

UWFP Delaware River Location Monthly Meeting
Tuesday, May 20, 2025
11:00-12:00 ET on Zoom

Attendees:

John Harrod, PDE
Kathy Klein, PDE
Haley Burns, PDE
Emily Maung-Douglass, DE Sea Grant
Ericca Rosenholtz, NJDEP
Irene Purdy, EPA Region 2

Karen Igou, Green Building United
Toms Deza, NPS-RTCA
Avery Lentini, DRBC
Kim Hachadoorian, TNC
Will Ethridge, FEMA Region 3
Donald Farrell

I. Welcome & Introductions

- Welcome Partners

II. Event Updates & Discussions

- **Artist in Residence (AIR) Program**

- i. Updates on program redevelopment and concept direction

- Last fall EPA provided guidance on the program that is now essentially not valid since it does not adhere to current executive orders. EPA is now letting regions assume oversight of this pilot program rather than headquarters (HQ), and the National Endowment for the Arts is no longer involved.
 - PDE had put out the original RFQ to hire artists as sub awardees, then found out it has to be an RFP process to hire contractor, so PDE will need to put out a new request and re-do that entire process. PDE is reevaluating what this process might look like and there is an opportunity to reimagine implementation of the program.
 - Originally this was really focused on environmental justice and climate change, but they can no longer be talked about them in same way, and HQ has instructed PDE to instead tie the work to the four focus areas of the National Estuary Program: nutrient reduction, reduce trash, engaging all communities, addressing recurrent extreme weather areas.
 - The change opens up potential to not just focus on urban priorities but bringing in other aspects. Maybe instead of 4 artists, one that does work focusing on various places and elements/uses of the Estuary. Also potential to tie into 250th anniversary of Declaration of Independence since there will be a lot of visitors in our region.
 - In the next few weeks, PDE will need to decide what direction it wants to go in, have it approved by EPA, change the assistance agreement since funding for the artist(s) was under sub awardees and now needs to be under contractors – which will then require PDE to make other changes to the assistance agreement.

- Funding needs to be spent by September 30, 2026.
- One of PDE's partners, Nurture Nature Center in Easton, PA, has done a lot of projects utilizing art for messaging. Tying into recurring extreme weather events may be a good move since for another project we have funding to create a resilience hub – there could be a way to connect the artwork and the hub.
- **Chester River Fest Recap**
 - i. Highlights from the May 17th event
 - Great weather, many happy attendees
 - Activities included Ike Foundation fishing lessons, Youth Development United playing soccer with youth, etc.
 - Thanks to those who joined, including DRBC.
 - Delaware River Festival is Saturday, Sept. 27 in Philadelphia and Camden.
- **Collaborative Community Projects & NFWF Update**
 - i. Status of NFWF funding (now unfrozen)
 - After several months these funds were recently unfrozen, so PDE is able to restart conversations with community partners.
 - ii. Next step for first round projects is completing NEPA categorical exclusions
 - PDE will also soon reach out to those that applied in the original round but were held off for potential subsequent rounds of funding
 - Looking for non-federal sources of funding for future projects.
- **Brief NEP Update from Kathy Klein, PDE Executive Director**
 - Hopeful that PDE will receive full base funding for FY26, but moving forward this could be a battle
 - PDE has been told that UWFP money will be cut back but are not sure how much. Because of the NFWF money received PDE planned to hire someone to help Eve manage all of these community projects, but will no longer be doing that, instead focusing on keeping the ambassador position fully funded.
 - Guidance for the NEP has been updated, and terms and conditions for all federal grants has changed. Agencies can terminate at any time if feel it no longer adheres to priorities, and organizations essentially have to verify that they are not doing DEIJ work.
 - To be eligible for federal funding, PDE has to abide by the executive orders and we have messaged that out to some partners that have decided to go in a different direction.
 - UWFP does not seem to have been targeted yet. PA Representative Brian Fitzpatrick recently [reintroduced legislation](#) to authorize and appropriate the UWFP.
- **Strengthening Our Network**
 - i. Rebuilding the Urban Waters partner base
 - We have lost a lot of partners, which is evident based on participation on this call. In general, there is concern about loss of institutional knowledge and information being passed down for continued effective work.
 - Looking for new partners in agencies that we no longer have representation from.
 - ii. Request for partner contacts (especially within federal agencies or organizations not currently engaged)
 - Please let Eve and John know if you have contacts/come across someone

that might be interested

III. Partner Updates & Resource Sharing

- Roundtable: share updates, events, initiatives, and other opportunities
 - NPS – anticipate staffing changes at end of month, as many retirements are coming up then, which is likely to be similar across agencies
 - DRBC – in person business meeting on June 11 at Nurture Nature Center in Easton, PA

IV. Next meeting: Tuesday, June 17, 2025, from 11-12 ET via Zoom.