

**Pre-Grant Announcement and Application Public Information Session
Second Subround of Round 3 Restoration Project Proposals for Land Acquisition to Conserve Habitat**

Massachusetts Housatonic River Watershed Restoration Program / 195601077

Date/Time: September 17, 2015 / 5:30 PM
Place: Lenox Library, Lenox, Massachusetts
Next Meeting: Not Scheduled
Attendees: Karen Pelto (MassDEP), State Trustee Representative, MA SubCouncil;
Thomas Potter (MassDEP), Trustee Representative Alternate, MA SubCouncil;
Cathy Kiley (MassDEP), NRD Contract Administrator;
Robin MacEwan and Simon Hildt (Stantec); and
Attendees (see Attendance Sheet, Attachment 1)
Absentees: Molly Sperduto (USFWS), Trustee Representative, MA SubCouncil
Distribution: Program Website (www.ma-housatonicrestoration.org)

These meeting notes summarize the presentation and discussions conducted during the Pre-Grant Announcement and Application Public Information Session for the Second Subround of Round 3 Restoration Project Proposals for Land Acquisition to Conserve Habitat.

Introduction

The meeting formally commenced at 5:35 PM. KP stated that meeting notes were being taken and that audio was being recorded for the purposes of supporting development of the meeting notes. KP then provided background information and summarized the purpose of the meeting as informing interested parties of the anticipated *Second Subround of Round 3 Restoration Project Proposals for Land Acquisition to Conserve Habitat* as a part of the Massachusetts Housatonic River Watershed Restoration Program (Restoration Program). KP also noted that, prior to issuance of the Grant Announcement and Application (GAA), the MA SubCouncil can have more open dialogue about the grant opportunity and potential projects; following issuance, only procedural questions can be addressed.

The Massachusetts SubCouncil of the Housatonic River Natural Resource Trustees (MA SubCouncil), representatives from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and Stantec Consulting Services Inc. (Stantec), and audience members introduced themselves and their affiliation. KP notified audience members of the availability of printed copies of the meeting agenda and presentation and reminded audience members to sign in using the attendance sheet provided. Audience members were also notified of the availability of printed copies of the Meeting Notes from the Pre-RFR Information Session (August 5, 2013) held prior to release of the GAA for the first subround of Round 3 and the Response to Questions document provided by MassDEP in response to questions submitted as a part of the first subround of Round 3 Restoration Project Proposals for Land Acquisition.

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Presentation

Beginning at 5:40 PM, the MA SubCouncil, MassDEP, and Stantec gave a presentation that provided an overview of the Restoration Program and the Round 3 Restoration Plan; summarized the status of the first subround of Round 3 Restoration Project selection; and outlined the anticipated timeline, application, proposal review, and Grant Award processes for the second subround of Round 3 Restoration Projects.

The presenters noted that the anticipated release date of the GAA is October 7, 2015, and that notification of release of the GAA will be posted on the program website at: <http://www.ma-housatonicrestoration.org/library.htm>, on the MassDEP website at: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/cleanup/nrd/nrd-restoration-funding-opportunities.html>, and on the Commonwealth's Procurement website (COMMBUYS) at: www.commbuys.com.

The presenters also noted that, following release of the GAA, the MA SubCouncil will hold an Applicants' Meeting to provide an overview of the GAA and application process and to address related procedural questions.

The 34-slide PowerPoint presentation is available on the program website at: <http://www.ma-housatonicrestoration.org/library.htm>.

Open Forum¹

At 6:15 PM Robin MacEwan (RM) opened the Open Forum / Q&A portion of the meeting. Questions posed by the audience, and answers provided by the presenters, are summarized below.

Question 1: Can the MA SubCouncil provide a summary of what types of projects the MA SubCouncil is looking for? West Stockbridge is in the Housatonic River watershed, but not directly on the river; would this affect proposal scoring?

Response: *Karen Pelto (KP) stated that the goal of the Restoration Program is to restore, rehabilitate, replace, or acquire natural resources and natural resource services within the watershed that are "the same or similar" to those that were injured. The MA SubCouncil is not restricted to the corridor of the Housatonic River, but rather to the Housatonic River watershed. For example, protection of a tributary higher up in the watershed could achieve project objectives because it preserves a similar type of fisheries resource as was injured.*

Land Protection projects that will be prioritized for Grant Awards are those that conserve habitat and address, in part or in whole, the interests listed on the second page of the Response to Questions document issued by MassDEP as a part of the first subround of

¹ Questions and answers documented here are paraphrased and summarized; they do not represent direct quotes.

Round 3 (BWSC-NFD-2014-02)² which include:

1. Protect habitat for rare, threatened and/or endangered species;
2. Protect exemplary natural communities;
3. Protect cold water fisheries resources;
4. Protect upland buffers to wetlands and rivers;
5. Reduce or inhibit habitat fragmentation; and/or
6. Protect or enhance existing wildlife corridors or create new corridors

Question 2: How much cost sharing is the SubCouncil looking for?

Response: KP stated that cost sharing is not required; however, cost sharing is addressed in one of the Evaluation Criteria ("Leveraging of Additional Resources"), and projects that propose leveraging additional resources will score higher under that metric. Robin MacEwan (RM) read from the Restoration Project Selection Procedure (RPSP) the descriptions of the scoring associated with the three different levels of cost sharing identified in the "Leveraging of Additional Resources" criterion.

Question 3: Is information from successful past applications available?

Response: KP stated that once a funding round has been finalized (including, in Round 3, once the land acquisition has been completed), project-related information is available on the program website. Project proposals from Rounds 1 and 2 are currently available on the "Library" page of the program website. Project information from the first subround of Round 3 Land Acquisition projects will be made available when the first subround projects are completed.

Question 4: Does the MA SubCouncil have a desire or requirement to spread projects out throughout the Housatonic River watershed, or will awards be based solely on scoring?

Response: KP stated that one of the stated goals of the MA SubCouncil is to benefit a variety of resources throughout the watershed; however, there is no minimum distribution requirement.

Question 5: Is a list of previously funded projects available?

Response: KP stated that Restoration Projects selected as a part of Rounds 1 and 2 are included in the Final Restoration Plans that are available on the program website. Information on the selected Restoration Projects for the first subround of Round 3 will be available on the website when that subround is complete.

Question 6: If an applicant uses state funds for leverage would it disadvantage an applicant that did not have access to such funds?

Response: KP stated that leveraging is not required, but is one of the scoring criteria for evaluation. Cathy Kiley (CK) reiterated that leveraging can be positive, but does not hold

²This document is available at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dep/cleanup/sites/nrd/hourta.pdf>.

more weight than the other evaluation criteria and that projects will be evaluated based on the total points awarded under all evaluation criteria. KP subsequently noted that one of the projects selected to proceed to Phase 2, and still under review in the first subround of Round 3, did not leverage state funds and this did not significantly affect how the project was scored.

Question 7: Will there be a fourth round of funding?

Response: *KP stated that there will most likely be a fourth round of funding, but that the amount of funding could not be identified until after the completion of Round 3. KP stated that before moving forward with a fourth round, the SubCouncil will also evaluate projects selected in prior rounds to assess if additional stewardship is needed to ensure the intended natural resource benefits are achieved. RM added that Round 4 will likely address all four restoration priority categories.*

Question 8: Will the restoration priority category change for Round 4?

Response: *KP stated that it is likely that all Round 4 will address all four restoration priority categories.*

Question 9: Why is this round is focused solely on land acquisition, and why were the other rounds focused on other restoration priority categories?

Response: *KP stated that she understood that, as a part of public meetings held after Round 1, it was communicated to the MA SubCouncil that there was need for a greater focus on land acquisition to protect habitat and that the Round 1 process wasn't particularly well-suited to land acquisition projects. RM added that the land acquisition focus of Round 3 was initially conceived as a part of Round 2, but was eventually separated from Round 2 to allow for a process focused strictly on land acquisition; land acquisition projects have unique needs and sensitivities, so it was determined to be beneficial to address these in a dedicated round of funding.*

Question 10: Will there be a cap on the portion of the Grant Award that can be used for administrative costs?

Response: *KP stated that she does not believe there is a formal cap. CK confirmed that there is no cap established. CK also noted that, if necessary, the MA SubCouncil may contact applicants during application review to resolve questions that arise.*

Question 11: Can the MA SubCouncil provide an example of why projects have been selected previously; for instance, why was the project in Egremont selected as a part of the first subround of Round 3? What were the special benefits of that project?

Response: *KP described that the project in Egremont is located on a tributary to the Housatonic River; provides very high quality cold water fisheries habitat; preserves intact floodplain, riparian habitat and upland buffer; provides continuity to other protected parcels; and preserves rare species habitat.*

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Follow-up Question: Is it safe to assume that, with leveraging, the total project cost was \$400,000? Was leveraging of funds critical to selection of that project?

Response: *KP stated that the total project cost was not as high as \$400,000 and that leveraging was not critical to selection of that project.*

Question 12: Who are the Trustee Representatives that currently make up the MA SubCouncil of the Housatonic River Natural Resource Trustees?

Response: *KP stated that the current Trustee Representatives are Molly Sperduto of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and herself, Karen Pelto of MassDEP.*

Follow-up Question: Is Molly Sperduto also a Trustee Representative for the Connecticut SubCouncil?

Response: *KP stated that, yes, Molly Sperduto is also a Trustee Representative for the Connecticut SubCouncil of the Housatonic River Natural Resource Trustees.*

The meeting adjourned at 6:38 PM.

The foregoing is considered to be a true and accurate record of all items discussed. If discrepancies or inconsistencies are noted, please contact Karen Pelto at 617-292-5785.

Stantec Consulting Services Inc.



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Attachment: Attendance Sheet

Massachusetts SubCouncil, Housatonic River Natural Resource Trustees
General Electric/Housatonic River Natural Resource Restoration

**Second Subround of Round 3 Restoration Project Proposals
for
Land Acquisition to Conserve Habitat**

PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION

Thursday, September 17, 2015

5:30 PM

Lenox Library

Sedgwick Reading Room

18 Main Street

Lenox, Massachusetts

ATTENDANCE SHEET

Name	Organization
Robin MacEwan	Stantec
Karen Pelto	MassDEP MA SubCouncil
Cathy Kiley	MassDEP
Thomas Potter	MassDEP
Simon Hildt	Stantec
David Naseman	(No affiliation provided)
Mackenzie Greer	Berkshire Natural Resources Council
Marie Raftery	Stockbridge Land Trust
Peter Milanesi	Massachusetts Dept. of Fish and Game
Bill Loeb	West Stockbridge Historic Association
Dennis Regan	Housatonic Valley Association

Name	Organization
James McGrath	City of Pittsfield
Gwen Miller	Town of Lennox
Marie Bourassa	Resident, Town of Lennox
Chris Horton	Resident, Town of Pittsfield
Becky Cushing	Mass Audubon
Warren Archey	Lenox Board of Selectmen