



Science and Technical Advisory Committee
Partnership for the Delaware Estuary:
A National Estuary Program
www.DelawareEstuary.org

Minutes
September 28, 2006
Partnership for the Delaware Estuary - Wilmington, DE

Members or Alternates Attending:

Ken Anderson II – PADEP
Greg Breese – USFWS
Dr. Gary Buchanan – NJDEP
Lance Butler – PWD
Dr. Tom Fikslin – DRBC
Dr. Jack Gallagher - Univ. of Delaware
Simeon Hahn – NOAA
Dr. Jawed Hameedi - NOAA
Dr. Bob Hoke - DuPont
Dr. Sue Kilham – Drexel University
Dr. John Kraueter – Rutgers University
Dr. Danielle Kreeger – PDE

Dr. Dave Russell – EPA Region 3
Dr. Jonathan Sharp – Univ. of Delaware
Dan Soeder USGS
Dr. Chris Sommerfield - Univ. of Delaware

Also Attending:

Mike Haberland - NJDEP
Amie Howell – EPA Region 3
John Kennel, Jr. – DNREC
Kathy Klein – PDE (Executive Director)
Krista Laudenbach-Nelson – PDE
Martha Maxwell-Doyle – PDE

I. Welcome & Introductions (Daniel Soeder, STAC Chair)

Dan Soeder officially opened the meeting at 9:30 a.m. and welcomed all in attendance. Introductions were then made.

1. Sixteen of the twenty STAC members were in attendance, along with three other Partnership staff and three guests.
2. Mr. Soeder first reviewed the scheduled agenda. He then asked if there were any comments or changes requested for the minutes from the June 15, 2006, STAC meeting, which had been circulated in draft form for review prior to this meeting. Two small changes were requested. With no further discussion, the minutes were accepted contingent on these two corrections being made.

II. PDE and National Estuary Program Updates (Kathy Klein, Executive Director)

1. Ms. Klein first summarized recent programmatic activities at the Partnership, such as our role in the Oyster Revitalization effort, various successful media events, and outreach and coordination at fall events such as Coast Day celebrations and the Annual PDE dinner.
2. Ms. Klein also discussed findings from the national ANEP (Association of National Estuary Programs) meeting held in San Francisco in early September. Although continued funding and support for the 28 NEP's was judged to be likely beyond 2007, base funding for the program is expected to be reduced beginning with the 2008 fiscal year that will begin in October 2007.

II. PDE Science Initiatives and Opportunities (Danielle Kreeger, Science Director)

1. Conceptual Framework Brochure. Dr. Kreeger described progress made to develop the new Conceptual Framework Brochure, which summarizes key living resources, habitats, issues and human uses in each of four different sub-regions of the NEP study area. The purpose of the brochure is to establish what makes the Delaware Estuary and Watershed distinct from other large American estuaries and to start to build awareness for its "signature" traits that make it a system of premiere national importance. The brochure includes a page with interesting economic and ecological facts, as well as an icon rich cartoon in a geospatial format.

We intend to use the brochure in various ways: a) as a marketing tool to build regional and national awareness about our system, b) as an educational resource to describe how the various ecosystem components relate to each other, and c) as a means to direct the reader to our new information clearinghouse on the web (see #2). The brochure was developed based on the ecosystem matrix table included in our 2006 white paper, populated with information from the white paper and prior science-based DELEP documents (e.g., the "Living Resources" and "Scientific Characterization" reports), and then reviewed by some STAC members and representatives from PDE partners (e.g., members from the Estuary Implementation Committee). PDE's intention is to print a large quantity of brochures that will have a long shelf life, and so we refrained from including any names of individual contributors, only the names of sponsoring agencies.

PDE contracted with a graphic designer who met with PDE staff to prepare drafts of the conceptual framework. Copies of the most current draft were then circulated during the remainder of the STAC meeting for further review and comment. The intention is to have this brochure be science-based and scientifically accurate. Numerous comments and suggestions were received. These were compiled by PDE staff at the end of the meeting and were thereafter incorporated in the revision. Funding for development and printing of this brochure was provided partly from the PDE NEP grant and partly from Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Coastal Zone Management Program. [*Update: A large quantity of brochures were printed in October and have received a very positive response – please ask any PDE staff member for copies to use for educational purposes.*]

2. Delaware Estuary Information Gateway (DEIG). Dr. Kreeger also described progress in developing the new information clearinghouse on the PDE website. In early 2006, PDE was awarded a grant for \$15,000 from the USGS NBII Information Node programs to establish a dataset and report directory online as a public resource. In concert with development of the Conceptual Framework brochure, the "gateway" was set up as a new info portal and given an array of webpages at <http://www.delawareestuary.org/gateway.asp>.

Ms. Krista Laudenbach-Nelson was introduced as the new Restoration Coordinator at PDE. Prior to coming to PDE, she worked in a variety of capacities for the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, including website and IT maintenance and GIS-based dataset configuration. Using these skills, Ms. Laudenbach-Nelson has taken the lead on developing the Partnership's new info node. For example, she linked each icon from the brochure graphics to pages where searchers could obtain resources regarding that resource or issue topic. With time, we plan to hire a student to help us populate this new node with reports, scientific studies, publicly available datasets, and links to resources at partnering institutions. We are also discussing options for upgrading to a geospatial platform with interactive online maps.

3. Ocean Priorities Report. Dr. Kreeger relayed a message from Mr. Bob Tudor, Deputy Director at Delaware River Basin Commission, regarding the current open comment period for the forthcoming national Ocean Priorities Report. A brief discussion ensued regarding the future use of the report, and comments contributed by individuals and groups like PDE. It's an opportunity to "go on the record" with input, participating in the open process. A weblink was provided to STAC members to look at later, and Danielle asked for any input to be given to her initially by October 6th, with a revision by October 18th. Danielle said she would email to the STAC the URL to review the draft report, which is available online. If sufficient STAC input is received, PDE would draft a formal letter with comments. [*Update: only a few comments were received from STAC members with few specifics and we did not submit a comment letter.*]

4. State of the Basin/Estuary Report. Dr. Kreeger summarized current progress by PDE, DRBC and other contributors in preparing this watershed-based assessment report. Data compilation and indicator selection has been completed, and current efforts are focused on merging datasets from different sources (e.g. states) and selecting metrics and graphics to use in the report, which is expected to be approximately 60 pages in total. A draft table of contents has also been prepared and writing assignments and coordinating roles have been assigned. PDE is taking the lead in coordinating the estuary-specific chapter as well as contributing write-ups and some data for a few additional indicators basin-wide (e.g. freshwater mussels, fish passage and dams). An ambitious timetable has been set, with first drafts expected to be completed by mid-December. The STAC will be invited to provide peer review of the estuary chapter of this effort, and depending on the interests of DRBC perhaps also the full report [*Update: the timetable has since been readjusted with first drafts slated for early 2007. Also, the organization of the report has been changed to eliminate an estuary-focused chapter in favor of a more holistic approach.*]

III. Proposal for a STAC-Affiliated Restoration Workgroup (Simeon Hahn, NOAA, and Krista Laudенbach-Nelson, PDE)

1. Mr. Hahn and Ms. Laudенbach-Nelson discussed the outcomes of some recent meetings dialogue regarding the possible formation of a regional workgroup that would help to compile a "one-stop shop" directory for restoration and enhancement projects. Currently, restoration occurs ad hoc, often in response to particular incidents or funding opportunities. Much of the restoration is not successful or fails to realize the intended effects to address mitigation or remediation needs. There is general agreement that a regional workgroup might help to coordinate restoration and enhancement, increasing efficiency, matching up potential funders with relevant projects, ensuring equitability throughout the region, performing projects proactively "up front" rather than reactively, and perhaps prioritizing restoration to maximize net ecological "capital" and functionality at the watershed scale.

2. Although the STAC felt that a regional restoration workgroup affiliated with the STAC would be worthwhile in principle, there was some concern that the timing is not yet right for this to happen. Who would be engaged? How would it be funded? What specifically would the STAC be asked to do? What would the geographic focus of this group be? Mr. Hahn suggested that the focus should be prioritized in the urban corridor of the system where most impacts tend to occur and where restoration often is most challenging. Dr. Kreeger noted that any restoration coordination by PDE must take a comprehensive approach for the entire NEP study area, although an emphasis on a specific sub-region might be justified once regional prioritization is undertaken, etc.

3. There was general agreement that further discussion would be warranted once PDE or a key partner identifies a specific funding program with which to target a proposal. Therefore, the STAC agreed that no further action was to be taken without further consideration and discussion. [*Update: PDE continues to consider Regional Restoration Planning as a possible strategic initiative for the future*]

IV. Delaware Estuary Science Conference Planning (Danielle Kreeger)

Updates:

1. Dr. Kreeger asked if STAC members had received and reviewed the draft program that was circulated in advance of the meeting, and they all had. She reviewed the overall structure of the meeting, which is planned to be a joint meeting of the 2nd Delaware Estuary Science Conference and the 1st Delaware Estuary Environmental Summit. The meeting is scheduled for January 22-24, 2007, at the Grand Hotel in Cape May, New Jersey. The format will be to run the Summit concurrently in one of the smaller ballrooms, but with shared breaks and meals.

2. The budget was reviewed. Sponsorship is currently on par with the first conference, and Dr. Kreeger reviewed the agencies and companies that had so far committed as well as those we were waiting to hear from. When combined with carryover funds from the first meeting and some additional NEP resources earmarked toward the Summit, the total in-hand or committed resources was estimated to exceed that available in advance of the first meeting. In addition, PDE is considering applying for an EPA conference support grant [*Update: this was not submitted*].

Based on this, a detailed budget was prepared that balanced all expected costs (about \$95,000) with either registration funds or these in-hand/expected resources. Due to the robust advance support, a very reasonable registration rate has been established. This rate is expected to be \$150 for the full, early bird rate (\$75 for students), which will include 3 lunches, 2 dinners and all breaks. The Science Conference and Environmental Summit will be budgeted together, with one registration rate covering admission to both events and all meals and functions.

3. Dr. Kreeger and Ms. Klein noted that the healthy advance sponsorship and interest from invited speakers supports the idea that a biennial science conference is sustainable. Although the first conference was widely regarded as necessary and very successful, there had been some uncertainty of whether a regular meeting would engender a similar level of participation and support. It now appears that the broader science and management community values the opportunity to get together with different sectors in a periodic, regional context.

4. Ms. Klein provided a brief summary of current plans for the Environmental Summit, the program for which is still being discussed. Likely, the Summit will not last for the full three days. Although there may be some overlap in interest with attendees of the science conference, summit attendees are expected to be mainly on-the-ground restoration practitioners, educators, and others from the NGO and non-profit community.

5. Dr. Kraeuter was commended for successfully engaging Dr. Scott Nixon from University of Rhode Island to serve as our keynote speaker. Dr. Nixon is the UNESCO/Cousteau Chair

in Coastal Ecology and Global Assessment at URI and a long-time editor at the journal Estuaries. He has written some of the most highly cited, seminal papers on nutrient dynamics in estuaries and is regarded as one of the best big thinkers in estuarine ecology. Getting such a strong keynote speaker early is crucial for seeding the program and getting others to join in.

6. Dr. Kreeger then reviewed recent changes to the draft program, specifically the session lineups. Some sessions will be regular, "catch-all" sessions that provide a forum for anyone who wishes to present on physical, chemical, biological elements, etc. Special sessions are designed to address timely topics and to also speak to the theme of this second conference, which are linkages among science, management and policy. A "hot topics" session has been added to potentially address areas of emerging interest, and if successful, this might become one of the regular sessions to be held every two years. The keynote address is scheduled for the first morning, and the hot topics session is positioned at the end to hopefully maintain high attendance throughout.

Mr. Soeder added that this approach is designed to continue to foster inclusiveness, giving everyone an opportunity to participate and present somewhere on the program, but yet also having enough sessions of special interest to generate enthusiasm and speak to the theme.

7. Unlike the first conference (May 2005), we do not plan to have a high level panel with regional administrators and commissioners. This would be difficult at the Cape May venue, which is less accessible. Plus, in 2005, this high level session was deemed important to launch the science conference as the first meeting of its kind for the region. Now that this has been accomplished, PDE felt that we should wait until we have another critical need to engage these officials.

Program/Session Discussion:

8. Dr. Kreeger briefly reviewed the session lineup on a flip chart, and suggested combining what had been two separate restoration sessions into one session that includes a panel. This would condense eleven sessions into ten. There was general support for this, considering that there was no restoration session at the first conference and we don't know how much support there will be for this during the first offering.

9. Considering how tight the schedule already looks, Mr. Soeder asked if the meeting might be extended to three and a half days. Danielle noted that we have a "hold" on Thursday with the hotel in case this is necessary. But, current consensus is that three days is sufficient and going beyond three days will present difficulties for staff and also may hurt attendance at sessions near the start and end. The STAC agreed, and we decided to manage the program within the full three days.

10. Dr. Fikslin asked about the possibility of integrating the management session with the policy linkages session. The STAC agreed, and this suggestion was accepted.

11. Mr. Breese suggested moving the restoration session in the lineup and Mr. Hahn agreed. By putting restoration near the end, it was thought it could match up well with hot topics, since some of the newer restoration concepts (e.g. "restoration up front") are "hot topics" in the region.

12. Mr. Breese also suggested adding wind power as a hot topic example. A discussion

ensured about what constituted a hot topic. Mr. Breese and the STAC agreed that the hot topics should be named in the call-for-papers. The STAC suggested various examples such as channel deepening, dredging, and wind power were believed to be good additions.

13. The discussion about hot topics led Ms. Klein to express some caution, however, that we should not take an advocacy role on these topics. Dr. Kreeger supported this cautionary note, summarizing how PDE considers hot topics, which are often contentious even within among different partners of PDE. Danielle offered her view that while PDE will not routinely advocate for or against specific hot topics, PDE is prepared to consult with the STAC and take a position on issues when there is widespread agreement that we should do so, or when we are asked to do so by the Estuary Implementation Committee or perhaps other key partners. But we are not an advocacy group like some other non-profits, which themselves play a pivotal role in focusing attention. Instead, PDE, and the STAC, should function as objective experts that should be consulted for third party oversight, and the data and facts will dictate any official positions.

14. Mr. Breese noted that we do not need a long list of hot topics because we don't want folks to expect coverage of all these issues. He suggested we should include a few examples. Dr. Kilham noted that we should cover as much as possible, though. Ms. Klein suggested perhaps including hot topics once per day to stimulate discussion. Dr. Kreeger said that this could be difficult to schedule, however. The STAC suggested we should wait to see how loose or tight the program ends up being, before we can determine if this is possible. For now, we'll keep the hot topics session as it is listed, but adding wind power as an example.

15. The STAC again discussed talk lengths. Some felt that longer talks were warranted (e.g. 20 minutes), but most felt that the 15 minute length is important to ensure we can avoid concurrent talks and provide as much diversity on the program as possible. By having a diverse audience it was felt that most will appreciate only the main points of each talk, wanting only a synopsis. The STAC agreed that the session moderators will be free to set their own program format, perhaps including panel discussions and challenge questions. But the general strategy will be to set talks at 15 minutes total, giving presenters the option of either speaking for 15 minutes or speaking for 12 minutes and allowing 3 minutes for questions. In any case, every session should allow at least 20 minutes at the close for general questions. The moderators plus all speakers will serve as a panel to address the general questions at the end.

16. Mr. Kennel asked whether the hot topics can be advertised broadly to generate enthusiasm. The STAC felt the outreach for the conference should cover everything since every speaker may feel their talk is a hot topic, and the hot topics session will only be large enough to catch some topics, not all.

17. Dr. Kraeuter commented that dredging is a major issue that cuts across most other areas, and related to sea level rise. Climate change and sea level rise should be listed. Dr. Kreeger noted that these are already listed under hot topics. Dr. Sommerfield asked where channel and flow topics such as natural channel design would fit best. The STAC felt this could go under several sessions, but would fit best under Session 1 (hydrodynamics and physical processes). The STAC noted that most talks would possibly fit in different places, which should give us the needed freedom to balance the program after we see what talks are contributed.

18. Based on discussions by the STAC, the session order was rearranged. Before asking for volunteers from the STAC to serve as moderators, Dr. Kreeger reviewed the expected responsibilities of moderators. She recommended 2-3 moderators per session, generally reflecting different sectors, who will be asked to work as a team to identify and invite key speakers, review submitted presentations, provide a program summary with the presentation order, and perhaps prepare challenge questions and a panel for the session. At the meeting, they will take turns moderating the speakers to keep the program on time, and they will facilitate questions and answers.

19. Mr. Hahn asked whether the evening talks (indicators and goals, monitoring programs) were of sufficient interest to hold the attention of participants. He suggested perhaps having the hot topics session in the evening. But Dr. Kilham and other STAC members suggested that coordinated indicators and monitoring are hot topics and are related to the conference theme, and there was consensus that no changes were needed to the evening lineup. Dr. Kreeger added that we do not anticipate running the evening as late as last time when ad hoc panels were formed and discussions ensued until after 10:00. But this possibility should be kept open and we will have the necessary infrastructure ready (e.g. head table, microphones, flip charts, etc.) should there be interest in broadening the evening events. Dr. Kreeger, Ms. Maxwell-Doyle and others noted that some of the best interaction happened last conference in the evening programs, which were not rigorously scheduled.

20. Ms. Howell suggested considering adding a panel near the end of the conference which reflected on the evening discussions, particularly relating to goal-setting and policy linkages, which are major themes. Dr. Kilham suggested whether we might bring in goal-setting experts from elsewhere to moderate these panels. Dr. Gallagher suggested we wait to decide on the final program for the evenings until we see what speakers we have during the day. *[Update: due to time constraints, there was not an opportunity to schedule a second part to the goal-setting conference. The program for the first evening has since been changed to a less formal panel.]*

21. Dr. Kreeger reviewed current plans for abstract length (400 words) and formatting, which will be less than before (500 words), since we will not be asking contributors to talk about needs. We will ask them to consider goal-setting interests, however.

22. Moderators were then recruited from the STAC, PDE staff, and visitors present. Dr. Kreeger said she would follow-up with reminders of roles and responsibilities.

23. A second discussion occurred regarding the Environmental Summit and Hot Topics sessions. Ms. Klein and Mr. Hahn noted that cross-participation between the Summit and Science Conference could be very healthy, particularly with regard to restoration practices.

24. Dr. Kreeger reviewed the planned timeline for preparation of a call-for-paper and asked all present to stay tuned to the conference pages at our website, www.DelawareEstuary.org.

V. Additional Items, Other Business, and Future Meeting Plans and Other Business

1. Mr. Breese notified the STAC about a 2007 conference on horseshoe crabs and handed out literature. For more info on the International Symposium on the Science and Conservation of Horseshoe Crabs – 2007, see: <http://www.horseshoecrab.org/isschc/>

2. Action Items. Dr. Kreeger will call Jonathan Sharp to ask if he'll co-moderate the hot topics session with Gary Buchanan. Amie Howell will ask if Ed Ambrogio will work with Dr. Fikslin on the water quality session. Dr. Kilham will ask Dr. Hal Avery if he might want to moderate.

3. All present were asked to begin recruiting speakers, particularly those who had volunteered to moderate sessions.

4. Ms. Maxwell-Doyle agreed to circulate a draft table of contents for the forthcoming State of the Basin report so that the STAC has an idea of the current approach. Dr. Kreeger or Ms. Maxwell-Doyle will also clarify whether the STAC will be asked to review the whole document or just the estuary portion.

5. The next meeting of the STAC was scheduled for January 4th, 2007 at the PDE offices in Wilmington. Although the meeting room is a bit small, the STAC generally felt that the PDE offices were a good location, being central and convenient. Mr. Soeder suggested that the next meeting occur before the conference to address any last minute programmatic needs. Dr. Kreeger suggested the first week of January in hopes we could provide a draft program for comment before it heads to the printer. Dr. Kilham said this is good timing because classes at least at some universities won't start until the second week of January. This timing may also coincide with a draft of the State of the Basin report, based on current goals. *[Update: the timetable for preparation of the first draft of the State of the Basin report has been revised and a draft will not be ready for the STAC meeting in January.]*

VI. Adjourn. Mr. Soeder formally adjourned the meeting of the STAC at 3:10 p.m.