

North Shore Water Resilience Task Force Meeting
March 12, 2025 – Virtual Meeting
DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Purpose

- Hear updates from the PFAS, Conservation and Demand Management, and Earmark Subcommittees
- Finalize designees for the Lower Basin Subcommittee; finalize any additional interviewees that the contracted facilitation team (CBI) should speak with to help them establish a productive framework for decision-making
- Engage in a full Task Force brainstorm session on objectives and parameters for the Decision Support Tool that will help the Task Force digest and evaluate infrastructure options.

Attendees

State and Congressional Legislators and staff: Senator Bruce Tarr (chair); Senator Joan Lovely; Representative Kristin Kassner; Representative Sally Kerans; Victoria Daigle (Office of Sen. Tarr), Christina Eckert (Office of Rep. Kassner); Ian Hatfield (Office of Rep. Robertson); Samantha Kelley (Office of Rep. Ramos); Bob McCarthy (Office of Sen. Lovely); Chloe Mitchell (Office of Rep. Kerans); Alice O'Neill (Office of Sen. Crighton); Michael Searles (Office of Rep. Walsh); Rochelle Sport (Office of Senator Lovely); Katie Morfill (Office of US Senator Markey); Claudia Runk (Office of US Congressman Moulton)

Task Force Members, Stakeholders, and Other Attendees (Task Force member official designees for the meeting are noted by showing the community or organization they represented) : Diane Alvarez; Rachel Belisle-Toler; Michael Cahill (Beverly); Anne Carroll; Erin Bonney Casey (IRWA); Zach Calderón; Peter Clay; Sharon Clement; Eileen Coleman (Burlington); Chuck Dam; Joe Domelowicz (Hamilton); Jen D'Urso; Jim Engel; Paul Goodwin (Middleton); Curtis Johnson (North Andover); Michael Kessman; Karen Lachmayr; Duane LeVangie; Joe Lobao (Wilmington); Erik Mansfield (Wenham); Hillary Monahan; Nathan Mousseau; Lydia Olson; Dominick Pangallo (Salem); William Paulitz (Peabody); Jen Pederson; Brad Perron; Peter Phippen; Ross Povenmire (Boxford); Matthew Prince (North Reading); Giovanna Recinos (Salem); Joscelyn Ruelle-Kersker; Alan Taubert (SBWSB); Ken Wittaker; Anders Youngren

Facilitators: Sara Cohen, Martin Pillsbury; Leah Robins; Jason Duff

Introduction

The facilitation team welcomed participants and reviewed the agenda. Senator Lovely extended an appreciation of the forward momentum. Representative Kassner expressed excitement that the recent studies have been completed and that the work of decision-making is beginning.

Updates from the Subcommittees

PFAS Subcommittee –

- Jason Duff reported that the PFAS subcommittee had continued to meet once a month. Current efforts are focused on developing a survey for Task Force member communities on PFAS treatment status, needs, and priorities. The survey may be conducted in written form to begin with, but may be followed by live conversations, as needed for full understanding of community circumstances.

Conservation and Demand Management Subcommittee (C&DM) –

- Rachael Belisle-Toler reported that the C&DM Subcommittee was planning to meet with water suppliers in each community to better understand their demand management goals and barriers to help the Subcommittee provide relevant resources. The Subcommittee is hoping to rely on AI to help digest complex legal documents and qualitative analysis software to help analyze the data collected from the interviews.

Earmark Subcommittee –

- The facilitation team reported that the three initial earmark projects are now complete: 1) Dewberry's study on water supply alternatives for the Lower Basin; 2) Horsley Witten / Weston & Sampson's study on hydrologic implications of reduced groundwater pumping in the basin; and 3) Dewberry's study on the status of individual communities' capital projects that could affect regional water supply options. The next two projects funded from Earmark money have just been contracted and are now underway: 4) a facilitation services contractor, the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), will be leading the Lower Basin Subcommittee as it seeks consensus on infrastructure solutions in the Lower Basin; and 5) a water resources software and engineering firm, EKI Environment and Water, will develop an interactive web-based Decision Support Tool to help the Task Force and wider regional stakeholders digest and evaluate the most promising regional water supply scenarios for the Lower Basin, drawing on the completed studies.
- Senator Tarr expressed appreciation for all this work and highlighted the importance of increasing the Task Force's external communication to help others in the region more fully understand the extent of this significant progress. While this issue is not on today's agenda, he expressed that ideas to address this need will be brought forward at a future meeting.

Lower Basin Subcommittee –

- The facilitation team reminded attendees that this subcommittee was launched by vote of the Task Force at the October 9, 2024 meeting and individuals were designated to represent subcommittee member communities/organizations at the December 16, 2024 meeting. At the December meeting designees also identified additional people from their communities/organizations, if any, who should be included in initial interviews by the contract facilitator to help the facilitator develop a framework for subcommittee deliberation and decision-making. The facilitation team has been working off-line to fill in the gaps for subcommittee members that were not present at the December 16th meeting.

- In the next 2-3 weeks, interviewees will be hearing from CBI to schedule interviews, which will focus on what the key issues are that need to be discussed, what's at stake for each subcommittee member, and what their goals are. These interviews will be confidential and provide an opportunity for people to get to know the CBI facilitation team, ask questions, and discuss any sensitive issues.
- Attendees were also reminded that the subcommittee would be pursuing full consensus on a set of actions for the Lower Basin. A decision package will likely include elements like which infrastructure solutions will be pursued, how costs will be allocated, what funding sources will be pursued, what regulatory and legislative actions will be sought, what intermunicipal agreements are needed, etc. The work will involve intensive deliberations, significant communication with decision-makers, and public engagement.

Discussion:

An attendee asked how the question of cost for the different supply alternatives would be addressed on the subcommittee. The facilitator explained that costs would factor into the deliberations in a few ways:

1. Determination of realistic cost estimates – The high-level costs estimated in Dewberry's report will likely help the group hone in on the most promising infrastructure solutions, which will then likely need further analysis to produce more refined cost estimates.
2. Fair allocation of cost – The group will need to address how the cost burdens should be fairly distributed among the beneficiaries of various alternatives.
3. Sources of funding – The group will also work to identify and pursue outside sources of funding and creative financing solutions. The New England Environmental Finance Center (NEEFC) has offered to fund the services of Quantified Ventures, a business consulting firm focused on driving positive environmental and social outcomes, to assist the subcommittee in thinking creatively about funding and financing.

Decision Support Tool Brainstorm Exercise

The facilitation team reminded attendees that at the October 9th meeting, the Task Force established that agreements that come out of the Lower Basin Subcommittee will be brought before the full Task Force for final approval. This was in recognition of the fact that even though all the parties with a major stake in the Lower Basin Subcommittee negotiations would be on that subcommittee, its ultimate course of action would occur in the context of the full watershed, in which all Task Force members have a stake. With that in mind, today's brainstorm session creates an opportunity for the full Task Force to help shape the decision-making parameters to be incorporated into the Decision Support Tool developed by EKI.

The tool framework rests on the following elements:

- What are the key objectives? i.e., What is the group trying to achieve through its preferred course of action?
- What are the options on the table? i.e., What scenarios should be looked at?
- On what basis should these options be evaluated? i.e., What are the key underlying values?
- What metrics should be used to support the evaluation? i.e., How do we define levels of success/desirability?

The group brainstormed on objectives and on what defines a “scenario”, leading to the following initial lists. **Note these lists are NOT comprehensive or definitive but rather a starting point for further discussion.**

Objectives

- Ensure drinking water supplies can meet current and projected demand
- Maintain adequate streamflows for a healthy river
- Create resiliency, including redundancy in the face of emergency
- Minimize new infrastructure needed
- Ensure compliance with Safe Drinking Water Act (considering water mixing, water age, etc.)
- Ensure compliance with PFAS regulations
- Continue/support responsible use of water resources
- Minimize cost burdens (avoid too much pressure on rate payers)
- Share cost fairly
- “Timeliness” / reach goals in a timely fashion

Note the following ideas may be more *process objectives* (a.k.a. strategies) than outcome objectives, but will be passed along to EKI for their determination:

- Identify best management practices and technologies for leak detection programs
- Identify infrastructure needed
- Determine an effective governance structure to achieve the objectives
- Identify regulatory and legislative constraints to objectives and find solutions

What Defines a Scenario?

- Which supply systems are involved
- Which sources from outside the region are brought in
- Which interconnections will be utilized
- Will additional storage be developed
- What governance structures are needed
- Length of time to implementation
- Cost

Next Steps

- ➔ The full Task Force will continue to meet nearly monthly through the spring.
- ➔ The PFAS and Conservation and Demand Management Subcommittees will continue moving full steam ahead on their respective priorities.
- ➔ CBI will begin confidential interviews with all Lower Basin Subcommittee members and plan an initial subcommittee kick-off meeting.
- ➔ EKI will use the above brainstorm and begin developing an outline for the Decision Support Tool.
- ➔ The facilitation team will send around a draft meeting summary from this meeting.