

NERR Site Selection Team Initial Meeting (CTDEEP HQ, Russell Rm. 1-3 PM)

5/18/2016

Attendees: Kevin O'Brien (DEEP), Peter Francis (DEEP), Ron Rozsa, Jamie Vaudry (UConn), Peter Auster (UConn), Ivar Babb (UConn), Roman Zajac (UNH), Dave Kozak (DEEP), Juliana Barrett (SeaGrant), Ralph Wood (CT Audubon Society), Mike Whitney (UConn), Diana Payne (SeaGrant), Suzanne Payton (USFWS), Chantal Collier (TNC), Mark Parker (DEEP), Cindy Corsair (USFWS), Susan Whalen (DEEP).

Phone: Chris Elphick (UConn), Allison Castellan (NOAA).

- Provide a more comprehensive overview of the CT NERR selection process;
- Information sharing (what and how);
- Discuss team logistics/operations

KOB: Introductions.

KOB: Steering committee includes Ivar, Syvlain, Edson, Tobias, PF, KOB, BT, Seiden, Blair.

KOB: Presentation:

1. Project timeline review – rough and flexible.
2. Site Selection Team – responsibility is to review the sites and nominate one. Use expertise, consider public comment. Core composition will be balanced amongst organizations and will HIGH level of involvement. Use external experts when needed – a lower level of involvement.
3. Screening Overview – two tiers: preliminary (to get 3-5 candidates) & detailed (to get the nominee). Sites must be within the project area and include both land and water. Must already be in some kind of preservation (land trust, state, etc), and it cannot be more than 50% owned by feds. Can be a single site or can be a multi-site.
4. Preliminary Screening – taken a stab at maybe ~2 dozen or so, just as a starting point. We have some latitude in how to consider these when it comes to single site or multisite.
5. Map of Potential Sites.
6. Prelim List of Scoring ideas.

ROMAN: What is the theme of the NERR and when do we look at that as we choose the sites?

KOB: That is a bit further down the road.

MIKE: We should focus on the marine habitats.

KOB: This is just to get us thinking about the sites.

CHANTAL: Agree but we need to look at the datasets when we do that review. What is the “unique typology” part – habitat or management/research needs?

KOB: It is the habitat part that NOAA is looking for.

AUSTER: Are we hardwired to the lexicon that NOAA has offered or can we prescribe our own approach? Do we have any flexibility in describing the unique typologies?

CASTELLAN: We need to stick with the NOAA definitions, but you can refine the representation and distinction and bring that to the table.

(6. cont.) There will be an initial scoring round and we'll tally the results. And we'll take the top 3,4,5 and can even take additional sites if the team thinks it might be viable. Then a public outreach session and document that explains what we did.

7. Detailed Screening. Discuss with external folks, SST core team engages external experts, process includes meetings, calls and site visits. Review of scoring process.

ROMAN: What about multisite?

KOB: These are scored collectively as one piece.

CHANTAL: Same criteria as other NERR sites has used?

KOB: Yes and no. We pulled from the same list of questions and have tailored them to work for us here in CT.

CHANTAL: when does the public have the opportunity for input?

KOB: Before we do the scoring on the detailed vetting review.

AUSTER: Scoring ... how do we handle the review if some of the sites score almost identically?

MIKE: Agree.

KOB → ALLISON: Has this happened in other places, has it been a problem?

ALLISON: No, hasn't been a problem at other locations.

8. Sample scoring example.

9. Criteria List.

10. Detailed Screening Outreach. During selection and post selection.

RON: NOAA has outlined the process for us. We need to identify sites as to whether we meet the typology threshold. Do we need to have the other NERR sites approve our typology?

KOB: The sites that we are reviewing (initial review) all have a unique typology. The question of typology will be addressed during the review process. NOAA has never really enforced the typology questions – so this has never really come up. We are behind the 8-ball because we are close to other sites that have already used various typologies. Two classes of three groups: habitat based: shorelands, transition areas, and submerged bottoms. Physical characteristics: geologic, hydrographic and chemical. We are sort of competing against NY (Hudson), RI (Narragansett) and MA (Waquoit). Flexibility on how to handle this – new class 1 typology (sea level fens, e.g.) OR we can look at class 2 typologies. Hudson River is a multisite riverine one, 2 are freshwater and 2 are brackish. Might be able to look at our river systems and contrast that our brackish is saltier. There are options and flexibility.

AUSTER: Every element doesn't have to be unique, but it could enhance our chances for a winner.

KOB: Yes. Probably going to have wetlands like our neighbors!

RON: We still need to come up with a unique typology, but before the scoring, we want NOAA to say whether we hit the mark?

ALLISON: We'll be going with CT as they move forward and will be able to see which site is rising to the top. Will probably already be giving feedback as the project moves forward, so there will be no surprises.

JAMIE: Criteria include "new typology". What is the order of events? Do we need to know this as we rank it.

KOB: Sites will rise to the top through the ranking process.

JAMIE: How do we know what the typology is so that we can target it? What is the process from here?

KOB: We will have a lot of meetings and discussions.

RALPH: Initial set of screening criteria? Is there anything that speaks to uniqueness of typology?

KOB: Yes.

DAVE K: Apply the uniqueness criteria to distinguish from the neighboring sites before we score the sites and develop a general written outline describing how LIS differs from other existing SNE NERRs to help guide further scoring?

AUSTER: What about the federal process? Is there an additional NEPA or EIS on the designation?

KOB: Designation process is the next phase. A management plan must be developed, reviewed and approved. That is when the EIS and management plan go out for review, which can take up to about 2 years.

AUSTER: If we designate a research reserve and no one does research there, does it matter? We need to look at unique typology but we need to also look at unique research opportunities.

KOB: The scoring will address these issues.

MIKE: this is an urban estuary and confronting climate change. How is ecosystem responding to climate change? The research reserve scoring system might be jaded against polluted areas that might be good for research.

DAVE K → ALLISON: is there a way to capture this concern?

ALLISON: The criteria will consider a lot of things and will ultimately promote the top site.

IVAR: Socioeconomic factors? Allison has already considered this.

KOB: NOAA has their typology, but we need to go through our scoring process, to find the best site for us.

11. Data Sources: KOB will provide documents on a Google drive sharing including sites inventory, process documents, NERR regulations, typology lists.
12. Data Sources: 2. NOAA environmental sensitivity index. New version of this (2001) is coming out in the next couple of months.
13. out in the next couple of months.
14. Data Sources 3: online viewer project area, DEEP property, protected open space, LISS stewardship sites.
15. Data Sources 4: DRAFT crosswalk of SNE reserve site profiles data to NOAA typologies.

CHANTAL: How is this working with Blue Plan?

PF: Separate.

Topics:

Introductions	1:00 – 1:15
Expected milestones & timeline	1:15 – 1:20
Process Overview: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Team Roles/Responsibilities- Initial screening/Detailed screening/Scoring- Typology Overview	1:20 – 2:20 (~15 mins) (~25-30 mins) (~15-20 mins)
Data/information sources review (Google docs share site)	2:20 – 2:30

Logistical Planning Discussion: - Meeting/call frequencies, locations, guesstimated effort	2:30 – 2:45
Spillover, Q&A	2:45 – 3:00

Anticipated Next Steps:

Prior to next meeting (TBD):

- Confirm member roles
- Selection Criteria Review (initial & detailed)
- Review initial inventory of possible sites – suggested changes?

At next meeting:

- Process/Criteria Q&A
- Begin discussions relative to initial screening (strategies, component site configurations, etc.)