

**Leadership Council Meeting**

**14 December 2023**

*North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality*

217 W Jones St, Raleigh, NC 27603

*Link via MicroSoft Teams*

[Click here to join the meeting](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_ZTBiNjg2ODQtZDkxZi00MGI2LTk3OWUtMmE0ZTM4ODU5ZGIz%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%227a7681dc-b9d0-449a-85c3-ecc26cd7ed19%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22c6dbc715-6eaf-4dab-ac11-aac9a2d9b96b%22%7d)

**AGENDA**

1:00 **Welcome**  Dr. Kirk Havens

* Agenda Review – Informed attendees that meeting will be recorded for record keeping purposes

1:05 **Public Comments**

1:10 **Director’s Briefing** Dr. Bill Crowell

* Sacket Review and discussion
* Approval Received for BIL, applying for the remaining 3 years of funds.
* Working with NCORR to move projects forward on resiliency.
* Workplan BIL will include the 5-year strategy and the funding will be broken out.
* CAC and STAC have mat and reviewed on CCMP.
* Water Resources MAT on Estuarine water quality monitoring strategy
* Jan 25 and Feb 21 will be the next LC meetings – please respond to Mar, Apr, May meeting.

1:20 **STAC Update** Dr. Paul Angermeier, Dr. Jud Kenworthy

(Jud) STAC engaged in the process of planning. New proposal of the process to be improved. Essentially 2 problems addressed: 1) STAC survey response, and 2) STAC activities and interests.

* Interest in citizen science and involvement in APNEP (no meeting set with CAC, but we want to accelerate that process to meet soon)
* Addressed proposing new STAC focus group areas (small subset of STAC members to assist with BIL funding direction)
  + Effort to advancing 3-5 BIL awards in these highly focused areas of the focus groups.
  + Identify BIL priorities areas from the Focus Groups
* Lack of resources has been noted – hiring graduate assistant to help implement these projects (Similar to interns for Chesapeake Bay Watershed)
* Preliminary vetting has been linked to CCMP (Mapping, Targeted protection/restoration, Planning
* (Paul) point out discussion on the Sacket decision, which meshes well with the wetlands and mapping efforts – what may be farmed out to STAC to help develop those plans.
* (Carl) enthused by proposal because we have discussed for some time on being more engaged in the APNEP program and decision making and interest in STAC members to pursue. Exciting on bringing on staff to help move those identified projects forward to advance the Programs agenda. This is important in making the program work and respond positively to that approach.
* (Kirk) The experience with interns would be beneficial to their goals and potentially onboarding them as staff once completed. LC is happy to help with implementation.
* (Paul) the focus teams were not meant to be a STAC entity, want the LC and CAC involved.
* (Kirk) lets investigate the intern route by next meeting.
  + Does anyone object to STAC having this discussion and moving forward? Do we have LC support?
  + Yes, this is an opportunity.
* (Tom) great idea, students are wanting this experience like Space Grant and SEA Grant opportunities. High help to CAC as well, it would help to engage with the CAC and building those relationships and implement in the areas the CAC proposes.
* (Todd) focus areas are great. Question would be what is the focus of the focus? Bite sized pieces or achievable projects. Years ago, there was history with partner engagement, lets work on that too.
* (Bill) citizen science water quality group in the past – it was more engagement and not acceptance of the data obtained. Those have changed over time and departments and divisions are open to citizen science data. Looking to explore that. Focus areas it is good for the STAC to take the lead on that – establish a framework that can be carried forward. Need a budget for that and decide what the funding contract mechanism would be. Need to figure that out, DEQ has been limited to summer interns. DEQ looking to establish HBCU relationship to gain interns.
* (Jud) STAC did not decide on citizens doing the science or intern doing the science and collecting the data. There are citizens that are very interested in what APNEP is doing.
* (Kirk) propose to move forward with the citizen science and focus groups.
* (Bill) will include an intern workgroup support item in the new workplan.

1:30 **CAC Update**  Holly White, Dr. Tom Allen

(Tom) met virtually to discuss CCMP and strategic plan for APNEP. Driving research to practical solutions for conservation, also driving the legal aspect of those as well. Virginia participation from LRNow, renewed interest in the upper Roanoke basin, brainstorming from the bottom up on interest and needs. STAC to attend the CAC meeting and vice versa. Good RISE presentation, like RAFT in VA. RAFT has a great process that can be used as extra support for an intern. SACKET ruling was discussed and implications. Soliciting for additional CAC membership. Interest in dashboard or report card to engage community members.

* (Kirk) Good interest in upper watershed, continue to explore that opportunity.
* (Jud) When is the meeting you would like STAC membership/leadership to attend?
* (Steve) February 29 is the next CAC meeting expected to be in-person.
* Jud requested a virtual aspect of that meeting so STAC can listen in.

1:40 **CCMP Development** Bill Crowell

**Bill provides update and next steps -** *STAC is looking for guidance on which draft actions they to focus on through the establishment of workgroups.* **Seek number of categories and approval /consensus to move ahead**

(Bill) Currently revising CCMP with minor comments, revised document was sent to you all ahead of the meeting. New question, current CCMP has 5 components (engage, identify, protect, restore, monitoring, etc.), the document includes 2 of those grouping. Looking for input. We can rearrange as LC sees fit. Combining categories, rename new categories, of not include the categories at all.

* (Jud) show the 3 proposed categories: Protect & Restore, Engage, and Assess & Monitoring
* (Cal) If there is nothing driving the grouping in anyway. The four category model follows a logic concept. As for the need of specific headings, I don’t care how that is handled.
* (Todd) Assess and monitoring seems like adaptive management – instead define the real purpose to adaptive management. Protect and Restore seems repetitive.
* (Bill) We are valuing the CAC organization of the categories. We do not have all categories yet but include them in the full narrative. Opinion, there needs to be some grouping to be helpful to the organization and categorization.
* (Kirk) Is Carl’s logic flow conceivable?
* (Bill) The current CCMP and new CCMP are all on that wheel with multiple categories, so it would be a struggle to organize into specific categories.
* (Susan) The lack of research is very noticeable (engage in research, advance research) is there an opportunity to include that?
* (Tim) Staff has discussed is that identify = understand, which would be research side to fill data gaps. The goal is to understand the system, which would include research. Add research into the narrative.
* (Susan) Identify may be difficult to understand.
* (Tom) The CAC would appreciate the language of identify as research, research is not a dirty word.
* (Bill) Thoughts on categories, number appropriate
* (Susan) that is fine and easy way to move forward.
* (Bill) Staff will continue to discuss and submit to LC review.
* (Carl) Advocate for 4 categories, because it follows the logic model
* (Kirk) Yes and include research.
* (Bill) CCMP will be sent to a variety of partners for review and feedback, edit and send back to public consumption.

2:00 **Sackett Decision Wetlands Analysis** Kirk Havens,

**Kirk introduces** *Sean Charles of Coastal Studies Institute*

* Also present are Tami Rudnicky and Jess Hendricks, Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences

North Carolina Vulnerability to WOTUS Sackett decision

* (Kirk) Sean and Tami is here to discuss initial steps of spatially analyses of NC wetlands. This effort was born out of prior LC meeting in the interest of looking at wetlands spatially in underserved underrepresented communities. Prioritization. VA has already completed this analysis but did not capture AP Va region.
* (Sean) using this meeting to direct the direction we are going based on the Sackler decision. How likely are the wetlands at risk in AP region with the Sackler decision.
  + Mapping of wetlands with hydrologic conductivity access that could endanger wetlands. With the analysis many the NC Wetlands are in serious danger. 21% in danger you will find in managed highlands and then depressional swamp forest. Impacted areas drained and cutover and some are no longer wetlands. Managers can help reduce impacts like NWRs. Need to engage these local managers to mitigate impacts.
  + DEQ data show 52% high risk, medium risk (33%), and low risk (15%)
  + Interest coming up – working with Audubon and Currituck coalition and also funds for SLR and future of NC Coastal wetlands.
  + Hydrologic information will be added to this model
* (Todd) not all properties are shown on the map so the data may be overstated. The protected areas need to be included and numbers adjusted.
* (Tom) USGS has protected areas in their database that can be included in the mapping. The artificial drainage network are essentially a connection. I have a model that ODU has developed using NHN2 to show more accurate data.
* (Kirk) Recent conversation VA DCR are discussing that needs to be included.
* (Jud) When you do future work, I am worried about high-risk areas of the subterranean biology that would not allow for development because high subterranean water influence. Are you considering that around wetlands? The hydrologic model may be prohibitive.
  + (Sean) Yes were are considering that. This may be overestimating what is at risk. We have a lot of data to incorporate into model. Then come up for ways for them to be protected by identifying worst case scenarios first.
* (Kirk) there is a GIS layer that can be used to help narrow this analysis
* (Todd) In the 70s, areas where land was being converted the entire risk was not assessed. 5 feet or less of sea level could inhibit projections.
* (Tami) VA had not considered using the conservation easements, we focused on surface water only as well. Love the ideas of incorporating more layers.
* (Tom) VA does not have land layers of parcels like NC. SO look at zoning levels instead of parcels, used a conservation tool down the road.
* Todd and Sean agree on water tables important but challenging.

2:20  **Project Updates (Introduces)** Heather Jennings, MS.

Spatial Targeting Dr. Dean Carpenter

Cooperative agreement with NCSU center for spatial analysis – Meeting with Ross Mettemeye (director) Jan. 8, 2024. Staff customized and refined scope in November. Draft scope has been sent to the lab to establish work, the scope will be further refined in January – the APNEP steering committee will oversee the exercise

Scuppernong Stacey Feken, M.S.

Lots of activity since Oct 13 meeting - The Albermarle commission, and many other partners. Engagement activity at River Festival and then community event at 4H center. Near end of 1st phase - KBE drafting update report; collecting community input. Consultant is drafting first phase of the project process. Community engagement and outreach has been huge with the design of the workshops - 100 participants on Oct 23 in Columbia - participatory mapping exercise. Lora Eddy (TNC) leading and APNEP will map community data. Water study engagement team working with SWCA contractor, Coastal Reserve, County Managers, and NWR engaged. Integrating this outreach with other resiliency projects that are going on. Team will continue to engage in community meetings to incorporate that into the phase of the Scuppernong.

Land Cover/Wetlands Mapping (C-CAP) Dean Carpenter, PhD

Staff support to acquire C-CAP funding for wetlands mapping, working with wetlands staff at DEQ/DWR that APNEP fund the non CAMA portion to map the wetlands in the AP region. DCM wanted to further to add into pools and pans, with the existing 6 categories. Nate Herald reach out to possible pilot with wetlands classification to include the additional category. 1 meter or more refined, APNEP SAV resolution would be helpful to the cause. DEQ representatives attending a GIS landcover workgroup meeting. Charlie Deaton of DMF developed the map, dark is DMF, lighter blue would be APNEP funding, SC funding portions that flow into SC. Gaps needed Cape Fear and the Upper Roanoke (3/4 in VA) working with VA to encourage VA to pay for that region.

Engagement and Education RFP Steve Anderson, M.S.

Staff been preparing the RFP for annual engagement and stewardship funding. Plan to release the RFP tomorrow Friday, Dec. 15 now that 320 funding in house. We also received state matching funds, and decided to offer a total of $80k up from $40k previously with a max of $30k/project. Plan to fund 3+ projects.

* (Paul) Please distribution list sent to the LC council, CAC and STAC.
* (Steve) Currently working to expand the distribution list, and looking for additions from LC, CAC, STAC to add to the list. The entire management conference will be included on the distribution list.

2:45 **LC Bylaws Draft** Kirk Havens, Bill Crowell

*Seek edits/comments or approval (consensus)*

* (Bill) Last worked on via Trish Murphey before returning to DMF. We want you all to review and provide any feedback. We can discuss today, send info to us via staff or we can discuss the next LC Meeting.
* (Kirk) Lets work to get approval at the next meeting. It does mention vice chair in this bylaw – giving you fair warning that one of you may be called on.

2:55 **Other Business**

* None known at present. Vice chair?
* (Bill) no new business at this time, hand the meeting to Todd
* (Todd) Earlier this week we are transitioning at the Coastal Fed, Braxton Davis will be new chairman, Todd will be executive advisor.
* (Jud) Is there any coordination between different states and resources issues to address the Sackler issue?
* (Kirk) This group is acting as a coordinator with Va and NC. There is an issue with EPA Region 3 and Region 4, as well as other Federal Regions.
* (Tim) There is a lot of discussion about the decision between several states. Biser is the president of ECOS

3:00 **Adjourn**

**Upcoming Meetings: January 25th & Feb 21st**