

Minutes

Meeting Attendees: Haley Burns (PDE), Elizabeth Butler (EPA2), Tanja Crk (EPA HQ), Karen Forst (PDE), Kathy Klein (PDE), Cathy Magliocchetti (EPA3), Martha Maxwell-Doyle (PDE), Jason Minnich (PA DEP), Rachael Phillos (DNREC), Irene Purdy (EPA2), Meghan Rogalus (PA DEP), Kelly Somers (EPA R3), Will Whalon (PWD)

Hatchery Update

- PDE continues working through the process of getting the final okay to move forward with working with Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) to repurpose their old pump station at 33rd and Girard.
- An overview of this latest plan was provided to Pennvest in late June. Pennvest asked PDE to revisit the return on investment business strategy, and PDE is working with PWD on that.
 - Initial projections in the Pennvest agreement made some high estimates of propagation numbers and money that could be recouped through sales. Any money made beyond operating costs (staffing, supplies, utilities, etc.) is supposed to go toward paying Pennvest back for the investment. After taking a closer look at the costs of operating the hatchery, animal sales alone, would not be enough to cover the expenses. Under the partnership with PWD, they will cover the annual operating costs.
 - The original agreement also said that PDE would propagate freshwater mussels for both the Susquehanna and Delaware River watersheds. There are some concerns about doing this for the Susquehanna (biosecurity and the complexity of the grow out system), and PA Fish & Boat is already building a hatchery in that watershed, so PDE is having conversations with them to determine a roadmap for moving forward.
- In the response that will be sent to Pennvest, which is targeted for late September, PDE will also ask for less money than the nearly \$8M originally planned. Because other funds have been raised and this building is smaller, the ask will probably be closer to \$5M. No Pennvest money has been spent over the past year while the project has been on pause, and no physical work on the building can start until it is decommissioned in 2029, however planning and preparation can begin once we have a clear path forward in regard to how costs will be covered.
- In the meantime, PDE is still doing a lot of work with freshwater mussels but is not currently getting new babies propagated by USFWS.

Artist in Residence (AiR) Program/September Bus Tour

- The bus tour to the AiR project sites in Camden will be Thursday, September 24. A formal invitation with a registration link will be emailed out today. Many of PDE's partners will be invited, and bus seats will be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Some details, like the exact timing of stops, are still being worked out. The tentative schedule includes meeting at American Water HQ for lunch at 11:30am, then visiting three locations: the Center for Environmental Transformation project site, Cramer Hill Waterfront Park, and JPEG gallery which will have an exhibit of residents' photos plus documentation of this whole program.
- The projects in other cities are coming along as well. Installation sites have been confirmed in Chester and Philly; efforts are underway to finalize the Wilmington site.
- The goal is to have all artwork installed by the end of October so the grant can be closed out by the end of year. There will be smaller events in each of the three other cities to celebrate the completion of the projects.
- PDE is actively fundraising to continue this program in some form and was recently awarded a Constellation Clean Environment Award for \$25,000 to do a project in the Schuylkill watershed.

IJA Year 5 and NEP Base Funding Assistance Agreements

- The IJA Year 5 has gone through approvals, executive order review, and is awaiting final funding memo approval. The FY27 base funding work plan has gone through EPA internal review and is currently under executive order review.
- PDE won't start spending FY27 funds until January, but IJA will start being spent as soon as it is available.

Urban Waters Federal Partnership (UWFP)

- It was announced in June that EPA is no longer going to provide any financial support to the UWFP.
 - Since about 2021, PDE has been getting an addendum to base funding (\$70k) to partially support the ambassador position. PDE would like to continue to lead the location, but there won't be as much staff time available to do that without money from EPA. It is unclear what this will look like moving forward, but will be decided as part of PDE's 2027 budgeting process.
 - It is unknown what other locations dependent on EPA funding are going to do. The NY NJ Harbor Estuary Program is working to piece things together but they have already moved from a full time to part-time ambassador position.
 - EPA has committed to continuing the UW locations monthly calls to keep UW locations informed and in communication.
- This is the last 6 months of a large NFWF grant to provide project assistance to community organizations. Some of the planned projects fell through for various reasons, so PDE worked with NFWF to repurpose some of that money for other things. This includes providing scholarships to community organizations to attend the CDRW Forum in Sept., and up to 20 scholarships for PDE's Summit in February. PDE is also putting together a fundraising and grant writing handbook to share with these organizations. A webinar around this is possible as well.
- PDE hired a consultant to help with PR around these collaborative community projects (as well as the AiR program). PDE is targeting four projects, one in each UWFP city, for which there can be some kind of press event or ribbon cutting.

Fall NEP Meeting

- The Fall NEP meeting will be in Corpus Christi, TX in October. Let PDE know if interested in attending and more information can be provided.
- PDE is sending 3 people to the meeting, Kathy, Martha, and Leah Morgan, who submitted an abstract.

Partner Updates

- **PDE:**
 - PDE's annual dinner is Thursday, October 8 at Vie in Philadelphia. To celebrate our 30th anniversary year we are making short video about our work.
 - Delaware River Festival is September 26. If interested in tabling, let us know.
 - EPA and the NEPs are working to do more around promoting activities around National Estuaries week. PDE is involved in that effort.
 - The STAC Summit subcommittee is working on programming and identifying speakers for the upcoming conference. A call for abstracts will be sent soon, and we will go out for sponsorship later this month. PDE is fortunate to have some good funding available already. USFWS reached out about supporting it and is providing \$15k for each of the 2027 and 2029 events. There is also some base and IJA funding.
 - The Franklin Institute is opening an exhibit in January focused on earth, weather, and water that will include large video screens and storytelling about work being done around these topics. They invited PDE to talk about freshwater mussel work and non-point source pollution prevention and will interview Sally and Chesa.
 - There have been discussions with an artist from Easton, PA, Maciek Albrecht, who wants to make a short, animated film about the river and keeping it clean. The idea originated after

they heard about Riverfest and wanted to create a film to show there. The project has evolved into something bigger since PDE got involved and is now called the [Great River Cleanup Project](#). They have brought in folks from L.A. and are looking to build out curriculum. PDE signed an agreement and is their first impact partner. PDE will be helping on the technical side with content of materials and with connecting them with potential partners. Originally there was no budget but now it is a monetized initiative, and they are working to raise money to complete this. Kathy mentioned this effort to EPA HQ in relation to the Trash Free Waters initiative.

- PDE was invited to sit on the committee formed out of the Wetlands bill that passed in Delaware. LeeAnn is the named appointee.
- **PA DEP:** The Coastal Zone section is still waiting to hear from NOAA on 2026 grants. Hopefully there will be approval by the end of Sept. Next week there is a pre-application workshop for the next grant round, and the following week (Aug. 18th) there is an estuary-specific workshop.
- **DNREC:** DNREC is preparing for a busy Nation Estuaries week. The [DNERR Symposium](#) will be held that week. On Sept. 22nd its focus will be on collaboration, and on the 23rd there is a site visit to Black Bird Creek Reserve focusing on restoration efforts.
- **EPA R3:** Region 3 hopes to get base funding out by the end of Sept. The SAV team is going out for annual surveys starting next week. They are working on an SAV model looking at habitat suitability. Kelly is on team working on Trash Free Waters and, when appropriate, can keep recommending the nexus between Great River Cleanup film project and the EPA initiative.
- **EPA R2:** Liz Butler started a detail as acting branch manager. She is still working with estuary programs, but her time will be spread across more efforts. Invitations were sent to NEP directors for September training for Program Evaluation guidance updates.

Action Items:

- PDE will keep the EIC updated about the small events that will be planned to highlight AiR project installations and Collaborative Community projects.

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

- Next EIC meeting: Friday, September 11, 1-3pm, virtual
- AiR Bus Tour: Thursday, September 24, 11:30am-3:30pm, Camden, NJ ([Register Here!](#))
- [Delaware River Festival](#): Saturday, September 26, 10am-4pm, Penn's Landing in Philadelphia, and Wiggin's Park in Camden
- PDE's [Experience the Estuary Celebration](#): Thursday, October 8, 5-8:30pm, Philadelphia, PA
- Joint EIC/STAC Meeting: Thursday, October 29, 10am-12:30pm, hybrid – PDE office and virtual
- Save the Date! [Delaware Estuary Science & Environmental Summit](#): February 23-24, Clayton Conference Center, Newark, DE