

Minutes

Meeting Attendees: Haley Burns (PDE), LeeAnn Haaf (PDE), Kathy Klein (PDE), Cathy Magliocchetti (EPA3), Martha Maxwell-Doyle (PDE), Rachael Phillos (DNREC), Chad Pindar (DRBC), Irene Purdy (EPA2), Bob Schuster (NJ DEP), Will Whalon (PWD)

DELEP Deliverables

FY27 Base Funding Work Plan

- On Monday, the draft FY27 workplan was sent to the EIC for review. Comments are due back to Haley by April 10.
- The draft workplan will then be sent to the Steering Committee (SC) for feedback and/or approval. If feedback/edit requests are provided, they will be incorporated and it will be sent back out to the SC for final review to collect approval from all partners.
- The workplan does not contain many changes compared to other years. As previously discussed, it does include funding to help pay for the portion of ANEP dues that cover communications efforts.
- \$75k is included for Urban Waters. While that funding did eventually come in for this year, it is not clear if it will continue to be available.
- Thank you to those that have already provided match information.

IIJA Year 5 Work Plan

- The IIJA Year 5 workplan was approved by the Steering Committee but has not yet been submitted to EPA. PDE has been backlogged with other proposal deadlines – 10+ proposals were submitted in the last two weeks – but the Year 5 workplan is on the list to be done soon.

Request to adjust calendar for overlapping requirements

- DELEP's next Program Evaluation (PE) is scheduled for 2029, which is the same year that the CCMP revision needs to be finalized, also a Summit year, and is just after the State of The Estuary is due. This would be a lot of work in a short period. PDE submitted a request to EPA to allow us to move the PE or the CCMP Revision deadline to 2030. It would be preferable to push the PE so that the revised CCMP would be in place for it, but there are quite a few PEs scheduled in 2030 already. PDE is waiting to hear back from EPA HQ.

Spring National Estuary Program (NEP) Meeting Recap

- Kathy and Martha conducted several Hill visits while in D.C. for the NEP meeting. They met with staff from Dave McCormick's office as well as staff from Coons' and McBride's offices.
- EPA regional staff could only participate in the NEP meeting virtually, so there were not as many people in the room as in prior years.
- The first day started with an Artist in Residence tabling event, where EPA staff were invited to meet and talk with the artists. Our artist in residence, Eurhi Jones, participated. Later that afternoon all of the artists gave presentations about their work. (A recording of the panel discussion can be [found here](#).) All have very different approaches, with ours being more prescribed than most.
 - We are behind on implementation because of delays in the RFP and then contracting processes, but Eurhi is doing great so far, meeting with community organizations and gathering information to inspire the final work(s). PDE is contemplating requesting an extension for the funding since it seems that another month could be helpful.

- Kathy initiated conversation with Rob Pirani (director for the New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program at the Hudson River Foundation) about an idea to go after national arts funding to expand this program to other NEPs, but there hasn't been time yet to dive deeper into those efforts.
- EPA shared that there would be an announcement regarding a location in Florida that was nominated for consideration of inclusion in the NEP - Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary of National Significance Act of 2024.
- Since the meeting, an email was sent saying that this location has been invited to submit information to support them being recognized as a NEP. It seems likely that their inclusion will be finalized but it is unclear if they will be in the FY27 appropriation.
- The RAE grant program is funded out of CWA 320 and coordination of that is going out for bid.
- 2027 is the 40th anniversary of the NEP. This meeting included a session about what to do to celebrate. EPA is evaluating the many suggestions received during the meeting.
- EPA mentioned wanting to provide a packaged tool for trash free waters.
 - PDE has been involved in a project with artist/filmmaker Maciek Albrecht, who is working on a short film involving the Delaware River (<https://thegreatrivercleanup.com/>).
- There will be updated NEP program guidance issued this year.
 - The program evaluation rating system is being changed from a two-level, non-failing system (proficient or progressing) to a three-level structure that essentially encompasses pass, needs progress, and does not meet requirements.
 - Cathy M. said that she is not concerned about NEPs in Region 3 being close to the lowest/failing mark in the PE scale. Also, a program would not immediately drop to that bottom category, it would be a progression down. Under this administration accountability language is being added to processes/documentation across programs.
- There was also a presentation focused on tools being created by EPA HQ to help tell the success story of the NEP.
- There has been a lot of turnover with NEP leadership in the past year or so. Three directors announced that they are leaving this year and there are already a number of new NEP directors. We will see how that impacts ANEP, which is driven by director involvement.
 - Rachael experienced similar turnover within the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) and said that the board is still just as active. She advised not to be overly concerned by these changes.

May Steering Committee (SC) Meeting Agenda

- The EIC reviewed a draft SC meeting agenda that was prepared and sent out earlier in the week.
- Kathy noted that she will be asking other PDE staff members to present on some of the topics under the DELEP/PDE Updates section.
- Chad said that if more input and time will be requested of the EIC/SC for the upcoming DELEP deliverables, especially the CCMP revision, it would be a good idea to plant that seed now. Meghan Rogalus shared a similar sentiment via email in advance of the meeting.
- No specific agenda changes we requested.
- Based on the amount of time that EIC members need to brief their SC member for the SC meeting, PDE will aim to get the meeting package out via email by April 20, about 3 weeks in advance.

Updates

Hatchery

- PDE had been looking at a Philadelphia Parks and Recreation site in the northeast section of the city that did not work out. After a debriefing with PWD, PDE found out that PWD will be [decommissioning a booster pump station](#) at a location close to the Schuylkill River. This is a 4,000 sq ft building that originally was going to be turned over to Parks and Recreation, but as it

turns out, they are no longer interested in it. This building will be available once the new pump station goes online in early 2029. PDE and PWD are moving along with exploring this location, which seems like a real possibility for the hatchery.

- PDE is looking at different scenarios around the funding that is currently in place.
 - The main funding is through PennVest, plus about \$1.4M in IJA funds and \$1M CDS funds, along with some smaller pots of money. Rebecca Hayden at PennVest advised PDE to come up with a very concrete plan to present to her bosses, including explanation of what PWD would be contributing (committed to carrying the annual overhead costs of running the hatchery, with PDE as a partner).
 - Ideally, PDE would like to change the PennVest agreement so that PDE is not on the hook for 30 years of annual reporting. PDE would like PennVest to contribute money to retrofitting the pump station building but would likely not ask for all the remaining funding in the agreement, which is \$6.5M.
 - Some of the other funding that has been secured will need extensions and/or reallocation of categories.
- Kathy is very hopeful that this will work out. Will said that he is also hopeful and has not heard any concerns on the PWD side as they are working on nailing down funding mechanisms and how to get existing retrofit plans to meet hatchery needs.
- In addition, there is a historic house adjacent to pump station - Hatfield House – which Parks and Recreation is looking for someone to take over once the new pump station is built (it is currently rented by the company building the new pump station). The building needs work, but if PDE could use CDS and PennVest funds for the hatchery, IJA money currently set aside for the hatchery could potentially be used to fix up the house to create a Philadelphia office location. If that worked out, in 3 years PDE's lease in Wilmington ends and we could be looking for a smaller footprint in Wilmington.

New Website

- The new website went live yesterday. There has not been a big announcement yet as there are still a lot of little things to be updated.
- Staff working on this project are learning the templates and back-end management and will be making some necessary updates over the next few weeks, but, if you see something that needs to be fixed, please let us know.
- There will be a lot of new content, including the Climate Resilience Hub which is not yet up and running.
- There is much more focus on engagement and being user friendly.

Summit

- PDE is almost ready to make a Summit venue decision. The leading option is currently Clayton Hall at the University of Delaware. Part of the very first Summit was held there many years ago.
- We are looking at February 23-24, 2027 – please let us know ASAP if you know of any other big items happening that week.
- Chad noted that the Newark Reservoir is very close to this UD site and that it might be a field trip opportunity.
- PDE plans to use some NFWF money to pay for scholarships for people to attend the Summit (as well as the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed's Forum in September).

Partner Updates

- **DNREC:** The Wetlands Conference took place in early March. Rachael could not make that meeting because she was in DC attending the NERRs meeting. She reported that general tone of that meeting was optimistic. Delaware has a lot of stuff coming up for Earth Month.

- **NJ DEP:** Bob reported that everyone is adjusting to the new administration and staff, getting folks up to speed. The Commissioner has not officially been appointed but it looks like it may happen in May.
- **PA DEP:** [PADEP Growing Greener Plus 2026 round](#) will be open from April 22 to June 22 and accepting applications with a focus on restoring and mitigating non-point source pollution to Pennsylvania's waterways. Pre-application meetings are required with the Watershed Manager in the respective region of the project site/area ([map with contacts by region is here](#)). Anyone interested in applying should schedule a pre-application meeting before the end of May.
- **EPA 3:** The Office of Management and Budget released Clean Water Act Section 306 funding to the region, as well as Section 319 non-point source funding. State Revolving Fund money has not yet been released, but is expected in the next few weeks, and with that CWA Section 604b. The travel budget for FY26 was unexpectedly cut by more than half, and folks are trying to find a way to restore some of this funding.
- **DRBC:** Chad shared that it is intern-hiring season at DRBC. They also had a successful tabletop spill exercise two weeks ago, centered on a theoretical spill up near Easton, PA. It was very well attended and will be reported on during the May meeting of the Subcommittee on Source Water Protection.

Action Items:

- PDE will send out the Steering Committee package on April 20.

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

- [Christina River Cleanup](#): Saturday, April 11, 2026, 9am-12pm, sites in New Castle County, DE
- Next EIC meeting: Tuesday, May 7, 2026, 10am-12pm, virtual
- Spring DELEP Steering Committee Meeting: Tuesday, May 12, 1-3pm, virtual