

North Shore Water Resilience Task Force Meeting
May 6, 2025 – Virtual Meeting
DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Purpose

- Hear updates from the PFAS and Conservation & Demand Management Subcommittees
- Introduce Task Force members to the Consensus Building Institute (CBI) Team and the EKI Environment and Water Team, both new contractors working on behalf of the Task Force
- Hear a presentation from EKI on the Decision Support Tool they will be building to help the Lower Basin Subcommittee and the wider Task Force and stakeholders understand and visualize tradeoffs among options

Attendees

State and Congressional Legislators and staff: Senator Bruce Tarr (chair); Representative Kristin Kassner; Representative Sally Kerans; Victoria Daigle (Office of Sen. Tarr), Ian Hatfield (Office of Rep. Robertson); Bob McCarthy (Office of Sen. Lovely); Chloe Mitchell (Office of Rep. Kerans); Alice O'Neill (Office of Sen. Crighton); Rochelle Sport (Office of Senator Lovely);

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) : Ayman Alafifi; Rachel Belisle-Toler; Anne Carroll; Erin Bonney Casey (IRWA); Zach Calderón; Eileen Coleman (Burlington); Chuck Dam; Joe Domelowicz (Hamilton); Deb Duhamel (Salem); Jen D'Urso; Anona Dutton; Greg Federspiel; Ona Ferguson; Rachel Freed; Paul Goodwin (Middleton); Vicki Halmen (Ipswich); Sandra Howland; Stephen King (Danvers); Joe Lobao (Wilmington); Erik Mansfield (Wenham); David Melycher; Hillary Monahan; Nathan Mousseau; Lydia Olson; William Paulitz (Peabody); Jen Pederson; Brad Perron; Steve Poulos; Ross Povenmire (Boxford); Giovanna Recinos; Anika Reynar; Colleen Rizzi; Brittany Segill; Alan Taubert (SBWSB); Ellie White; Andy Youngren (LCWD)

Facilitators: Sara Cohen, Martin Pillsbury; Jason Duff

Introduction

The facilitation team welcomed participants and reviewed the agenda. Representative Kerans expressed appreciation for the ongoing efforts of the Task Force.

Updates from the Subcommittees

PFAS Subcommittee –

- Jason Duff reported that the PFAS Subcommittee had sent a survey about PFAS treatment status, needs, and priorities to all water suppliers on the Lower Basin Subcommittee, to help the PFAS Subcommittee focus their efforts where they would be most useful. He encouraged recipients of his email to fill out the survey if they have not yet done so. The PFAS Subcommittee may need to follow up with live conversations with some communities if needed for full understanding of community circumstances.

- ➔ Based on group discussion, there was agreement that Town Managers and Administrators should be notified that the PFAS surveys were sent to their respective water suppliers.

Conservation and Demand Management Subcommittee (C&DM) –

- Rachael Belisle-Toler reported that the C&DM Subcommittee had received the grant funding applied for in late January, to purchase software and licenses that would enable more complete qualitative analysis of the information they obtain from interviews with Task Force communities about their water conservation goals, challenges, and resource needs. The interview template that will be used for these conversations is currently being finalized and is based on the prioritization exercise the Task Force undertook last spring.

Introduction of the Consensus Building Institute Team – Contract Facilitator for the Lower Basin Subcommittee

The Consensus Building Institute (CBI), hired with legislative earmark funds allocated to the Task Force, introduced their team and their role in the coming year.

- The team consists of Ona Ferguson, Rachel Freed, and Anika Reynar. Collectively, they have significant experience in environmental mediation and consensus-building as well as water resources challenges in MA and are looking forward to the work ahead.
- The team has been conducting confidential interviews with the members of the Lower Basin Subcommittee to help them structure the meetings to best address the needs of the group.
- They have sent scheduling polls to set up the first three meetings of the subcommittee and encouraged everyone to please fill out the poll.

Introduction of and Presentation by EKI Environment and Water – Contract Vendor Hired to Develop a Decision Support Tool for the Lower Basin Subcommittee and Other Stakeholders

EKI, also hired with state earmark funds, introduced their team and gave an overview presentation of their anticipated process for building the Decision Support Tool (DST). The full presentation can be found on the Task Force website: <https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/north-shore-h20/>

- The team consists of Ayman Alafifi, Anona Dutton, David Melycher, and Ellie White. Collectively, they have significant experience in environmental engineering, water resources planning, data visualization, and decision support tools.
- For the Lower Basin Subcommittee (LBS), the DST will be developed to:
 - Build on information previously gathered
 - Reflect objectives and priorities (still to be determined)
 - Enable focused comparisons and analysis of trade-offs among different regional water supply scenarios, including providing helpful visualizations
 - Support interactive adjustments to scenarios to enable exploration of ideas
- The steps for developing the DST are:
 - 1) Define Objectives – An initial brainstorm of these objectives was generated at the March 12 Task Force meeting and these will be honed through facilitated discussions with the LBS.

- 2) Identify water supply scenarios to be analyzed – These will also be determined by the LBS. Each will include attributes such as: estimated cost; estimated timeline; estimated infrastructure needs; potential water quality implications; estimated streamflow impacts; technical feasibility factors; legislative and regulatory requirements. These attributes may be better understood for some alternatives than for others, based on whether they were included in the technical studies completed by the Task Force last year. Where attributes might be missing for scenarios of interest, the LBS can try to obtain the information, or substitute reasonable estimates, or acknowledge the data gaps in the tool.
 - 3) Develop Evaluation Metrics – These should align with objectives (from step 1). They will address needs/concerns; reflect priorities; balance quantitative and qualitative factors; capture strengths and limitations; enable direct comparisons.
 - 4) Evaluate Alternatives – This involves applying weights to each metric based on relative importance, comparing alternatives using the metrics and assigned weights, testing how outputs change with different inputs; and identifying trade-offs between alternatives.
- EKI walked the Task Force through an example Decision Support Tool from a different project, to help people get a better sense of what to expect from this DST. That demonstration tool can be explored here: <https://tinyurl.com/NSWRTE-DEMO>

Discussion:

An attendee asked whether new scenarios that had not been studied within the consultant reports would still be available for the Lower Basin Subcommittee (LBS) to consider and whether these could be built into the tool. The facilitation team responded that the LBS would be able to explore any potential solutions that seemed viable during the course of discussions. The extent to which any of these as-of-yet unstudied scenarios could be built into the tool would depend on how much information was known about them. The hope is that the tool has sufficient flexibility to allow at least some scenarios newly conceived of by the subcommittee to be evaluated and compared with other more heavily studied scenarios, although certain data gaps may make these comparisons incomplete.

Next Steps

- ➔ The Lower Basin Subcommittee will convene its first three meetings, based on the scheduling poll sent around by CBI.
- ➔ The PFAS subcommittee will finish its survey effort and develop a plan to ensure town officials are aware of this effort.
- ➔ The Conservation and Demand Management Subcommittees will finalize its interview protocol and implementation plan.
- ➔ CBI and the LBS will work closely with EKI to incorporate key objectives into the Decision Support Tool, as these become better defined.
- ➔ The full Task Force will meet regularly, but slightly less frequently, to stay updated on progress of all the subcommittees and provide direction as needed.