

MCTF Local Engagement Subcommittee Meeting Minutes 12 02 21

Minutes for the Mosquito Control for the Twenty-First Century (MCTF) Task Force Meeting

Subcommittee Meeting: Local Engagement

December 2, 2021, 12:00 p.m. via Zoom

Meeting Topics:

- Meeting opening, roll call, welcome (chair)
- Housekeeping notes (EEA representative)
- Meeting purpose and agenda (chair and facilitator)
- Identify any additional overlap from other subcommittee and task force meetings
- Discuss process for outlining recommendations
- Review subcommittee input on initial list of recommendation ideas and brainstorm recommendation ideas for outline development
- Read any Q&A/Wrap up (facilitator and chair)
- Vote to adjourn (chair)

Heidi Ricci opened the meeting at 12:01 p.m. and conducted roll call and a quorum was established. Subcommittee members in attendance included Priscilla Matton, Eve Schluter, and Russell Hopping. Derek Brindisi was not in attendance due to active military duty and it was yet to be determined when Derek would be back with the subcommittee. Heidi noted that this session represents the fifth meeting of the subcommittee and stated she would be participating as both chair and participants and will only be acting as chair when identified as such. Jenny Helmick shared the agenda for the meeting. Heidi discussed purpose and agreement on process of outlining and brainstorming recommendations. Heidi inquired about meeting minutes. Alisha Bouchard notified Heidi that draft minutes have been completed and were in final review.

Heidi asked if there was any input regarding subcommittee overlap. Priscilla noted at the Best Practices meeting a recommendation was discussed to move education out of the MCDs and make it the sole responsibility of DPH. Priscilla noted that this was something to consider as we talk through what we mean by local engagement. Heidi noted that it was difficult to make recommendations when there was no designated policy structure. Also, Heidi thought messaging coming from the MCDs and local Boards of Health was important and related to the question of overall framework.

Jenny Helmick asked a question to the group of how we frame this up in the subcommittee. Heidi asked Priscilla to clarify which subcommittee recommended the education point and Priscilla noted it was the Best Practices subcommittee. Heidi noted that the MCDs get inquires and respond to people and thought that the messaging should be consistent amongst DPH, MCD's and local Boards of Health. Russell Hopping noted that these were just Richard Robinsons recommendations and it had not been vetted yet by the entire subcommittee. Jenny commented that it would be good to take this up as an overlap item. Heidi noted that she still felt that education was a topic that should be taken up by the Local Engagement subcommittee.

Hearing no other comments on overlap items, Jenny moved to the topic of agreement from subcommittee members on the process to engage and to outline recommendations. Jenny noted that each subcommittee member would take on responsibility to draft recommendations based on their expertise. Jenny presented a listing of recommendations that have been drafted so far for input and additions if needed. Jenny recommended two ways to look at the recommendations. First, any low hanging fruit or recommendations the group could readily come to agreement on. Second, to think in terms of priorities – what were must haves to determine success of the subcommittee. Jenny asked the subcommittee group if they wanted to spend time on overall program goal and

framework? Russell Hopping noted that it may make sense to start with a goal to define what local engagement means and for him he was thinking about the opt out process.

Alisha Bouchard offered to provide the MCD framework and the MCD local board of commissioners. Alisha noted they have legislation that defines certain positions, and it may be something for the subcommittee to look at. Jessica Burgess noted that other than Cape MCD, all other MCDs have their commission appointed by the SRB. The SRB appointment process applicants were voted on by member communities, they were local representatives from local communities. Heidi Ricci noted that she was aware of those local representatives and noted the issue was there was no public engagement in the framework and operations, and it was not addressing the framework and best practices of mosquito control statewide. There was nothing tying what happens at the MCD level to comply with the state arborvirus plan and, zero public input into those statewide plans and updates. Russell Hopping commented similar to Heidi and noted that the commissions seem far removed from engagement with the local community. Russell asked how we can make that more effective in terms of local Engagement and noted perhaps we have a two-tier system.

Jenny asked Priscilla Matton or Eve Schluter if they had any comments. Eve noted if there should be a recommendation of two levels, higher level input and recommendations more on the local level. Priscilla noted that the commission does hold monthly meetings that were open to the public that no one attends. Priscilla commented that information was sent to cities and towns regarding budgets and operations and there was minimal feedback from member communities. Priscilla commented that anyone can come to a commission meeting as they were public bodies. Heidi noted that it was helpful to know the information that Priscilla provided. Heidi commented that there was currently no ability for communities to have operations done in a different way and no amount of public comment changes that. Heidi noted that was why a science-based plan was needed that was more responsive to community desires. Eve noted regardless of structure there might be a general lack of understanding of how communities interact and since we were talking about local engagement it will be critical to get the word out regarding education and public input.

Russell asked if the MCD committee meetings meet at one location in the district every month and can we look at recommendations that these meetings be done through Zoom to create greater participation. Jessica Burgess noted the commissions were all state public bodies subject to open meeting law (OML) and they must meet in a particular location each month. Meeting notices and agendas were posted and MCD budget policy was posted on the website. Jessica noted if it was helpful, information can be provided to the subcommittee to help understand how the commissions were structured. Heidi commented on environmental justice policy and protocols and how to engage the public. Heidi noted that many people even if they have the time may not feel comfortable speaking up and posed the question if there were other ways to engage the public and to think creatively on how else we can engage to ensure we were providing information in a form that was accessible to large segments of the public.

Jenny asked the subcommittee if they wanted to spend more time on new ideas that have come up. Such as, engaging the public, surveys to the public, and MCD commissions. Jenny shared her screen with the group and presented the framework document that Heidi drafted. Heidi noted that the framework needs to be based on science. Heidi proposed that DPH be in the lead. Reconstitute the SRB with ecological, wildlife expertise, and ecotoxicologists and within that framework develop a plan to consider new information and IPM with measurable thresholds. More local engagement for land use. Heidi noted IPM, education, and source reduction as the most bang for the buck and to only use adulticiding in limited cases. Larviciding was also of concern due to the development of resistance, but this may be a topic for some of the other subcommittees to explore. Heidi commented that the overall theme was science based with public input and that the MCDs still exist but under a different coherent system.

Jenny opened it up to the group for conversation and input. Eve thanked Heidi for drafting the framework that was shared with the group and thought the framework should be shared with the full task force. It was noted that the draft framework should be on the agenda for the overall task force to review and comment on. Heidi and Russell agreed with Eve regarding the framework being included on the next task force agenda as this was something that needs to be discussed a layer above this subcommittee. Priscilla noted the framework was over the subcommittees head but was part of the underlying theme of how we make recommendation, and it will be interesting in figuring out how to get more engagement. Engagement may be seen differently for member and nonmember communities.

Jenny commented that she heard from the group that we need to carry on making specific recommendation but need to figure out how we get the proposed framework on the task force agenda on 12/14 for consideration.

Alisha commented to the group to come up with what the agenda item and it can passed forward to Caroline Higley. Alisha acknowledged that something was in the Q&A section from Brian Rosman on behalf of senator Comerford's Office that played a key role in drafting the legislation. Brian Rosman commented "we envisioned recommendations for comprehensive overhaul to be within the task forces charge". Heidi proposed for the next task force meeting that there be an item on the agenda for the task force to discuss the overall goal and potential framework for mosquito control.

Eve asked if the framework can be distributed to the task force in advance of the meeting for consideration and potential discussion. Jessica noted that the best way to do it was to draft it as an agenda item to get it out sooner and flag it for people for people to come prepared to discuss at the task force meeting. Jessica noted that we would figure out a way to get out in the most appropriate and effective way. Heidi noted that she did submit the framework to the ERG facilitators for the best practices and policy structure subcommittees and she was hoping to submit some further thoughts on their directives. Heidi also noted that she agreed with sharing the draft goal and framework with the full task force. Priscilla commented that because she was not a member of the policy structure subcommittee, she was not sure how the recommendation would be received. Priscilla noted that those recommendations should not come from the whole local engagement subcommittee but rather from Heidi specifically. Heidi noted that she was ok with that approach as they were her viewpoints.

Russell asked Jenny if the other two directives were listed in the document that Jenny was sharing with the subcommittee and Jenny noted that they were. Russell commented that he was using the directives to frame his recommendation and it sounded like most agreed with the local landowner opt out process that was recommended and documented. Priscilla noted that opt out was being discussed in the best practices subcommittee as well and has a lot of crossover. Eve commented that clarity was needed on how decisions were made when municipalities meet criteria for opting out. For example, were things weighted more heavily. Clarity was needed on how the opt out process work. Heidi agreed that there was a lack of clarity on the opt out criteria and how things work. Eve noted that this may overlap with the best practice and policy structure subcommittees.

Russell asked if the recommendation could be made that the municipal opt process not go past next year. Priscilla agreed we could make a recommendation. Priscilla noted that the decision to opt out needed to be made in April and what happens in August can be very different. Priscilla commented that it was a difficult balancing act and gave a bit of an edge to DPH as they were balancing a benefit towards health. For example, if DPH was suggesting a town be sprayed it was in the best interest of the town. Russell commented that he thought a new framework was the way to go and recommended an opt in process for towns versus an opt out process. Priscilla responded to Russell that there were criteria in the state response plan and provided an overview of the criteria and asked Russell what other criteria he would want. Russell noted that in terms of best practices where was this town in the grand scheme of risk and that may not be enough to say to the town you were high or low risk. Russell noted that it did not seem like there were clear thresholds and we were trying to move away from variability over time. There may be some spikes but where does the town sit in risks going forward.

Priscilla noted that DPH may be able to provide a heat map of where arborvirus may occur and Russell noted that would be helpful information for a town to have. Heidi commented that it was important to recognize that WNV and EEE were different. Heidi noted the need of frequent coordination with the communities getting messages out to the public about managing their properties to avoid WNV. Heidi noted EEE was rare but was nothing to ignore considering the implications of the disease, again noting that WNV and EEE were very different. Heidi also pointed out the DPH arborvirus plan said aerial applications cannot and do not eliminate risk. In extreme high cases DPH was doing it to reduce risk not to eliminate risk. Heidi commented that there were a lot of technical issues beyond what the task force can do and the best we can do was to set up a framework for ongoing agencies and experts to continue to revise protocols and thresholds of the plans.

Priscilla commented on the cyclical nature of EEE. Priscilla noted that it was a rare event when aerial applications were done. Priscilla cautioned making hard and fast recommendation when we may not see EEE again in 10 years and she would like to keep in consideration that we don't do this every year, data and science was used when deciding to spray. Eve commented on the concern of emerging diseases. Certain diseases may be rare now but that may not be the case moving forward and building in flexibility and an adaptive approach will be critical.

Jenny asked the group if they wanted to formulate a recommendation more specifically at this point. Eve noted a need to closely examine the opt out process. Some of the model warrants more discussion and cross pollination between the various subcommittee. Priscilla agreed and noted how to move forward with municipal opt out will be the question and a recommendation needs to be as clear as possible regarding criteria for opt out consideration Jenny asked about what Russell brought up regarding opt in versus opt out. Priscilla commented from a mosquito control perspective the MCD's would need to have an opt out not an opt in. Priscilla noted that about one tenth of 351 towns in the Commonwealth applied to opt out. It was noted that opt out from the state side referenced opting out from aerial spraying for EEE.

Jessica noted that the group should think about the formal role for taking action with a local legislative body. Eve commented on how many towns submitted to opt out and noted that we needed to be careful about how many towns opted out as it could have been a timing, capacity, or understating issue with communities. Eve noted that feedback was heard. Heidi agreed with Eve's commentary and noted that this pointed to the subcommittee's other directive around availability or option of services. Heidi noted that all communities should have access to education and surveillance. There was a need to be adaptive over time as more information was received. Heidi noted that the problem currently was that there was not good data on efficacy and non-target impacts to people and the environment. There was a need to structure a framework that addresses EEE while also still respecting the rights and desires of local communities and residents. Heidi noted that this was a tough balancing act, and a Framework may be more beneficial than coming up with a formula that addresses everything.

Priscilla noted the need for public input during town meetings if residents wanted to opt out of spraying. Jessica commented to what Priscilla had mentioned to consider the framework. Was it a board of selectman, city council, or board of health, or was it the local legislative body operating under a town meeting structure? There were opportunities once or twice per year for town meeting for decision making. Two different options to think through about the implications of picking one or the other for public input and municipal action. Jenny asked if the committee needed to decide on one of those avenues or would that be part of examining the process? Eve noted that it be part of examining the process and to gain a better understanding of the pros and cons of different perspectives. Russell agreed and asked if the provision for municipal opt out goes away after this year? Jessica commented that it does and all of 2A goes away after this year. Heidi noted that she thought that it was very important that there be public input at the higher level for when the state steps in and there should be improved lines of communication during that timeline. Heidi commented that public information about aerial spraying could be communicated better. Heidi noted she has never received more than 24-hour notice.

Priscilla commented that once a decision was made to spray, people want to know where, when, why, and what. Priscilla noted that maybe public education was exactly what we need to help to inform the public. Heidi commented that this was where we need to get into more technical analysis. Was there efficacy and how do we measure that? Heidi noted that she was interested to go the other direction on public education and protection because she was not convinced there was efficacy in aerial spraying. Heidi noted she could be convinced but needs to see the data.

Jenny asked the group if anyone would like to start drafting recommendations. Russell offered to start drafting landowner opt outs, but not municipal opt outs. Eve commented that she was wondering about feedback on the framework for the full task force meeting on 12/14 and noted that it would help inform how some recommendation may be developed. Jenny noted that she will be circulating the table of documentation to the group and the subcommittee will be providing an update at the task force meeting on 12/14. Jenny noted the subcommittee meeting on 12/16 would prioritize recommendations that will need to be drafted over the next couple meetings.

It was noted that the 12/30 meeting was canceled and rescheduled for 1/18 from 11-1. Priscilla asked if the group should make a recommendation to the task force for a fill in on the subcommittee. Heidi noted that it would be beneficial if we could get clarity on Derek's timeline. Heidi commented that if it was going to be more than 3-4 weeks, we may want to get someone to step in in Derek's place. Heidi recommended Joanne Lindenmayer, or perhaps Derek had someone he could recommend from his community. Jessica responded regarding the appointment process to replace Derek and noted the decision would need to be made to formally replace him and would need to be go through a process. Priscilla recommended adding someone that was already on the task force. Heidi commented that she was not sure about having another existing member of the task force, she was open to it but noted that Derek brought municipal perspective. Jessica commented that she believed Derek's appointment may be an SRB appointment and the SRB would need to identify a replacement and go through the formal process for subcommittee member replacement. Russell seconded the idea that if someone was going to replace Derek that they have a municipal perspective.

Jenny noted that there were no questions or comments in the Q&A chat function. Heidi asked if the public listening session had been scheduled. Alisha noted that she would check with Caroline Higley on the public listening session. Priscilla commented that she thought it had been pushed to January because of the December task force meeting. Heidi asked if there were any additional requests for future agenda items and nothing was noted. Heidi thanked everyone for their time, effort, and participation. Heidi Ricci took a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion was made by Priscilla Matton and seconded by Eve Schluter. All in favor said aye. The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.