



Department of Environmental Protection

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Federal Fiscal Year 2021 Section 604(b) Water Quality Management Planning Grant Program: MassDEP Official Answers to Questions March 18, 2021

MassDEP accepted questions pertaining to the Section 604(b) Water Quality Management Planning Grant (“604(b)”), Request for Responses (“RFR”) for Federal Fiscal Year 2021 from February 18, 2021 through the Tuesday March 2, 2021 604(b) RFR Question Deadline (the “Q&A Period”). No questions were received by MassDEP during this time period.

The 604(b) program held a pre-RFR informational meeting via Zoom on February 10, 2021. For completeness, questions received during the pre-RFR meeting are summarized below.

Q1: If one has an existing QAPP and a slight modification might only be needed, could a sampling plan (SAP) just be added to an existing QAPP.

A1. This would likely be a site-specific issue. It is likely a modification to an existing QAPP would be required. Please see the 604(b) RFR Appendix D: Additional Resources - Frequently Asked Questions, Question 2.

Q2: When are QAPPs needed? Looking at a project with issues on sediment and depth and wondered if a QAPP is needed for non-sampling type investigations. What about bathymetry?

A2. A QAPP is needed. Please refer to the RFR Application at Page A3.

Q3: Would a summary of others’ data as part of a prioritization framework need a QAPP?

A3. Simple data summaries to conduct rudimentary prioritization may not need a QAPP but must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Please refer to the RFR Application at Page A3.

Q4: Looking into Mill Creek in Chelsea at sediment runoff. Is sedimentation a pollutant of concern? Would restoring natural hydrology also be potential goal?

A4. It is recommended to look at MassDEP’s 2016 Integrated List of Waters to determine if the waterbody is impaired for sediment or total suspended solids. To the extent that reducing sediment reduces any other relevant listed impairment for a waterbody, it would strengthen a project idea. While there is a focus on reducing pollution, restoring natural hydrology could be co-benefit of any proposed green infrastructure projects.

This information is available in alternate format. Contact Michelle Waters-Ekanem, Director of Diversity/Civil Rights at 617-292-5751.

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Q5: Is there a highest priority amongst the areas identified as high priority waterbodies and watersheds?

A5. No.

Q6: We have never submitted a project and wondered if we could give guidance on how to determine a good project with a given watershed.

A6. It is recommended to look at readily available information, including water quality assessment reports, technical memoranda, and existing water quality data.

Q7: In terms of watersheds identified as high priority due to being a NWQI watershed, what sort of connection between a 604(b) project and NRCS work would you be looking for?

A7. While 604(b) projects may deal with agricultural concerns in NWQI watersheds, they may also be complementary.

Q8: Is a category 3 waterbody with harmful algal blooms considered a priority?

A8. If the waterbody is one which Massachusetts Department of Health (MA DPH) issued a beach closure advisory due to harmful algal blooms within the last 5 years, or it is identified in Appendix F of the 604(b) RFR, it would be considered a priority waterbody.

Q9: Would a category 3 waterbody be a priority for the 319 grant program?

A9. The 319 grant program implementation grants focus on impaired categories 4 and/or 5 waterbodies. There is also a healthy waterbody category available through the 319 grant program that may be more appropriate for unimpaired waterbodies.

Q10: What might be the focus on environmental justice communities in this grant round?

A10: Please see the 604(b) RFR evaluation criteria, at section 5A, criteria #7 (environmental justice).

Q11: Can you further clarify where in a watershed activities would be supported in terms of dealing with impairments? There are some lakes in our watershed of interest which are listed for nutrient/eutrophication indicators.

A11: Projects targeting eutrophication could be potentially good projects. One could determine the watershed to a relevant lake or river using the watershed-based planning tool. See:

<http://prj.geosyntec.com/MassDEPWBP>

Q12: Is dam removal associated work a supported activity for this grant?

A12: No. However, the Department of Ecological Restoration has a dam removal grant program that might be appropriate for this type of project. See: <https://www.mass.gov/river-restoration-dam-removal>