

**Science and Technical Advisory Committee  
Winter Meeting (Webinar Only)  
Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership  
February 18, 2021**

STAC Members: Brian Boutin (TNC), Bo Dame (Chowan U), Michelle Moorman (US-FWS), Jud Kenworthy (US-NOAA ret.), Wilson Laney (NCSU), Paul Angermeier (USGS/Virginia Tech U), Lee Bodkin (USGS), Eric Brittle (VA-DWR), Randall Etheridge (ECU), Don Field (US-NOAA), Erin Fleckenstein (NCCF), David Glenn (US-NWS), Tim Goodale (ECSU), Peter Kalla (US-EPA), Rua Mordecai (US-SACB), Dan Obenour (NCSU), Hans Paerl (UNC), Greg Taylor (US-NRCS), Doug Wakeman (Meredith U ret.), Rich Whittecar (ODU ret.)

EPA Staff: Rachel Hart (US-EPA-Reg4), Kelly Somers (US-EPA-Reg3)

APNEP Staff: Dean Carpenter, Tim Ellis, Bill Crowell, Stacey Feken, Heather Jennings, Jimmy Johnson, Trish Murphey

**Call to Order / Welcome and Introductions / Meeting Notes Approval / Meeting Objectives**

Boutin: called the meeting to order, reviewed agenda and meeting goals.

- All members and other meeting attendees introduced themselves
- Meeting notes from the STAC fall meeting were moved/second and approved with no objections

**APNEP Staff Update and Member Reports**

Carpenter: briefly reviewed APNEP staff and STAC member updates

- Acknowledged STAC members who provided member highlights
- Other staff updates
  - Crowell: National Estuary Program re-authorization by US Congress
    - December 2020 passed and signed
    - Increases the amount allowed to be authorized
    - Authorizations last about 10 years
    - No questions/comments from STAC members
  - Crowell: CCMP revision
    - Will be more focused on core mission and priorities set forth by the Leadership Council
    - Will be finalized in latter half of 2022
    - No questions/comments from STAC members

**Member Questions on SAV Monitoring Plan Draft**

Carpenter: reviewed remaining steps for finalizing the APNEP SAV monitoring plan (slide presentation to be posted on APNEP-STAC website)

- Steps: address questions from STAC members; seek STAC feedback and approval; provide to Leadership Council on March 1 and seek their approval at their next meeting
- Thanked members who have provided written feedback

Kenworthy: recognized the two SAV monitoring sub-committees that helped develop the plan and noted the following:

- Some things we can implement now, and some will be in the future with more resources
- Monitoring low-salinity SAV remains a major challenge
- Need partners to cooperate and collaborate for implementation to be successful
- Need to integrate with the Water Resources MAT, as well as DEQ Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP) and nutrient criteria development efforts

Boutin: asked about addressing gaps in water quality monitoring

- Carpenter: it is difficult to specify commitments (an EPA requirement for NEP monitoring plans) but the intent is to rely on existing programs and work towards addressing gaps with increased partner collaboration
- Kenworthy: through adaptive implementation the gaps can be addressed as we become more confident in our monitoring capabilities
  - Regional rotation is built into the sampling design to help manage the workload with existing resources given the large size of the A-P
  - Goal is to be able to report on status/trends every five years

Field: asked about SAV planning for 2021 field season, including target sub-region in high-salinity waters.

- Carpenter: estimate that detailed planning would begin mid-March (after Leadership Council approval of monitoring plan) and into April

Laney: the SAV monitoring plan is a good start

- Supports ASMFC vision of how states should protect SAV
- Discussing with Kenworthy ways to engage NOAA (and USFWS) now that both Field and Kenworthy are retired
- Carpenter: reminded STAC members that Laney represents the STAC on the Leadership Council

Boutin: sought approval from STAC members on the draft monitoring plan

- Thanks to Carpenter and Kenworthy for all the work that went into plan preparation
- Monitoring plan was approved by the STAC with no objections

### **Planning Re-Boot for Ecosystem Monitoring & Assessment**

Carpenter: reviewed STAC member MAT assignments (see slides)

- Brief review of activities MATs during 2017-2020
- The charge of the MATs during 2021 will be determined by next week by the STAC Executive Board
- Propose that MAT leads will report out to the STAC at every meeting
- Propose that each MAT develop a monitoring plan for at least one indicator/metric during 2021
- Propose that each MAT develop a report for at least one indicator/metric during 2021
- Propose that STAC/MATs contribute to developing a 2022 ecosystem assessment
- Propose that STAC/MATs contribute to developing a low-resolution model of Albemarle-Pamlico ecosystem

Boutin: getting MATs better integrated with the STAC, through feedback loops, to ensure that the STAC is providing guidance, and so the STAC can hear from the MATs about the directionality of their work and how that relates to the bigger picture.

Moorman: raised concerns about having enough time to put towards writing a plan or report; she gave her perspective from the last cycle of the Water Resources MAT noting that everyone had lots of ideas to share but no one wanted to do the work; she is personally swamped at work and doesn't have extra time to volunteer for writing APNEP plans or reports

Taylor: NRCS engagement in APNEP monitoring

- NRCS crews will be on the water a lot in the A-P going forward
- Carpenter: NRCS is needed but more discussion is needed to determine how to best integrate their efforts into monitoring plans
- Field: there is an important link to the NOAA topobathy lidar and having NRCS field sampling for verification

Laney: ready to reboot the Aquatic Fauna MAT and noted that NRCS work is important to that MAT as well

Boutin: summed up the discussion by stating that the STAC Executive Board will deliberate further and provide suggestions before the STAC spring meeting; he echoed the concern about capacity and said it is important to consider STAC members interest and availability in creating expectations for the MAT

### **STAC Issue Papers**

Boutin: opened up the topic of STAC issue papers for discussion, noting that some members have expressed topics (e.g., environmental justice) that need the STAC's attention

- Carpenter: these papers are typically around five pages long and are directed towards the Leadership Council and other policy/decision-making bodies; purpose is to advance from the status quo

- Laney: shared his perspective on the importance of issue papers and their timing, using as a recent case study the USACE dredging environmental window issue that he also wrote about in his member report for this meeting; he wanted to see the STAC be more proactive about its engagement on such issues
- Carpenter: being proactive was one of the Leadership Council's charges to the STAC (LC charge to STAC: "...consider a steering group to recruit the experts needed for specific topics; publish STAC's [issue] papers on the APNEP website...)
- Somers: other NEP STACs that she engages with get their issue paper ideas from an equivalent of the Leadership Council; environmental justice will be a priority of the new USEPA administration and that some NEPs (e.g., Delaware Bay Estuary) have included environmental justice as part of their new CCMP
  - Crowell commented in the chat box with a link to APNEP's Diversity-Equity-Inclusion (DEI) statement, which references environmental justice

Angermeier: supports creating issue papers on emerging issues

- Suggested that graduate students would be good to tap for this work, as they likely have more time and energy to devote to it than STAC members
- Any issue needs at least two to three strong STAC advocates to keep the issue a STAC priority and moving forward
- Laney: agreed and provided some examples of environmental justice issues from North Carolina to which Paul agreed and noted that both North Carolina and Virginia have lots of environmental justice issues to address
- Dame: the impacts of flooding on marginalized communities is an important environmental justice issue
- Carpenter: per some previous papers, the first cut at a topic can be broad and identify areas requiring further exploration, with subsequent papers addressing these areas individually

Boutin: suggested that Angermeier, Laney, and Dame continue the discussion and perhaps form a STAC subcommittee with other interested members to pursue this topic further

Whittecar: has been working with the Elizabeth River Project on how to create awareness about the value of shallow water ecosystems, noting that there are dredging impacts and currently no mitigation requirements

- Laney and Mordecai talked about USFWS "community profiles" and the connection to environmental education (re: APNEP and NCDEQ)
- Paerl: there are lots of communication products on wetlands and their connection to nutrients, such as economic valuation studies and the value of mitigating nitrogen
- Ellis: mentioned APNEP's pending SAV economic valuation study and a series of communication products available on the APNEP website about the importance and condition of SAV

- Mordecai: need to convince people of the importance of shallow-water habitats, particularly the “last mile” challenge: much convincing the public about wetland values, but not the value of adjacent areas
- Taylor: exposure of these shallow areas to the atmosphere is another aspect of the problem

**Public Comments and Action Items**

No public comments.

Boutin: adjourned meeting and thanked everyone for attending