

Technical Assistance through the SNEP Network:

Tracking and Accounting in the Blackstone and Ten-Mile River Watersheds

Jan 15, 2021 02:00 PM in Eastern Time (US and Canada)

The objective of this call was to provide an opportunity for municipalities to ask **questions** and receive **answers** from the project team regarding the above referenced solicitation.

What are the benefits to municipalities for being involved in this project?

As implementation of MS4 permits continue, communities have to account for stormwater control installation (also known as BMPs). Up to now this has only had meaning if a community is within a TMDL watershed or is under a Consent Decree. With the new MS4 permits municipalities have to present accountability around what work is being done to protect water quality limited water bodies. The accounting methods in Appendix F to the 2016 MA MS4 provides a framework but we want to make sure that the approaches are better and easier to use. As part of this project, we hope to educate municipalities on what information is needed in order to accurately and effectively track and account for pollution reduction. At the same time, we hope to also gather information on what kind of data is easiest and most practical to collect that presents an accurate representation of stormwater practices that municipalities can take credit for. Municipalities will come out with a better understanding of the data elements required to accurately account for and track the performance of stormwater controls as well as an introduction to different tools available to conduct this accounting and tracking of stormwater control performance.

The anticipated benefits for MS4s is to be able to identify how much of a pollutant is removed when various structural and nonstructural controls are implemented. Using this accounting method gives an idea on how TMDL pollutant reduction targets are being met, but also gives information on how much each control costs. This will allow MS4s to achieve maximum pollutant reduction with minimal costs to meet the goal of improving water quality.

In MA, the requirements for this is in the MS4 permit down the road, but we want to give communities a head start on how to use these methods and what kind of data to gather and how to set up that database.

In RI, this is a way to let communities give feedback on deciding how to move forward with tracking and accounting requirements that will be included in the new MS4 permit.

It would be helpful to go over the application process. I understand that a letter of interest is due soon?

The Solicitation is at https://snepnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Interstate-Watershed-Tracking-and-Accounting_Community-Solicitation_Final_1-5-2021.pdf

Key points that should be included in the application are listed in the solicitation. Each municipality has to be able to show that they are interested and committed to the project and have the right team available to make sure that key decision makers around stormwater management are involved.

On specific questions/key points it is not required that all municipalities have experience but should demonstrate that there is a good understanding of what efforts have been made to initiate the process. For example, a community may not have had much experience with green infrastructure implementation, but demonstration of the understanding of the process is helpful.

The application is about 1-3 pages and is meant to give an indication of where the community is at the time.

If people are on the fence on whether the project will be beneficial/they have enough information to apply; if a community has experience installing BMPs or mitigating flooding, would that be ok?

This targets stormwater control measures, structural and nonstructural that are included in the 2016 MA MS4 permit and not dealing with manufactured treatment devices. This is the first time we are seeing this in the MS4 permit and understand that this is a complex requirement to meet. As part of this effort we want to make sure that municipalities have a way to track their activities on the municipal level that can apply the crediting in the MS4 permit.

How much staff time do you think will be required from the Town/City staff?

This project is modeled after other initiatives, mostly in the Mystic River Watershed. We want to engage staff, so the minimum staff time are the five half day meetings that occur monthly, but likely includes effort by municipal staff between meetings. We hope that municipalities will benefit from the technical assistance provided during this project but outputs will likely be commensurate with the level of effort put in by the municipal staff.

Is the vision that the model/tool outcome from these pilots will eventually be required for all MS4s in future annual reporting on progress toward TMDL requirements?

The industry is moving towards accountability, whether that is something you create on your own, your consultant designs, or you can obtain for free from other sources. The information required to establish a tracking and accounting system can be entered into any of those tools. We want to find the best way to get easy, consistent, reliable reporting while remaining consistent with pollution reduction accounting methodologies in MS4 permits.

How are the state DOTs going to be involved?

MS4 is very complex in the implementation and since DOTs in both states have set up tracking and accounting tools, their involvement would be to share their experiences, challenges, and successes with the participating municipalities. This project focuses on whether we have the right tools for tracking and accounting for stormwater controls implemented as part of MS4 permit compliance. MS4s and since DOT has experience already, they have a different perspective and there could be a good exchange of ideas and information.

The overall goal is to streamline the data collection efforts that are needed to meet this requirement and being able to streamline this with the help of a DOT who has already developed this and potentially gone through trouble shooting could be helpful to municipalities.

Have other municipalities aside from Ten Mile and Blackstone been contacted and how will they be selected?

We are hoping that there will be 2 municipalities each from RI and MA that belong either to the Blackstone or the Ten-Mile River Watershed to facilitate identifying potential regional partners down the road.