



Freshwater Initiative
Sagamore Lens Stakeholder Group

Meeting 3 Summary: June 4, 2024

The third Sagamore Lens Stakeholder Group meeting for the Freshwater Initiative was held on June 4, 2024. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an update on the Freshwater Initiative, share tools and resources created to date, present an overview of draft key recommendations of the Freshwater Initiative and solicit feedback from meeting attendees on the recommendations and strategies for implementation.

During introductions, participants were asked to share one point they wanted to make sure was heard through this stakeholder process. None were provided. Following introductions, Cape Cod Commission (Commission) staff provided an update on the Freshwater Initiative and reviewed tools and resources currently available for use, such as town and county-wide pond profiles, the pond restoration projects viewer, the ponds atlas viewer, and a suite of draft pond management strategies fact sheets.

Commission staff also reviewed work currently in progress, such as the development of a pond water quality data portal, the regional pond monitoring program, development of pond shore buffer guidelines, and the creation of a communications framework.

One participant asked if the pond strategies fact sheets are currently available. Commission staff said they will be shared with stakeholders for their feedback and comment. Another asked if the pond shore buffer guidelines would include things like specific plants for planting. Commission staff said yes.

PRIORITIZATION FRAMEWORK

Revisiting discussion from Meeting 2 on interest in a prioritization framework and criteria for prioritizing ponds for management, Commission staff asked participants if such a framework would be useful.

Overall, attendees said a prioritization framework would be useful but discussed wanting to act with urgency and the need for support on implementation. One attendee noted the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth did a study of ponds for Barnstable in Marstons Mills and asked how, for ponds that have these types of studies already done, this information could be used to move forward with restoration projects more quickly. Participants expressed desire to move forward with

suggested restoration strategies now, asking for assistance with faster implementation and help with prioritization as it informs implementation.

Attendees suggested prioritizing ponds that already have data, moving forward with projects and using those as models for other projects. They also asked for help prioritizing an implementation timeline, and for guidance to pond groups that already have a study on tips for how to implement those recommendations and how to use funding, such as Community Preservation Act funds, to forward projects.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Next, Commission staff reviewed twelve (12) draft priority recommendations developed from feedback received throughout the stakeholder process, noting that there may be other recommendations that come out of the Freshwater Initiative, but those presented rose to the top as priorities that could be implemented in the near-term or are foundational to furthering other work. The draft recommendations are grouped into six (6) categories:

- Funding Sources and Mechanisms
- Municipal Recommendations
- Support and Technical Assistance
- Regulatory Reform
- Information (Monitoring, Data)
- Education and Communications

Following review, attendees were invited to ask questions and provide comments on the material presented.

One attendee said there should be urgency in releasing the communications framework at the beginning of the summer rather than the end of the year.

One attendee asked if the pond profiles were in development. Commission staff said they are available now. Attendees noted that some pond groups have created profiles of specific ponds. Commission staff expressed interest in those profiles and clarified that the pond profiles referenced above are actually profiles of the ponds in a town, not profiles of individual ponds.

One attendee noted the need to involve the public health sector in ponds work.

One attendee asked, related to funding, if opportunities from Fish & Wildlife or partnering with universities have been considered. Commission staff noted there is interest from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in increasing the use of 319 and 604b funding and said the Commission could look to expand collaboration with universities.

Participants also discussed the need for more focus on ponds at the state level with an emphasis on nitrogen removal, where pond groups can lobby and act as advocates.

RECOMMENDATIONS FACILITATED DISCUSSION

Following initial questions on the draft recommendations presented, attendees were asked if there is anything missing, or are there other key recommendations they think should be included.

One attendee said the list of recommendations is impressive. Participants agreed the recommendations generally capture discussions at previous stakeholder meetings and reiterated the urgency in needing education through the communications toolkit.

Attendees were also asked which recommendations they think will be most impactful from their perspective.

Attendees said the communications framework, funding, and the strategies fact sheets. Another said a blank form to fill out pond profile information would be helpful to distribute to volunteer monitors or monitoring groups.

Attendees said expanding lab capacity and addressing data gaps are important. More ponds should be monitored more often. One participant suggested implementing test or pilot projects, such as the use of automatic monitors and other technologies and comparing that data to water quality lab data as the baseline.

Attendees suggested adding PFAS to the suite of parameters monitored, that towns should include a link to the Freshwater Initiative webpage on their website, and the Commission should partner with DEP, universities, and Fish & Wildlife for funding purposes.

One attendee asked why DEP did not include ponds in their new Title 5 regulations. Commission staff said that ponds are inherently captured in the watershed-based approach encouraged by the new Title 5 regulations. Ponds are considered in the Massachusetts Estuaries Project (MEP) reports and development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), as properly functioning ponds capture nitrogen moving through the groundwater in a watershed. Staff also noted that there is currently no MEP-like program for ponds and that TMDLs have generally not been established for ponds, particularly as it relates to nutrients. Attendees reiterated the need for more focus on ponds at the state level.

Attendees also said the importance of easy to implement strategies cannot be underestimated, stressing the need to implement projects in areas that are not planned to be sewerred for years to come.

Attendees noted the importance of coming together as pond groups, town-wide, or regionally to improve the chances of receiving funding for projects.

Participants also discussed the need for available, consistent water quality monitoring information and signage, such as colored flags at boat ramps or standard signage, and the need to provide messaging about potential concern for water quality issues in a pond so people are aware of emerging issues, not just when a limit has been reached or an advisory has been issued.

Lastly, attendees discussed bylaws for project implementation, including health bylaws, and the need to make restoration a priority.

Attendees were also asked if there are ongoing efforts that could be expanded upon to achieve any of these recommendations, or barriers to execution.

Participants asked for a roadmap or flow chart to provide guidance on the order of operations when implementing a strategy, from identifying the problem and strategy through permitting and implementation. They suggested providing a place to start and considerations as they move through the process towards implementation.

One attendee noted public health is the responsibility of the town or County, but suggested the Commission could work with those entities on these issues as it relates to pond health.

Attendees also said providing information on best practices and examples for other towns to follow would be useful, such as establishing a group like the Falmouth Freshwater Advisory Committee.

To conclude the meeting, Commission staff thanked all stakeholders for their participation and noted that while these meetings have come to an end there will be opportunities to engage with this work further before wrapping up efforts of the Freshwater Initiative by the end of the year.

Meeting 3 Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Freshwater Initiative Update: Cape Cod Commission (Commission) staff will provide an update on the Freshwater Initiative.
3. Tools and Resources: Commission staff will provide an overview of tools and resources that will be available to support preservation, restoration, and management of freshwater ponds.
4. Freshwater Initiative Recommendations: Commission staff will present an overview of draft key recommendations of the Freshwater Initiative and solicit feedback from meeting attendees on the recommendations and strategies for implementation.
5. Next Steps: Commission staff will discuss next steps for participants and the Freshwater Initiative.

Meeting 3 Participants

Stakeholder Participants

- Ashley Fisher, Town of Mashpee
- Susan Dangel, Save Mashpee Wakeby Pond Alliance
- Lucinda Keith, Falmouth Ponds Coalition
- Michael Smith, Barnstable High School
- Jodi Cutler, Joint Base Cape Cod
- Steve Waller, Association for the Preservation of Long Pond
- Jane Ward, Association for the Preservation of Long Pond
- Kathy Fox Alfano, candidate for State Representative
- Maggie McGaw, Falmouth Ponds Coalition
- Grace Hilton, Barnstable Clean Water Coalition
- Luke Cadrin, Barnstable Clean Water Coalition
- Nicolle Nistico, Barnstable Clean Water Coalition
- Brook Withers, Town of Barnstable
- Kristin Weir, Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Cape Cod Commission Staff Present

- Erin Perry, Deputy Director
- Tim Pasakarnis, Water Resources Analyst
- Tara Nye Lewis, Water Resources Analyst
- Jessica Rempel, Natural Resources Analyst
- Michele White, Special Projects Coordinator

Partners in the Regional Pond Monitoring Program

- Andrew Gottlieb, Association to Preserve Cape Cod