



Freshwater Initiative

Nauset, Chequessett, Pamet, Pilgrim Lenses Stakeholder Group

Meeting 3 Summary: June 3, 2024

The third Nauset, Chequessett, Pamet, Pilgrim Lenses Stakeholder Group meeting for the Freshwater Initiative was held on June 3, 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. Participants said they would like information on how to determine a pond's sensitivities when choosing a restoration strategy and who has the legal responsibility to act and for enforcement. Another participant emphasized that shoreline erosion is a problem.

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.

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. Attendees suggested a decision tree to work through the presented criteria and said there could be all kinds of different users so a framework needs to be useful at multiple scales.

Attendees discussed how a prioritization framework could be advantageous when applying for funding. One attendee said larger projects are underfunded and the private sector may need to provide support, or there is funding for very large projects (1,000-acre ponds versus 10-acre ponds,

for example) and partnerships may need to be established. Attendees noted a decision tree structure would also appeal to funders as a way to demonstrate why and how the proposed project was chosen. Attendees agreed on the need to be clear about our 'pond values' to tie those to funding opportunities.

Attendees suggested including information on ownership and jurisdiction in the prioritization framework, and the need to consider environmental justice communities. One attendee said there are a lot of older people in town or people whose home was passed down to them; there needs to be a way to support those with less means on an individual basis to make improvements to their properties or implement projects.

Attendees also discussed enforcement, with participants asking: what do you do when you see misuse of ponds? How is this enforced on private property?

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.

Attendees discussed the funding recommendations. They asked if towns would join together to do a project and if they have in the past. Commission staff said there are examples across the spectrum. Some towns work independently on their own priorities and some towns do discuss actions in a shared watershed. Staff noted the Pleasant Bay watershed permit as an example of towns working together across town boundaries.

Town staff commented that the towns of Eastham, Wellfleet, Truro, and Provincetown coordinate on the Wellfleet Harbor Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for ways to reduce nitrogen and are always looking for ways to collaborate.

Participants also discussed education and communication, and the possibility of having educational signage on flora/fauna along trails or at the pond's edge. Some attendees urged that visitors do not care and detrimental actions need enforcement. One attendee noted that information can be difficult to find, even for someone knowledgeable on the subject, and finding information needs to be more user friendly.

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 suggested changing the recommendation of "Integrate freshwater ponds into municipal water resource planning documents" to simply integrate into municipal planning documents more generally.

Participants again discussed the need for education and communication, stressing the need to get visitors to care about ponds and understand their sensitivity. Commission staff suggested the communications framework could help with that.

The need to utilize other partners to help with messaging was noted, and participants expressed support for a communications campaign. The Water Protection Collaborative was given as an example of successful messaging. Attendees agreed the region does not do a good enough job of publicizing how unique Cape Cod's ponds are, that part of the reason the National Seashore is here is because these ecosystems exist nowhere else in the world.

Attendees discussed the need to balance education with the amount of signage, saying people are less likely to read signs if there are too many of them. One participant liked the visual look of Maine's "The Lake Book", saying the bold graphic of the cover was eye catching, and something like that could be given to people with their beach sticker.

One attendee noted that flora/fauna signs could help with education too, such as the importance of the protection of kettle ponds because of their uniqueness.

Participants agreed on the importance of education at every level, the need for a wide-scale approach to reach people in different ways, and that more education is needed than what signage alone can provide. Attendees referenced the Lake Tahoe campaign presented at OneCape and a septic system handout used at one time in Wellfleet as examples.

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

Attendees said funding and easy to implement strategies.

Attendees also thought permitting would be impactful and suggested a “mitigation menu” where the mitigation must have a meaningful impact on improving water quality and/or habitat. It was said a fund for mitigation projects could assist those that cannot afford implementation costs.

Participants stated a need for pre-project consultation, saying people apply for a permit after the design work has been completed and they have a design they want to permit. They suggested there may be a more efficient way to present applicants with recommendations earlier in the permitting process, such as a template with a hierarchy of mitigation measures.

Attendees also suggested including concepts like low flow appliances and water reuse, and stated a need to talk with people who do mitigation work for insight on design.

Attendees agreed attaching materials, such as fact sheets, to application forms could be an effective way to get applicants resources earlier on in the permitting process. They also discussed engaging businesses that do these types of projects to help protect resources and create landscapes that are permittable.

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

- Sophia Fox, Cape Cod National Seashore
- Carl Persson, Ocean Solutions, Inc.
- Laura Hewitt, Wellfleet Natural Resources Advisory Board
- Ellen English, Friends of Village Pond Watershed
- Heith Martinez, Town of Wellfleet
- Emily Beebe, Town of Truro
- Barbara Carboni, Town of Truro
- Melyssa Millet, Town of Provincetown
- Mike Fisher, Wellfleet Conservation Commission
- Nick Picariello, Wellfleet Board of Health
- Leon Shreves, Wellfleet Conservation Commission
- Bob Stewart, Wellfleet Conservation Commission

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