesner, NEIWPC

Introduction:

The meeting was called to order at approximately 10:06am in the teams meeting by co-chairs Mary Arnold and Kelly Streich.

Environmental Justice as a topic and its integration into WEWG and N Coordination Workgroups:

Kelly Streich initiated conversation to introduce an overview of the goals for the meeting and how it pertains to WEWG and N Coordination WG.

Questions & Comments:

- Denise Savageau Interested in what LISS needs to do to see where we are and what we need to do to make sure that we're moving into the overall health of the watershed and not only by monitoring. She added "There's a lot of other things we need to be looking at in the upper part of the watershed."
 - Richard Friesner responded that the upper basin states is an integral part of the N Coordination WG and more and more focus has been in their inclusion.
 - Paul Stacey added to D. Savageau to encourage a focus on bio-integrity and environmental health; suggest focusing initiatives outside of monitoring and nutrients.
 - Leah O'Neill adds that there will be great opportunities for this in the upcoming revision of the CCMP and to include the upper basin there.
 - Bessie Wright also added that LIS FF has been making great strides in the inclusion of the upper basin through funding.

Brief Overviews of Workgroups were given from Richard Friesner and Mary Arnold.

Environmental Justice Presentation by Bessie Wright

- What is Environmental Justice? Definitions and keywords.
- EJ within the CCMP as a cross-cutting principle
- Reviewed the EJWG 5-year Workplan Diagram

Separated into two breakout groups to address questions (**Presentation Attached**)
For the Workgroups:

1. How can we, as workgroups, encourage the consideration and prioritization of environmental justice and the proposals we support and what kind of backgrounds, disciplines, institutions, and perspectives are currently missing?
2. What are the known barriers and how can we prioritize addressing those barriers? (EX: capacity, staffing, implementation)

For LISS Projects and Proposals

1. How can we ensure that Long Island sound study, research and implementation projects are benefiting disadvantaged communities?
2. What are the effects upstream and downstream? How can we mitigate some of the impacts environmental improvement projects may have on disadvantaged communities?
3. What tools would be useful to better integrate environmental justice into our projects and work?
4. Would you like to share any additional ideas you have for incorporating equity and environmental justice considerations into your program?

Room 1

- Kelly Streich offered when considering the workplan, WEWG should find a way to include the outcomes of this discussion.
- Mary Beth Hart added we tend to focus on projects only instead of engagement as well. The GC3 in CT had a EJ specific working group and a member of the EJWG participated on other working groups to help with focus. Could we reach out to EJ working group formally assigned to bring the EJ perspective to the table.
- Paul Stacey noted that climate planning works well with EJ communities as it identifies threats where people live. So, the first thing we have to do is identify what types of benefits we are bringing to where people live. Controlling nitrogen (for example) doesn't do a lot for disadvantaged communities unless you consider jobs created at treatment plant. Cross cuts socio-economic strata.
- Denise Savageau mentions that we are missing community involvement at these workgroup tables. What is best way to get there. Starting with youth and school systems that are really looking at this. Bottom-up planning rather than top down. EJ leaders were brought in right from start. Leaders can be the youth. GC3 had some great community momentum. We need to think about when we meet, how we meet is this best method. Watershed perspective, streams are often underground, access to sound is limited, how do we connect communities, climate change is the natural connection. Student involvement can come with connections to community colleges and the Envirothon for the high school level.
- Jordan Bishop agreed with the community college idea. Course work is also really relevant and should be well known and available to students. Ask professors to include participation as a part of their curriculum. Three Rivers Community College is a great example and includes programs on LIS and Stormwater classes.
- Paul Stacey warned that using classes hasn't drawn attention in past. People want to make connections at their front door.
- Harvey Pine added that academia is always looking for these opportunities and one can be in NH and still be tied to this work. There are modules/tools where they could for instance go through EJ screen and connect to a watershed.
- Denise Savageau noted that we need to engage people in their communities. Who needs to be at the table we are missing the local perspective. Municipalities aren't necessarily this perspective. When

working on statewide or region wide efforts, how do we engage at the local level. Figure out how better to engage local communities. Typical NGOs are at the table but they don't speak for the communities. Some of the churches have experts on climate, etc., as leaders in their community.

- Paul Stacey mentioned that we need a certain amount of natural goods in neighborhoods to improve the health of the sound. Bring these resources to communities. For example, IC has same impact regardless of what community it is in. How do we educate and promote good behavior.
- Marybeth Hart noted that a project in Meriden and Mill River in Stamford are good examples (NP source improvements, flood improvements and access improvements). Can the workgroups identify projects like this that have multi benefit with EJ lens. She stated that her colleague identified that grant rules which limit use of funds for food or other compensation is a barrier itself. These should be eligible for funding.
- Harvey Pine noted that one concern is how we prioritize. In the past strong local associations get prioritized for funding as they have the competitive edge while EJ communities often don't make the cut. This should be addressed.
- Denise Savageau mentioned that we should talk about indigenous cultures and learn from them. The Connecticut River Museum has some interesting work. Ecosystem services and ecological integrity. Missed opportunity for Tribal involvement. WG can involve everyone, we could expand to state and local tribes, WG doesn't need to be narrow.
- Facilitator Kate Knight noted group to-dos:
 - Follow-up with EJ needs assessment team on lessons learned regarding how communities are indicating they prefer communication. Ask to be involved in the community level meetings hosted by EJ needs assessment team.
 - Actively look now for opportunities with the information we have. (EX: pilot with Three Rivers)
 - Engage with Sound Waters (have ambassadors) have a great program we could work with. CT Audubon also has a great community engagement program.
 - Consider using priority ranking of multi-benefit projects in the work plan.
 - Explore with EPA a remedy to address barriers (ex - bus vouchers, food, childcare). Perhaps seek a waiver for EJ specific projects.
 - Identify project that successfully included EJ communities and spotlight them.
 - Review programs like LISCF and America the Beautiful as template and consider applications to this program as well.

Kate Knight provided the wrap up for Breakout Room 1.

Room 2

- Sue Van Patten spoke about how DEC and their program credit to projects that are directly located in an EJ community or directly benefit an EJ community. The priority is the project, example of water quality improvement, and then taking the EJ component into consideration.
- George Hoffman made a comment on if the property isn't in an EJ area but may be used by an EJ community.
 - Bessie identified that language barrier is a need.
- Esther Nelson brought up jurisdiction as a potential barrier, but also a potential solution. How do we bring the right people to the table?
- Mary Arnold and Sue Van Patten explain that safe access is a barrier to EJ in our local communities. Sue had added potential to add EJ liaisons for the communities.

- Vivian Felten as the outreach coordinator in CT sees building relationships with communities as her responsibility. Notes that it takes time to build relationships within the community between finding them, fostering the relationship, and maintaining them.
 - Sue and Vivian agreed and noted about how far we have come with the issue of capacity, and we must keep going.
- Bessie Wright suggested the inclusion of incorporating liaisons and community building into proposal.
 - Richard Friesner added that it can be a factor when being scored but it is not the factor.
- Richard Friesner mentioned the thought about when considering upstream projects should they score higher because they impact downstream communities and disadvantaged communities?
 - Vivian Felten added that would be assuming all the impacts are positive, you have to identify positive and negative impacts when analyzing the projects.
- Bessie Wright called for the need of a tool to better assess the benefits and impacts of projects.
 - Vivian Felten mentioned NEPA process and EPA 52.

Bessie Wright provided the wrap up for Breakout Room 2.

Next Meeting & Adjournment

- The next WEWG meeting will be held on 8/9 and the work plan will be discussed.
- The November 8th WEWG meeting will be held in Larchmont, NY at Save the Sound's office. **This will be a longer meeting than usual from 11-2.** We will tour the new water quality laboratory in addition to our regular meeting.
- Meeting was adjourned at 11:58am.