

**MEETING NOTES**  
**Public Engagement Working Group**  
**Water Sustainability Commission**  
**May 15, 2012**

The meeting was held at the Department of Environmental Services, Concord, NH.

Commission members present: Denise Hart, John Gilbert, Amy Manzelli, Marcy Lyman  
Guests: Paul Susca/DES staff

1. The Group reviewed and approved meeting minutes from 4/17 and 4/25 meetings.

2. NH Listens: Those who attended a NH Listens sessions offered comments:

Paul Susca – New London: There were 18 people in attendance. Comments included expressions of cynicism about enforcement of existing rules, need for better coordination of existing agencies/regulatory programs and more education.

Denise Hart – Greenland: There were 60 people in attendance with many water “professionals” including public water systems managers. People seemed to think we know what to do, just don’t know “how” to do it. Need to pay attention to foreign ownership of state’s waters, privatization of water systems (and whether there should be). There was a discussion of tax structures: downshifting from state to municipalities, inequities of single property tax and suggestion that we are “shooting ourselves in the foot”. We have 18<sup>th</sup> Century laws in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. All expressed a need to address bonding and how it is used for public water systems – should they be considered infrastructure to ensure public health? Do all state residents pay for public water systems or does it devolve only to the community faced with the challenge? Comment that it was empowering having 60 people take the time to attend and talk about water.

Marcy Lyman – Berlin: there were 14 people in attendance. Composition was mostly lay people, though engaged to one degree or another in water issues. Comments from group included need for education, role of state in supporting/assisting in financing and comment that everything doesn’t need to be done at once. Great engagement, informed citizens, reinforced need for coordination of constituency.

Other comments: Facilitation was uneven – where it was good, discussion was vibrant, where it was not the “grumblers” dominated and compromised the discussion. We decided to get feedback from Commissioners to NH Listens on sessions they attended.

**ACTION:** Denise will obtain evaluation form from Michele and send evaluation around to Commissioners to fill out and return to Denise.

3. Planning for June 19<sup>th</sup> final public session: The group decided that the “stakeholders” session would be a good opportunity to get feedback on report from May 8 sessions – ask for reactions to recommendations – where people agree on key messages and what are the priorities; to identify and determine what if any collaboration/coordination is already occurring and if not what would it take to organize; and to identify a process for looking 25 years ahead to create benchmarks. Two main objectives were identified for the June 19<sup>th</sup> Session:

- What are the barriers to the groups working together – what would it take to get over barriers?
- Work with the group to coalesce around priorities – can we agree on common set of priorities?

Discussed making list of “sectors” that we would like represented at session: e.g. outdoor recreation, business, policy-makers/decision-makers, and regulators to be sure we invite all. A recommendation made that instead of a list to describe the session to describe the following: “People whose work life involves or depends upon water.”

The group then discussed the process and what components needed to be incorporated into the session including:

- 1) Provide an overview of Commission’s work
- 2) Determine how to treat discussions around concrete work (recommendations?), a creative exercise to get people to look out into the future, ways to measure progress, cause progress to happen. It was suggested that we use the word “indicators” instead of benchmarks and to run language by Michael Licata/ NH BIA and how to frame indicators work. Importance of using “Water words that work” (see Local Government Center). When jargon is used, it may turn off participants, make them feel less confident or as if not talking to them.

**ACTION:** Denise to get back to Michele Holt-Shannon with

- 1) Overview of Commission’s work
- 2) How to treat language (benchmarks/indicators etc)
- 3) Mention that session is FREE

**ACTION:** John to get draft of overview to Denise

**ACTION:** John to contact Michael Licata on language that will resonate

**ACTION:** Public announcements of session to describe that session is in collaboration with NH Listens. Denise will check with Michele on description of relationship.

Going forward:

- 1) Denise and Marcy will work with Michele and identify any additional meetings required in preparation
- 2) Anything that is published about session needs to be run by Amy, Paul and John
- 3) Amy will check in on registrations, #'s and geography (1-2X/week and more as we get closer)
- 4) Denise set up a Gmail account for activity about this session – Paul agreed to follow up and check the email regularly.
- 5) Facility and location need to be identified and confirmed
- 6) Should there be written comment period (through end of June?) and/or structured public comment form to allow for more feedback, to identify themselves, possibly frame around five challenges, recommendations. Possibly incorporate survey monkey?

**ACTION:** Marcy and Denise to work with Jenn on locating an appropriate site and coming back for sub-committee approval before taking to full Commission

3) Additional opportunities for public engagement: Denise made a recommendation to follow up with those who wrote to us from the Lakes region and possibly hold the July Commission meeting in Lakes Region (Belmont area at request of locals), Hancock in August. Concern expressed that meetings are needed for commissioners to work together on final product(s), discussion getting more meaty and potentially more heated. With potential for opinions/positions coming to surface is it time to be more public? It was agreed to take the option of holding the July Commission meeting in the Lakes region to the full Commission meeting following this one.

**The meeting was adjourned at 2:00pm. The next meeting is scheduled for May 29 at Baldwin & Callen with Dr. Judy Silverberg, NH Fish and Game presenting the NH Environmental Literacy Plan.**