

## **MCTF Local Engagement Subcommittee Meeting Minutes 10 18 21**

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

#### **Subcommittee Meeting: Local Engagement**

October 18, 2021, 12:00 p.m. via Zoom

Heidi Ricci (Chair) called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. with roll call and a quorum was established. Subcommittee members in attendance included Russell Hopping, Priscilla Matton, Derek Brindisi, and Eve Schluter. Alisha Bouchard (EEA Staff Lead) started the webinar. Like previous meetings, the meeting is being hosted as a Zoom webinar. All task force members and state staff are panelists and can participate freely throughout the duration of this meeting. All non-task force members are attendees and questions can be submitted through the Q&A function and will be addressed throughout the dialogue or at the end of the meeting. Alisha also noted that meeting minutes were being cleaned up with the hope of being caught up within the week for all subcommittees.

Jenny Helmick (ERG Facilitator) shows meeting agenda to the group with the purpose of the subcommittee meeting to:

1. Review subcommittee directives and questions
2. Discuss any data gaps identified and determine which the subcommittee considers to be critical
3. Discuss proposed sources to fill critical data gaps and determine which the subcommittee considers to be essential

Jenny Helmick noted that she and Heidi Ricci went over the agenda and they made a few adjustments in how to approach the overall review of the directives and questions. The group had eight days and most people were not able to submit data gaps or sources. The purpose of the meeting is to start digging into that. Jenny noted the need to go around to each person to get a take on the directives, the status quo, and what the issues are with the status quo as a starting point for identifying data gaps. Then the group will look at the data of the sources that had gaps and sources that have been submitted. One additional adjustment to the agenda was to leave a few minutes at the end to read out and acknowledge any contributions from the public who are listening, in the Q&A.

Heidi Ricci asked if Jenny had received any input from anyone on the committee in writing. Jenny commented that Heidi was the only committee member to submit. Heidi noted what she wanted to go around to the other members of the committee and ask if they had questions or thoughts on the directives and questions that subcommittee are working to address; and in particular, if any critical gaps were identified or if there are suggestions on important information to add.

Russell Hopping commented that he had no changes on the directives and he thought the underlying questions were broad enough from his point of view, Russell thought they captured anything that he would be concerned about. Russell also noted one area that he is interested in exploring more with the subcommittee is opting out. Derek Brindisi commented that like Russell, his major concern, also brought up in policy structure subcommittee is trying to engage local municipalities regarding local engagement process. Derek sent some articles highlighting frustration from local officials. Other priority is to try to engage local officials around having more flexible options to enter Mosquito Control Districts (MCDs) which was also brought up at policy structure subcommittee meeting. Derek noted that it would be

good to have other ways to join MCDs that would allow local officials to choose. Jenny Helmick noted that she did not get those links and Derek Brindisi commented that he would send again.

Priscilla Matton commented that she is interested in exploring more about how to fill data gaps around evaluating effectiveness at controlling arbovirus. Difference between nuisance control and vector control. Priscilla noted that we need a more precise definition to understand each other. For example, to Priscilla, vector control equals controlling mosquitoes that could transmit virus, not requiring virus to have been detected. Priscilla commented that some folks seem to think of that as nuisance control and it is only vector control if the virus has been detected. We need to be clear about what kind of spraying is being conducted and how that impacts our conclusions. There may be more comfort with spraying for vector control, and possibly more if there have been virus detections. Heidi Ricci noted that might be discussed at Best Practices and Policy Structure subcommittees and she can report back.

Eve Schluter wanted to understand better how we'll address making recommendations from this subcommittee when there's significant overlap between subcommittees. For example, thinking about data gaps, whether we could make a recommendation on understory questions about which decisions should be subject to public input. Eve noted it is hard to know without understanding what Policy Structure subcommittee is talking about. There is much overlap and we need to make sure we're communicating and can make it into appropriate recommendation. Heidi Ricci commented that raises the question of when and what actions should have public input. Eve responded that if different subcommittees are making recommendations that we don't know about, it's hard to know if there should be public input at those steps. Trying to manage the feedback loop between subcommittees so all the recommendations can work with each other.

Jenny Helmick noted that some members of this subcommittee are participating on other subcommittees as well. ERG is watching all the subcommittees so we can keep you informed and there is the option for subcommittee members to attend other meetings. Eve commented that she doesn't have time to attend other meetings. Alisha noted that it might be possible to have a joint meeting between subcommittee to raise those meetings. Heidi Ricci agreed we may need to do that as we go forward.

Heidi Ricci noted that she is putting on member hat and much of her initial feedback was on best practices and policy subcommittees. Heidi commented that it is important for those committees to start reaching agreement on the overall framing to allow us to focus more on local engagement. Heidi Ricci noted that she and Russell can bring extensive experience with landowner optout. These are some things we might need further outside input on. Heidi echoed what Derek was saying. What are the barriers to a locality joining a district, meeting local needs? Mosquitoes don't respect local boundaries. Heidi noted that one gap is what are the barriers now we need to overcome. Second gap is questions and concern around municipal opt-out. Even though that process is only one more year. Heidi asked if others have any thoughts/input about these gaps?

Priscilla Matton commented that she doesn't know much about decisions or issues with municipal opt-out. Priscilla would be fine listening to someone, or if a subcommittee makes the decision to go forward with municipal opt-out, it would be good to hear what difficulties they had. Priscilla commented that it is hard to narrow down exact criteria every year when the decisions need to be made in April and we don't know what will happen in August. Heidi noted that it would be good to know what towns think they can do to have local control. One additional thing Heidi identified was about folks with chemical

sensitivities, health risks. Heidi noted there was a comment from an MD that hundreds of thousands of people in the state have chemical sensitivities to pesticide exposures, not just from mosquito control. Jenny Helmick noted that she wasn't sure if that fell into this subcommittee, perhaps needs to be brought to the full Mosquito Control Task Force or to another subcommittee.

Russell Hopping asked if municipal opt-out is off the table or could it come back? Heidi Ricci noted that we could recommend continuing it or do a hybrid version allowing more choice. Russell then asked if we didn't recommend anything, what would happen in 2023? Heidi noted that the legislature might do something. Russell asked if it could go back to the way it was before the 2020 law that created the task force was adopted? Heidi answered that yes that's what would happen if the legislature did nothing.

Jenny Helmick called on Derek Brindisi since Priscilla Matton mentioned him. Derek commented that Uxbridge has done good work. Some towns have appointed boards. For example, Upton has a five-member board reviewing options. Derek commented that there are probably many such across the state. As a strategy, we could engage these communities and board members and get their feedback on what improvements could be made.

Heidi Ricci commented that Uxbridge got a large grant under municipal vulnerability preparedness program. They did a big review of ecological arbovirus management. Dr. Joann Lindenmayer on the Uxbridge board of health has technical expertise. Heidi noted that we could see about having her speak or provide a written summary of her findings. On some of these Heidi recommended bringing speakers with set amount of time and prescribed topics. For example, the town of Harvard would be good – their opt-out application was thorough, but it was not approved. Senator Comerford worked across municipalities that applied for opt-out and has expressed interest in coming for a bit of a meeting. Derek Brindisi noted that would be great and he would like to consider it because some of these issues are also at the policy structure subcommittee. Derek commented maybe we should have a joint meeting with the policy structure subcommittee for these presentations.

Jenny Helmick noted the subcommittee would need to decide on whether to ask people to provide written input or to come as speakers, how much time they should have, and which meetings to come to. Jenny recommended the subcommittee formulate specific questions, not just to have the presenters talk, but have specific questions the subcommittee would like them to answer. Russell Hopping noted it would be helpful to clarify what the gap is more specifically for each of these. Russell commented that it looked broad right now, and he's wondering if there were specific questions, it might streamline how we get the answers.

Heidi Ricci commented that she can narrow it more. From an alternative municipal perspective, for example, Uxbridge and Upton have made attempts to join a MCD but it didn't pass the town meeting because of cost and the way services are provided (concerns regarding truck-based spraying and lack of local control once in a MCD, for example). If towns could choose among services, what would that look like? Heidi noted that Uxbridge found a way to get testing through a private entity and get into the DPH system. Heidi commented this is a case study example of municipal struggles with existing structure and looking to find an alternative structure. Heidi also noted that Senator Comerford and Harvard would be focused on opt out as it is currently structured. Heidi mentioned that we need a whole other understory question on landowner opt-out. For Senator Comerford, her districts would be more concerned with municipal opt-out. Russell Hopping asked if we will be making this current process clear, or will we be

making a bigger recommendation about making it easier to have local options, a plate of private options, etc.?

Heidi Ricci noted this question does get back to Policy. One perspective Heidi heard at last policy structure or best practices subcommittee meeting is that we need a clarifying goal for the program. Identifying what local engagement will look like must fall in that framework. Heidi Ricci commented on proposing speakers, making sure we're informed on current landscape and all perspectives and she thinks we need to hear them. Priscilla Matton noted some of these issues may have been written about or provided in some of the comments. Priscilla is not against having speakers, but maybe we need to look at public comments before bringing in too many outside people. Heidi Ricci commented that she checked with some of these people. Senator Comerford as state senator, has been very involved. Heidi thinks we should give her five to ten minutes. She's available on 11/4, but Dr. Joann Lindenmayer isn't. Heidi was going to see if she can write something. Derek Brindisi commented that many people we've talked to have had challenges with joining MCDs or with the opt out process. Derek noted that there must be some who have had success, it would be useful to learn from them what they learned from the process. We can't just all be negative, so it's going to be some positive pieces we can take away.

Heidi Ricci emphasized one reason to bring Dr. Joann Lindenmayer in is because Uxbridge has found a path forward. Priscilla Matton commented that DPH does not prohibit MCDs from conducting surveillance only virus testing on their own or through an outside laboratory. Can't get EEE results from the bench, need to get a lab. MCDs aren't allowed to go outside DPH to do testing. Priscilla noted that her district could test for much less money than DPH. There could be an alternative but it's not part of the framework and not an option a local MCD or town has. On the Islands, if they don't have an MCD, they aren't allowed to send mosquitoes for testing. Alisha Bouchard commented that her understanding is DPH made an exception for Uxbridge. They have standardizations with testing. DPH should be part of these conversations.

Priscilla Matton noted that EEE is considered a biological hazard. Not allowed to test for it outside a BSL-3 lab. Heidi Ricci commented that she'd like to understand more from DPH. Maybe for the next full MCTF. Alisha Bouchard stated that she would talk to DPH and see if we can get them to come to meeting. Heidi Ricci noted that would be very helpful because she heard from municipalities that there is a desire to get testing but not have to join an MCD and get unwanted spraying. Heidi wanted to understand what's involved with testing and getting it done safely, securely. Heidi heard strong consensus across the board that people want to know when and where virus is present. DPH understandably doesn't reveal exactly locations of test sites. Confounding to not have much location information. Derek commented about Kevin Cranston speaking since he's on the full Task Force. Derek asked if it would help to survey municipalities and get a sense of what they're looking for?

Priscilla Matton brought the conversation back to testing. Priscilla commented that she really supports having DPH speak and feels there are significant barriers in understanding the data without more specific information. Priscilla asked if Alisha or Jenny can make another request for DPH to explain how they collect data and why they release it in the way they do. If DPH samples in towns outside MCD they don't charge which isn't fair for towns in MCDs. Priscilla also noted education, if that should come from DPH or local, not sure what's best.

Heidi Ricci commented that she did not know if DPH is charging Uxbridge. Alisha commented that they're not. Alisha noted that charging a district is agency to agency via the State Reclamation Board (SRB). Uxbridge isn't being charged, DPH does some of its own surveillance. Statewide surveillance is a baseline, we've never seen any town not want surveillance and education. Heidi Ricci noted that she would like to hear from DPH what best practices are to avoid getting disease. Heidi commented when she sees articles, they recommend source reduction and personal protection. Heidi asked a question regarding surveillance data; do you get to know which samples were positive? Priscilla Matton responded yes, we know exact trap locations, we're told detail on human and horse cases, as is local Board of Health. Neighboring cities/towns may be told. Risk may be adjusted for more than one town, which is to protect patient info, also if they live on border, better to show larger risk area since mosquitoes move.

Heidi Ricci commented that she didn't know if DPH had done any analysis of disease incidence in relation to surveillance and response data. Heidi commented that it is a horrible disease but so rare. Even in 2019 when hundreds of mosquito samples had EEE, there were still millions of people being bitten without getting EEE. Priscilla Matton responded that's because we're taking preventative actions to prevent disease spread. We're doing truck-based spraying and reducing the risk. We're not eliminating risk, but we're at least reducing risk - can't prove we prevented a case because that is not how the data works. Heidi asked if they interviewed patients or family members to try to understand when and where they were likely infected, and whether they were following personal protection measures. Priscilla responded - yes, they ask questions like: did you travel, do you camp, do you think you know when/where you got bitten?

Jenny Helmick noted that she added a few things to this spreadsheet that were sent by Derek Brindisi. Heidi Ricci commented not sure how we would conduct a survey or if we have the resources to do that. I think if we did do it, we'd probably want to have a survey that listed all the different services and ask them to check off which ones they want and maybe an open-ended question. Russell Hopping noted documenting a running list of draft potential recommendations. Another recommendation noted by Russell Hopping was a baseline statewide surveillance plan that functions as a baseline. Just wondering if that's something valuable that we should be thinking about tracking these potential records.

Heidi Ricci commented that another one that she'd like to put in that placeholder category would be a statewide mosquito or mosquito borne disease management plan that is drafted by the experts. Russell Hopping was thinking we would do the survey in the limited time that we have. It could have important outcomes for the recommendations and would add that if policy is going to be directed at all by a municipal survey that it be conducted every ten years, as things change. Jenny Helmick mentioned that one of our functions will be to go through the notes of these meetings and pull those kinds of things out and present back or hear something that a subcommittee member said that could be formed into potential recommendations.

Russell Hopping also added that a policy topic of note is that EEE testing can only be done by certain types of labs and agencies. He requested that there at least be a protocol that's made available if a town hires a private company. Heidi Ricci commented that a survey that was done through the Mass Rivers Alliance, which includes eighty different organizations and was distributed to watershed groups and

environmental groups after the 2019 aerial spraying. There are individual responses and a summary that are available. Heidi wanted to make those available for people to review, acknowledging again, it's probably a biased summary, but it's got some interesting information about statewide dialogue. Jenny Helmick commented that we'll make all these available to the group.

Eve Schluter commented that she worries about going too far down one direction and then it's in direct contradiction with a recommendation from another subcommittee. Eve asked about check-ins on potential recommendation overlap more frequently. Eve feels like there's overlap and commented on how we're addressing those questions that come in through chat during this meeting from an external person. Jenny Helmick commented that at the end of the meeting we would give ten to fifteen minutes and read out Q and A's and to recognize them and take them into consideration. Russell Hopping commented that ERG is in the best position to look across all of these subcommittees and what's coming out of them to potentially alert us to anything that could be a major conflict and then raise that in the monthly overall task force meeting. Jenny Helmick noted that here will be a report out by the subcommittee chairs at the task force meetings with opportunity for question and answer and ERG will be looking across these subcommittees too.

Jenny Helmick wondered if we needed to circle back to see if any of the speakers being proposed are valuable and credible to fill gaps. We can all look at the documents with these PDFs. Heidi Ricci noted here was some interesting GIS mapping analysis that was presented by Harvard that wasn't addressed in the response from the state. Priscilla Matton commented that she needed a little bit more time to go back through all the public comments to the report and then comments that people made, including comments that were made during the public meeting that took place back in May. Priscilla would like to see if some of these things were addressed more closely so we won't need to bother someone to come in if they don't have to. Eve Schluter commented that these are very specific to certain municipalities, and wants to be mindful if we're inviting people from municipality---that could be seen that we're not giving everyone the opportunity to meet and talk that may have submitted something that wasn't accepted or have a concern. Heidi Ricci responded not sure that we're going to have the resources to do a survey. Eve Schluter understood, but posed the question why are we only bringing in Harvard and Uxbridge? Heidi Ricci commented that she could make the case for Uxbridge more so than Harvard because of the fact that they spent the state's money examining this issue in great detail and they engaged other people from other municipalities and their regional conference. Also, given Joann's technical background, it just seemed like that might be worthwhile. But again, Joann is not available on 11/4. She might be able to come later if we decided to do that.

Eve Schluter commented that it would be useful to think about what we want them to address to consider if it's worth it, not that it's not valuable, but is it worth the time, what would we get that we wouldn't get. Alisha Bouchard noted during opt-out process, most applications were from western MA. None received from southeast MA – that's where they have the most disease activity. Could be a place to think about to get different perspectives. Priscilla Matton commented she is interested to learn more about Uxbridge regarding how they plan to move forward. Priscilla commented none of her towns pay \$230k to be in the district. Most is \$180k. Priscilla noted she could do a lot if they all paid \$230k. Priscilla asked how do they plan to sustain process without the grant? Maybe Derek Brindisi can talk about his experience in Worcester which is bigger.

Heidi Ricci clarified that the grant wasn't to conduct the services, the grant was to study, they convened conferences, counted catch basins, went well beyond traditional mosquito control services. The grant also covered other climate resiliency topics beyond just mosquito control. Heidi also added that she'd like to allow Senator Comerford a little time. She has expressed interest and she's a legislator who was involved in legislation that created our Task Force and she has perspectives from many municipalities. Maybe ten minutes. We can think more about other potential speakers or ways to get input. I'd still like to get more input on the medical question although maybe it's not for this subcommittee – overall concern for chemically sensitive individuals.

Russel Hopping asked if Heidi could clarify that last point regarding chemical sensitivity. Is this regarding roadside spraying, or a one-time event because of an emergency designation? Heidi noted this is an area where she would like more medical expertise. Heidi's understanding is people could have single exposure to a chemical that affects them in a way that makes them more sensitive to many chemicals in the future. It could be from multiple lower-level exposures. Heidi has names of some people at MGH, MIT. It could be good to understand from the medical community regarding impacts on sensitive people like asthmatics or long-range Covid. Russell Hopping noted we could list items that need to be included in a plan. Priscilla noted we work closely with the other side of DPH (human, environmental health) during aerial spraying. perhaps somebody from that side of DPH can be helpful since they sit on the Task Force. Let's put it back on our other committee members to see what they can help us with. Let's ask DPH to see if we can get them to give us some more information.

Jenny commented that it seems like we are honing in on two speakers – DPH and Senator Comerford, although there was no feedback from other subcommittee members on recommendations for speakers. Alisha commented that we have DPH environmental health bureau contacts. Alisha offered to take the lead trying to get someone or a couple people from DPH for the group. Heidi Ricci asked the subcommittee what people think? Anyone object to giving Senator Comerford ten minutes? Eve commented that she didn't object but she didn't understand specifically what we want to ask. With every speaker, whether Senator or not, what are we trying to ascertain from having them come and speak. Heidi responded the Senator heard from many people in her area and she made an effort to go back and forth with EEA and had some outstanding questions. Heidi feels the Senator's perspective is valuable and she would like to hear what the Senator would like to see from this aspect of the Task Force, what in her view would've made this process work better.

Jenny commented that we'll need to hear from everyone on this before moving forward with that suggestion. Derek Brindisi noted we should include as many voices as possible. Senator Comerford would be a natural next step given her involvement and Alisha had mentioned DPH. He indicated interest in continuing to engage communities like Harvard that had barriers and challenges to set course for us to make changes. Russell Hopping noted that he is not opposed to having anybody come. He'd like to see a more refined, clear question around filling the data gaps. Priscilla Matton agreed. There are some very direct questions for DPH. Senator Comerford's representative has been at some Task Force meetings and there are likely written comments from him. Maybe as we move further, if we decide it's for us or another subcommittee decides to continue the municipal opt-out, then we could ask Senator Comerford to attend. Priscilla noted she gets nervous about asking any single person because you can

get different answers depending on who you ask. She indicated agreement with the concept of a survey, but noted that responses would vary based on who answers the question.

Heidi Ricci noted that a variety of opinions is important. From Sen Comerford, Heidi is looking for municipal perspective on how this impacted their roles as town officials. Given she helped write that part of the law, the group should hear how the Senator thought the process should work. Jenny noted that she is hearing agreement on having a few people from DPH and maybe this could be arranged for the November meeting. Back to the points on Senator Comerford, Heidi commented that we do have one more year of opt-out coming up. We heard communities need a lot more advance notice to prepare. Even if we don't have Senator Comerford come to speak, we will want to know what the criteria is going to be and what do communities need to do. Heidi noted we need to hear something more specific from EEA.

Jenny asked Alisha, if she thought we could get DPH for the next meeting? Alisha responded scheduling DPH is difficult with Covid, but she would reach out and see. Heidi noted what DPH could share would be good for the policy structure and best practices subcommittees as well. Heidi commented that she has questions for DPH. Eve asked if we could call out for subcommittees to develop specific questions and have DPH give a presentation at the full task force meeting addressing those questions. We need feedback from subcommittees about what we'd want addressed. Priscilla noted that she made a request to Caroline Higley to have DPH at full task force meeting especially if policy structure requests will be adding DPH to the SRB. Russell agreed it should be at the full task force meeting. Heidi asked could we record part of a meeting where there's a speaker and make that available. Jenny responded that would need to be proposed to EEA. Heidi noted that most presentations that have been given have made it onto website, yes? Jenny responded that she was not sure, but we'll need to figure out if DPH speakers will come to full task force meeting or this one. In any event, coming up with specific questions is needed. Jenny recommended that can be part of homework. Formulating specific questions for DPH or any other source and pulling out potential recommendations the subcommittee has already come up with and what are gaps in developing recommendations. For example, specific questions and additional info sources we might need.

Heidi recommended other items most relevant for this subcommittee. This included perspectives from Utah Physicians for Healthy Environment and CDC/EPA joint statement and to reserve some time for Russell and Heidi to speak to landowner opt-outs. Jenny noted that time will be carved out on the agenda for that at the next subcommittee meeting. Heidi asked if the consensus for Senator Comerford is that we don't want to schedule her now, we'd taken written comment, we might come back to her later in process. Jenny noted that she thought we had said we wanted to come up with more specific questions to make best use of Senator Comerford's time. Russell asked if Senator Comerford is an expert on understanding barriers for municipal opt-out and what's preventing towns from opting into MCDs. Heidi noted that it is more the former. Russell noted that he is trying to think about how to make a more specific request. Russell added, municipal opt out goes away after next year unless changes are made to keep it in place, right? Heidi responded, yes and added that maybe we can make recommendations to EEA for next year but maybe it's not a priority for us.



Priscilla commented that she is not sure if we have authority to make those changes. It's a separate part of the legislation. We can make it part of recommended new legislation. Priscilla commented that she thought Senator Comerford or her office needs to bring it up to EEA sooner than later. Heidi noted one question she heard was what is it the MCDs are doing that towns aren't that the state considers essential? Eve noted that we've talked about a lot of things, which is great, but as perspectives, we're talking about what happens next, rather than what's on the books now. Eve keeps coming back to our charge and she wants to make sure we're understanding the charge and what our next steps are. As Russell said, municipal opt-out is going to go away so we should be mindful of what our charge is. Heidi noted that looking at our directives, we haven't discussed much on the third directive yet. Heidi stated that has the most overlap with best practices subcommittee. Jenny mentioned to maybe consider info sources that could be used for that directive. Eve commented for this meeting we were supposed to focus on directives two and three, so it's worth moving along to think about directive eight. Heidi noted there's a lot of overlap there with the best practices subcommittee.

Jenny noted she'll send a follow up email with ERG notes and a summary of what to focus on for next meeting. Jenny also mentioned that there will be a public listening session in December and maybe one later, too, for the whole task force. Derek asked how is that listening session being advertised to local communities? Alisha responded that she was not sure and that we would have to ask Caroline. Derek notes there are many listservs. Alisha commented that she thought EEA had that MMA listserv but thought it was a great idea. Jenny acknowledged and read two questions that were received via the Q&A function (received at 1:04 and 1:18 from Barbara Katzenberg) Alisha noted that DPH would have to answer the questions. Heidi responded these might be questions to share with them when they present. Eve noted that it is important to keep this in mind when we're talking about what points are appropriate for public input in the decision-making process. Something heard a lot in conversations is the idea of relative risk and is the action proportionate to the risk. Heidi commented that's why she wants to understand more about public health issues with chemicals in the environment.

Heidi Ricci thanked subcommittee members and staff for helping and for their time. The work is important and will have implications for years to come. Heidi entertained a motion to adjourn from Eve Schluter, seconded from Priscilla Matton. All in favor said aye. The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.