



Baker Cove Watershed Committee (Bacwac)

Meeting Notes

June 2, 2021

10:00 – 11:30 am

ZOOM online meeting

Attendees:

Keith Hedrick, Mayor, City of Groton
Joan Smith, President, Groton Open Space Association (GOSA)
Ben Roccapriore, Facilities operations & Building Services, UConn Avery Point
Syma Ebbin, Professor/Research Coordinator, UConn/CT Sea Grant
Tabitha Harkin, Town of Groton Planner/CDBG
Jamie Lee, Property Manager, Groton Housing Authority and Project Manager, GGRC
Jill Rusk, Administrative Assistant to Mayor, City of Groton
Michelle Maitland, Project Mgmt. Specialist, Public Works, Town of Groton
Callie Scheetz, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Project Oceanology, Groton
Kate Blacker, Watershed patrol, Groton Utilities
Eric Thomas, CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)
Heidi Comeau, Public Works, City of Groton
Sidney Van Zandt, Vice President, GOSA
Aundré Bumgardner, Councilor, Groton Town Council
Karen Scopino, Town of Groton, Conservation Commission liaison

Additional Invitees:

Dan Mullins, Executive Director, ECCD
Judy Rondeau, Assistant Director, Eastern CT Conservation District (ECCD)
Joseph Summer, Building & Zoning Official, City of Groton
Leslie Creane, Planner, City of Groton
Shawn McComiskey, Airport Manager, CAA Groton-New London Airport
Rick Stevens, Manager, Water & Sewer, Groton Utilities
Dick Conant, Groton shellfish Commission
Henry Jorsz, Elks Club
Mike Sinko, Sr. Mgr of Environmental Resources, Electric Boat
Ron Bata, Watershed patrol, Groton Utilities
Brae Rafferty, Chair-Town of Groton Conservation Commission & Sr. Instructor-Project O
Tom Olson, Town of Groton Conservation Commission Member
Rich Palmieri, City of Groton Conservation Commission
Cierra Patrick, Economic Dvlpmt Specialist, City of Groton
Jonathan Reiner, Planning Director, Town of Groton
Deb Jones, Assistant Director of Planning, Town of Groton
Stacey Leitch, Public Works Admin Supervisor, Town of Groton
Eric Morrison, Shennecossett Golf Course manager, Town of Groton
Tessa Getchis, Extension Educator, UConn/CT Sea Grant
Judy Preston, LIS Outreach Coordinator, UConn/CT Sea Grant
Judy Benson, Communications Coordinator, UConn/CT Sea Grant
Joellen Anderson, Member, Avalonia Land Conservancy
Stephen Mansfield, Director of Health, Ledge Light Health Department
Danielle Holmes, Sanitarian II, Ledge Light Health Department

Roger Sherman & Jay Kane, Co-chairs, Groton shellfish commission

Groton shellfish commission members

Alissa Dragan, Environmental Analyst II, CT Dept. Agric/Bureau of Aquaculture

Kristin DeRosia-Banick, Environmental Analyst III, CT Dept. Agric/Bureau of Aquaculture

Eugenia Villagra/Liz Raisbeck, Groton Conservation Advocates

George Vassallo, Manager, EHS Compliance / Regulated Waste Lead, Pfizer

Patrice Granatosky, Mayor, Town of Groton

Town & City Conservation / IWWA Commissions

Project Coordinator: Maura Robie, ECCD Natural Resources Specialist & Watershed Coordinator

Emailed: Agenda, Email of CT DEEP updates from Eric Thomas

MEETING NOTES

Introductions - Welcomed new members Callie Scheetz – Project O, Karen Scopino – Town Concomm liaison backup. Restated Bacwac goals.

1. Fertilizer usage study and implications that it has for outreach and behavior – Dr. Syma Ebbin, Professor/Research Coordinator, UConn CT Sea Grant
Syma gave background on Legislation & Regulations in place around non-point source pollution both nationally and locally. Lots of great info. about a service learning project done by her students consisting of surveys in and around Groton on various lawn-care practices.

Additional info: Niantic River watershed committee Fertilizer reduction campaign – J. Rondeau received funding from NFWF LISFF to expand 2018 pilot project conducted by LISS, TNC, and NRWC.

Homeowners encouraged to adopt 3 simple practices to reduce amount of nutrients entering the Niantic River:

- Leave lawn clippings on lawn
- Reduce amount of fertilizer by 1/3 to 1/2, or eliminate fertilizer use
- Apply fertilizer at optimal times of the year

Nitrogen in commercial fertilizer is a plant nutrient that promotes growth of algae and seaweed in the Niantic River. Too much nitrogen in water promotes algae blooms, causing murky water. Once algae uses up all available nitrogen, it dies and falls to bottom & is decomposed by bacteria. Bacteria use oxygen to decompose algae, creating areas in river with extremely low oxygen levels, which are harmful to aquatic animals. During summer months, oxygen levels in the Niantic River can vary widely in a

single day, creating extremely stressful and deadly conditions for aquatic animals, especially those that aren't able to swim away. more information on fertilizer practices:

www.healthylawnshealthyriver.net

ex) mow at least 3" high – healthy roots, use low-water, low-fertilizer grasses (fescues), Avoid over-watering & don't fertilize prior to heavy rain forecasted, Avoid using combination products, weed-and-feed control, get soil tests (uconn ext., CT Ag exp. Station)

2. Implementation Subcommittee – (WISC) – 18 month simplified Work Plan review (**Maura, Michelle, Heidi**)

Added suggested leads in red on workplan. Looking for Project Leads – please let Maura know if interested & need to know more about project you were recommended for! Aundre B. volunteered.

3. Committee Member progress reports

Sewer blockage, Avery Heights / Water quality data (**Maura**, Kate had to leave early)

Report from 5/3: Sewer line bypass/grease blockage, between 1-5K gallons into BPC – remediation = Cleaned area up and put lime down. Fecal coliform (species e-coli) tests 5/5 - 156 & 193/100ml MPN, 5/6 – 46 & 39/100ml MPN. Reviewed past water quality data in reservoir and Poquonnock River provided by G.U.

GU can offer:

- quarterly samples at the Birch Plain Creek site
- collect & analyze (internally) for parameters: Fecal coliform, TSS, temperature, DO and pH

Jamie offered to work with G.U., others on education of Pequot Village Housing tenants. Heidi – Public Works has tried ways to educate Avery Heights residents in past, unfortunately high turnover rate, asked for input on ways to educate about sewer-safe practices. Michelle mentioned 'FOG' (fats, oils and grease) campaign and Sydney suggested education in schools.

- i. 'public-friendly' watershed map for handouts and social media posting
 - a. Outreach & Ed. materials – Town of Groton (**Michelle**)
Logo, blow-up foamcore maps, tablecover, banner
 - b. Letter to property Mgr stakeholders listed on map/brochure – assistance from volunteer (**Maura**)

ECCD volunteer intern Bailey Comeau working on dissemination to: 30+ prop mgr stakeholders for lobbies or reprint as partner and about 200 targeted homeowners in watershed. Plan to hand out

map/brochure at outdoor events if held this year, i.e. Town & City PW weeks, August - City Day, Town summer concerts - Esker Pt. Beach & Fall World Rivers Day event. Jamie, Heidi, Michelle assisted with list.

- ii. Rain barrel project, City of Groton & beyond (**Heidi**)
Rain barrel update/help us outreach
 - iii. stream & waterside clean-ups
 - a. Town concomm - Stewardship Mgmt Plan for BPC (**Maura, Karen S.**)
Maura met w/Larry Dunn, Chair & Bruce Lofgren, Land use Planner @ clean-up by constr. Co. Larry – Johl & BPC open space along Birch Plain Creek from EB parking lot.
 - v. Other updates
Update on LISFF submittal by ECCD (**Maura**)
Map pollinator pathways along Tri-town (Groton, Ledyard, Preston) multi-use recreational trail & Groton to Stonington, add vegetated riparian buffers – 1 in each town (5,000 sf), rain gardens – 4 in each town (2,800 sf) on town, residential, business, open space properties using native pollinator plants to reduce stormwater runoff, provide flood control, filter or trap pollutants and provide food and shelter for critical pollinator species, Riparian Buffers & Rain Gardens workshop/workdays & workshop on Alternative Landscaping and Septic system BMP's.
4. Other Outreach & Ed
TRBP Floating Workshop – **Maura**
Reminder: **June 18 (rain date June 25)**, Bluff Point state park – Good oppt'y to hand out brochure/map.

To Do's for next meeting:

- ▶ Let me know if you're willing to be Project Lead on Work Plan items
- ▶ Fertilizer Usage article (provided by Syma – state laws often preempt local laws, towns trying to ban or restrict certain lawn chemicals)
<https://sej.org/publications/tipsheet/lawn-chemicals-may-make-fertile-soil-local-environmental-stories>
- ▶ TRBP floating workshop registration
<https://thamesriverbasinpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/FW-21-Registration-Form.pdf>

* Meeting dates for 2021: **August 4, October 6, December 1 (10-11:30)**