

MMOC Meeting Minutes
April 12, 2023 ZOOM Meeting, 6:00-7:45pm
As Approved May 10, 2023
Minutes prepared by Matt Eddy, MMOC Administrator

Member Attendees:

- Kelly Brilliant, Tom Brady, Elisabeth Cianciola, Elton Elperin, Jan Henderson, Lisa Kumpf, Arleyn Levee, Jack Schleifer (representing ENC), Tom Timmons, Matt Eddy (MMOC Administrator).

Other Attendees:

- Kiran Johnson, Caroline Reeves, Carroll Williamson.

Phase 2 Update:

- Matt Eddy presented photos as part of his monthly field report, with Tom Brady providing explanatory detail.
- The sediment handling equipment at Charter's Agassiz Road work site is largely removed, and clean-up, grading, and landscaping are pending.
- Supplementary dredging of Phragmites root material continues at Work Area 6 (Back Bay Yard). Clean-up, site prep, and landscaping are pending here as well.
- Goose egg-laying season has begun; the City and the Town have initiated their goose management programs. Anecdotally, there appears to be fewer nests this year than last year, perhaps because of the removal of so much Phragmites.
- The MMOC and others continue to monitor errant Phragmites root balls in the Charlesgate area. It's important that these not be allowed to colonize the area.

Carlton St Footbridge:

- Bridge construction is drawing to a close with work focused on the finishing touches to the ADA ramps and pathway. Landscape work is anticipated in the coming two months. No official date of opening has been announced, but any update will be communicated to MMOC members well in advance.
- Elton asked about plans for lighting in the area. Tom Brady will ask Bill Smith (Project Manager for the Footbridge) about the intention/design.

Phase 1 Update:

- Matt Eddy presented photos of the Phase 1 area as part of his monthly field report with Tom Timmons providing explanatory detail.

- Tom Timmons has met with Kellie Connelly (Terraink) in the field and will meet soon with Kellie and the site supervisor for A&M Home Services to discuss plans for the 2023 maintenance season. A&M continues to do weekly litter clean-up of the Phase 1 area.
- Eight supplementary trees are expected to be delivered May 2, with planting work scheduled for the week following. Boston Parks approved the species and locations provided by the MMOC's Landscape Maintenance Subcommittee.
- Long-term points of concern in Phase 1 continue to be related to (a) the high-traffic areas along Brookline Ave.; (b) the filling in of the bay adjacent to the peninsula with leaf litter; (c) the exposed geocells; and (d) the difficulty establishing turf or other vegetation in upland areas. The Landscape Maintenance Subcommittee is in regular dialog with Boston Parks regarding these questions.

Flow Restriction Control Structure (Cofferdam)

- Per decision by the USACE, the FRCS was reduced in height to 1.0 ft and subsequently to 0.4 ft (NAVD88) in stages over the month of March. This represents a departure from the original plan approved by Mass DEP and the Boston Conservation Commission, which was for total removal of the cofferdam. USACE representatives presented to the Water Quality Subcommittee on March 24, 2023, explaining the decision-making process that preceded this action. Lisa Kumpf summarized the meeting:
 - The rationale for the change is to prevent any possible damage to MWRA pipes in the area that could occur during the removal process and to maintain water levels along the Riverway consistent with recent history.
 - USACE has concluded that water levels along the Muddy River are largely correlated with levels in the Charles River Basin and therefore are mostly the result of the closing and opening of the New Charles River Dam. Although accumulated sediment in certain choke points played a key role historically, most of that sediment has now been removed. The USACE hydrologist anticipates a reduction in minimum seasonal water level at Netherlands Rd. of 0.7 ft in winter, with a higher median level anticipated during the spring.
 - USACE modeling suggests that water levels would be suitable for fish migration over the weir 90% of the time between April and June.
 - This is a temporary arrangement. Per USACE communication, MassDEP has already stated that the Corps' plan meets Chapter 91 permit obligations for the short-term. If the below-grade sections of the cofferdam were to be left in place permanently, this would represent a Project Change and would need to be approved formally by Boston Conservation Commission and MassDEP. USACE and the non-federal sponsors will monitor the site for two years to decide what the final condition will be.
 - The Water Quality Subcommittee's concerns and questions about the decision are many and varied but include:
 - How does this choice affect median water levels along the Riverway? Insofar as this median level will likely be lower than in recent memory, what effect will that have on the size and distribution of

mudflats? Elton pointed out that current river width does not match the design drawings.

- How does this choice affect modeled water levels during design storm events (20-year storms)?
- Is 90% fish passage sufficient?
- How does this choice affect water temperatures?
- If, following two years of monitoring, the situation is deemed problematic, who will pay for changes?
- Tom Brady replied that the non-federal sponsors have many of the same questions and concerns, but that it is important to maintain constructive dialog with USACE as all parties work to explore these questions further.
- The focus of the non-federal sponsors will now be on data-gathering to assess the condition of the river following cofferdam removal.
- Tom Brady reported that USACE (in principle) has funds available for “unanticipated impacts” of Corps work, if such impacts are identified. The MMOC and its organizational members can support the non-federal sponsors in this monitoring effort.
- Tom Brady noted that the river has meandered since the installation of the MWRA pipes several decades ago. A granite stone, now about ten feet offshore from the Boston side, marks the previous bank edge. Matt Eddy will visit the area, look for the stone, and provide photo-documentation.

MEPA Annual Update and USACE Inspection

- Tom Timmons reported that CDM Smith intends to release the MEPA Annual Update for 2014-2021 (revised based on MMOC feedback) in the coming days, and Annual Update 2022 soon thereafter.
- The USACE annual inspection of Phase 1 is scheduled for April 19, 2023. Tom Brady and Tom Timmons expect the Project will receive a grade of “Acceptable.”
 - Following the presentation of this report, a decision can be made regarding removal of the exposed geocells. CDM Smith has retained a contractor for this work.
- Bathymetry data for 2020-2022 has been delivered to the MMOC, and 2023 data is anticipated to be delivered by CDM Smith shortly. The data has been delivered to the Water Quality Subcommittee.
 - Elton asked for further clarification from the non-federal sponsors as to how to interpret the bathymetry data. Tom Brady replied that he was waiting to see the 2023 numbers but that, in general, changes in water depth were consistent with expectations.

Subcommittee Reports:

- Kelly Brilliant, on behalf of the Communications Subcommittee, stated that planning for the MMOC Annual Meeting is on schedule. All MMOC members are key “ambassadors” for this meeting. A link to the registration website is available [here](#).
- Jack Schleifer, on behalf of the Historic Bridges Subcommittee, summarized the group’s recent efforts to gather and organize historical data for each of the bridges along the Muddy River. ENC’s Northeastern intern Ciara Culligan has been very helpful in assembling this information. Networking with both public partners and bridge experts continues. One key goal is to formalize the inspection and maintenance activities for the bridges.

Member Organization Updates:

- Jan Henderson (Longwood Collective): Longwood Collective is working with MassDOT on transportation striping plans for the Longwood Ave. Bridge. This is the missing portion that will connect the existing bike lanes in Brookline to those in Boston.
- Jack Schleifer (ENC): ENC has more than 600 volunteers registered for a Muddy River clean-up event to be held on Earth Day (April 22). [ENC’s Annual Meeting](#), scheduled for Thursday, April 27, will complement the MMOC’s Annual Meeting the night before. ENC-sponsored tree planting is also scheduled for Arbor Day (Friday, April 28)
- Lisa Kumpf (CRWA): CRWA is seeking volunteers to participate in anadromous fish counts. There are also several webinars and in-person tours scheduled. Further even information is available [here](#).
- A reminder that the Colleges of the Fenway annual [Muddy River Symposium](#) is scheduled for 4PM on Tuesday, April 18. Lisa Kumpf is serving as one of the jurors. All MMOC members are encouraged to attend. The event will be promoted on the MMOC website.

Public Comment:

- Caroline Reeves expressed her view that the MMOC should more forcefully use its leverage with USACE, MassDEP, and Mass Fish and Game to pursue a fully satisfactory resolution to concerns related to the FRCS. In response, Chair Kelly Brilliant said the MMOC is actively engaged in this issue, and has not at all taken a passive role, but is awaiting collection of more data and observation from both non-federal sponsors and the data collection and observation the MMOC will engage in itself.

MMOC Member Business:

- Following motion by Jan Henderson and second by Arleyn Levee, minutes for the MMOC meeting for March 8, 2023 were approved by unanimous vote (with abstentions from those who were not present for that meeting). Final copies of the minutes will be distributed to MMOC members and will be available on the MMOC website.

Upcoming MMOC Meetings:

- Weds, May 10 and Weds, June 14, 6:00 PM

Adjourned 7:45PM.