Joint RMAC/LMAC Water Quality Indicators Subcommittee

June 16, 2020
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
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Meeting Summary

Members Present	Representing	NHDES Staff Present
Mark Lombardi, Lead	RMAC	Jen Drociak
Shane Bradt	LMAC	Tracie Sales
Garret Graaskamp	LMAC (non-voting)	
John Magee	RMAC (non-voting)	
Norman Sims	RMAC	
Michele L. Tremblay	RMAC	
Mary Truell	LMAC	

- Mark Lombardi opened the meeting by informing everyone that he received a consolidated list of topics from Mariah Mitchell after the last meeting. Mark stated he will email this to the group and suggested using it to start building a product.

- Michele L. Tremblay suggested the group examine what data is currently available, such as on NHDES OneStop.

- Shane Bradt suggested the group determine what data layers would be necessary to answer any determined questions.

- Michele asked if anyone had any thoughts as to what the final product might look like and how it might be packaged.

- Shane asked where the NHDES data layers come from and if they can be brought into another platform. He suggested the group assess what information they think they will need, determine if it exists, and if so if it can be pulled into another platform.

- Michele stated that there are platforms that can provide data, however, the group needs to determine what kind of product they want to create.

- Shane noted that connection to existing data is important, and that ultimately the group would not want to maintain a whole separate site of data. He also noted that what the group does will be dependent on their skills, unless someone is hired to create this product. He asked if there is any funding to hire an individual to do so.

- Michele stated that the New Hampshire Rivers Council would be willing to invest in this endeavor and hopes that NH Lakes would also be willing to invest. She questioned whether the group would want a .com or a .gov website, and noted that she has purchased the domain www.howsthewater.

- Tracie Sales stated that NHDES funding would be unavailable, and it is doubtful that DoIT would maintain an outside website. She asked the group to consider how it would set up a platform to answer the question of "Can I go swimming today?" with respect to how current existing data is.

- Shane asked if the group can even answer these questions, and if not, what data would be needed in order to do so. He stressed that current data is important.

Joint RMAC/LMAC Water Quality Indicators Subcommittee

- Michele noted that data are transient and points in time. She referred to the saying "When it rains, it's poor" and mentioned sites with history of illicit discharge points and exceedances in *E. coli*.

- Mary Truell suggested including a broad category of acceptable ranges to each parameter, similar to drinking water quality standards.

- Norman Sims suggested the group should be careful about what questions they are trying to answer and cautioned the legality of potentially saying "yes, it's safe to swim today" noting that he is unsure if the group should address things that may have changed between yesterday and today. He suggested defining the classes of waterbodies and general conditions of water where it may not be safe. He also suggested adding points of access on rivers, as well as what types of recreational activities are available above and below said access points.

- Mary suggested perhaps having a webpage with a list of links that direct people to other websites for data.

- Mark noted that perhaps the answer is in front of him but he doesn't know it, and that the NH Lakes website answers many of these questions for lakes, but not for rivers.

- Michele noted that the group may have to develop something deeper than the content of the NH Lakes website.

- Shane stated that while the NH Lakes website is a good model, the group shouldn't just forward people to other sites. He suggested perhaps creating something like the NH Lakes website, but slightly more in depth and to include rivers.

- Michele noted that if the group can't create a dynamic document then they will have to create something that links to data but with more interpretation. She suggested the group put themselves in the mindset of people who want to visit a New Hampshire waterbody for the weekend or to buy property on a waterbody. She stated the NH Lakes website is helpful, but does not get the group where they ultimately want to be.

- Mary stated that realtors provide resources, not answers, so people can look at the information and draw conclusions for themselves, so suggested following this model.

- Shane asked how much individual data exists to answer the group's questions. He stated NH Lakes walks the line in a conservative way, and it would be difficult to do anything more than that. He suggested determining a better, more complete version of what they've done and considering how to present the data in a format that is easier to digest.

- Garrett Graaskamp suggested looking at websites and platforms that already exist and what data they provide. He also noted that the group would need IT support because of the dynamic nature of the questions and how current the data is.

- Mark noted that Jen Drociak compiled a lengthy list last year and suggested all review it again.

- Mark asked if anyone knew how NH Lakes built their website, how they found their links, and how they update it, and suggested the group provide people with a "roadmap" to answer their questions.

- Shane noted that there so many state agencies responsible for data and answering questions and noted the need for one clean, easy-to-find and use website. He stated he will talk with NH Lakes on their processes.

Joint RMAC/LMAC Water Quality Indicators Subcommittee

- Michele stated that the NH Lakes website does not appear to be a high level of complexity and believes it is hosted on Wordpress, which is fairly easy to maintain and update.

- Mark suggested providing people with one place to find data, and to let them draw their own conclusions.

- Michele suggested the group review additional existing tools such as the Gulf of Maine indicators website. She noted that it provides a map with several data layers that allows people to choose which ones they want to look at. She suggested that perhaps the group's approach should be to make a map-based tool that lets people click on what data they want to review.

- Norm cautioned that if the group is telling people it is ok to swim in or drink the water when it's not, there may be a lawsuit. Michele stated that while lawsuits are not a concern of hers it appears that they are for others and should be taken seriously.

- John Magee suggested taking an aggregate approach by taking language from existing websites such as the NHDES Beach Program website which includes a disclaimer.

- Mark Lombardi summarized next steps which include:

  - Mark: Email consolidated list of topics from Mariah to group.
  - Shane: Talk with NH Lakes to see how they built and maintain their website.
  - Michele: Email examples of websites and platforms she likes.
  - Jen: Incorporate Michele's websites and comments into the larger water quality information summary document and to redistribute it to the group.
  - Everyone: Bring specific examples of what they like to the next meeting.

- Mark stated that he will schedule a meeting to occur within the next month or so.

The meeting adjourned at 2:02 pm.