



Housatonic River Natural Resource Restoration Massachusetts SubCouncil – *Project Update*



Public Information Meeting
November 1, 2005, 5:30 – 7:00pm
Lenox Town Hall
Lenox, Massachusetts



IEc
INDUSTRIAL ECONOMICS, INCORPORATED

Massachusetts SubCouncil, Housatonic River Natural Resource Trustees
100 Cambridge, 9th Floor Boston, Massachusetts 02114



Overview

Status of Restoration Planning

Current Project Timeline

Details on Upcoming Solicitation Announcement

Review of Evaluation and Selection Process

Questions and Answers



Responsibility of the MA SubCouncil

MA SubCouncil is responsible for disbursing the Massachusetts portion of the Housatonic River Natural Resource Damages (NRD) recovery (approx. \$7.5 million).

Housatonic River NRD Fund must be used to:

- Implement compensatory restoration projects that address natural resource injuries in the Housatonic watershed, and
- Restore, enhance, protect, conserve, replace and/or acquire the equivalent of natural resources and services that were injured.



Restoration Planning Process

Before funds can be disbursed, a Restoration Plan must be developed. The MA SubCouncil is required to:

1. Evaluate a reasonable number of restoration alternatives, and
2. Explain the rationale behind the choices made regarding the restoration projects that will be implemented.

There are several components to developing the Restoration Plan.



Restoration Plan Development to Date

Restoration Planning Strategy finalized February 2005

Restoration Project Selection Procedure finalized June 2005

Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) will soon be released for public review and comment.

- Draft PEA addresses National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance requirements.
- Referenced in the upcoming solicitation announcement.
- Will assist in the evaluation proposals and help to streamline the disbursement of funds.



What's Next?

DRAFT Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) will *soon* be available for public review and comment:

- On www.ma-housatonicrestoration.org
- In hard copy at public libraries throughout the watershed.
- Public Info Meeting: DRAFT PEA

SOON AFTER IT IS RELEASED....



What's Next?

Solicitation will be posted for the first round of funding.

Widely announced via news releases, public notice, and public service announcements.

The official location of the announcement will be at
www.comm-pass.com.

A direct link will be provided on the MA SubCouncil web site
at: www.ma-housatonicrestoration.org.



Restoration Priority Categories

Restoration projects must address at least one of the following categories:

- **Aquatic Biological Resources and Habitat**
- **Wildlife Resources and Habitat**
- **Recreational Uses**
- **Environmental Education and Outreach**

Applicants will identify the Predominant Restoration Priority Category. Secondary Restoration Priority Categories should be indicated as well.

MA SubCouncil Goal: To implement at least one project per category in each funding round.



Solicitation Rounds

- Solicitation of projects will take place in several rounds over many years.
- At least three solicitation rounds will be held:
- **Round 1:** Scheduled posting in 2005. Allocation of \$3.5 – \$4 million.
- **Round 2:** Scheduled posting in 2007. Allocation of \$1.5 - \$2 million.
- **Round 3:** To be posted after finalization of ROD for Rest of River, estimated in 2009. Allocation of \$1.5 - \$2.5, or balance of NRD funds.



Eligibility: Who, What, Where?

Eligible applicants:

All private entities; local, state, federal and tribal governments; academic institutions; non-profit and commercial organizations.

Eligible projects:

Any project that would directly benefit injured natural resources and/or services in the Housatonic River watershed in Massachusetts.

Eligible project locations:

Projects may be conducted at any location, but they must directly benefit the injured natural resources and/or services in the Massachusetts portion of the Housatonic River watershed.



Two Application Formats

Prospective applicants will have the choice of two application formats:

Project Proposal Form –

to request funding to conduct a project themselves

Project Idea Form –

to present an idea, but not requesting funding to conduct the project themselves.

DRAFT versions of forms provided in Restoration Project Selection Procedure document (released in June 2005)



Key Milestones for Prospective Applicants

Day 1 = Solicitation is posted

Day 30 = Deadline for applicants to submit written questions on the solicitation.

~ **Day 40** = Applicant Conference. Submitted questions are answered. Additional questions may be asked.

~ **Day 50** = Questions and answers posted on the Comm-PASS website.

Day 90 = Deadline for all proposed projects and ideas.



Feb. 2006

Approximate Timeline





Public Evaluation of Projects

Soon after they are received, all applications will be provided for public review. Available online and in an electronic copy at local libraries.

Public comments will be considered simultaneous with the comments of the Review Team assembled by the MA SubCouncil.

This is a *unique method* that allows the MA SubCouncil to:

1. Provide equal access for the evaluation of all applications by all members of the public, and
2. Fully comply with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) while minimizing expenditure of NRD funds on administrative costs.



Overview of Project Evaluation

A **three-stage approach** will be used to evaluate projects and select the preferred alternatives:

1. Apply Threshold Criteria
2. Apply Evaluation Criteria
3. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Compliance



Stage One: Threshold Criteria

- Trustee members of the MA SubCouncil are solely responsible for applying the Threshold Criteria.
- Review focuses on project's consistency with the goals of the MA SubCouncil, federal regulations and other federal, state and local regulations and laws.
- Public Info Meeting: Results of Applying Threshold Criteria.



March 2006





Stage Two: Evaluation Criteria

- Identifies the most appropriate and deserving projects for funding and implementation.
- Two-pronged review process:
 - At least three Review Team members will evaluate and score each Project Application
 - Public review and comment on all applications.



Stage Two: Evaluation Criteria

- Review & Scoring Guidance will be provided to the Review Team. These materials will also be available to the public.
- The guidance will be finalized shortly before the deadline for proposed projects and ideas.
- Largely procedural, but will be helpful to “hone in” on which parts of a proposal should best address each Evaluation Criterion.



Stage Two: Evaluation Criteria, continued

Category	# of criteria	Max. points
Relevance and Applicability	7	85
Technical Merit	6	65
Project Budget	6	60
Socioeconomic Merit	7	75
TOTAL	26	285

NOTE: Scoring for each criterion is a scale of High, Medium, or Low.
Scores for criteria are weighted (i.e., some criteria have more points than others).



Stage Two: Evaluation Process

Scores provided by the Review Team are not the only factor but they will be an important indication of:

- A project's merits according to the Evaluation Criteria, and
- How a project ranks relative to other projects.

The MA SubCouncil seeks public comment on the proposed projects and ideas. Your scores are of interest, but...

- *Do you support or oppose a proposal? Why?*
- *Do you have specific concerns about a proposal? What are they?*
- *Do you think aspects of a proposal could be improved upon? How?*



Stage Two: Evaluation Process

Public Information Meeting – Results of Evaluation Process

Summary of Review Team evaluation will be provided.
Public comments received and comment period closes.

An Evaluation Summary Report will provide additional detail.

The MA SubCouncil will consider public comment at the same time they consider the Review Team evaluations.

Soon thereafter, the MA SubCouncil will select the Proposed Alternatives.



July 2006





Stage Three: NEPA and MEPA Compliance

- All Proposed Alternatives will be evaluated for potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts.
- MA SubCouncil will draw upon information provided in applications.
- After this evaluation, the MA SubCouncil will select the projects to be implemented (i.e., “Preferred Alternatives”).
- DRAFT Restoration Plan will be released describing the Preferred Alternatives. A public review and comment period will take place.
- All public comments will be considered. Restoration Plan will be finalized.





Disbursement of Funds

Timing of funding disbursement will be project-specific, for instance:

- Larger projects may require additional documentation for NEPA and/or MEPA compliance.
- Certain land acquisition projects may require additional documentation, such as submittal of a Draft Conservation Restriction.
- Completion of required contractual documents may take longer for some projects.





Project Schedule – subject to change

2005

- Nov: Release of DRAFT PEA (30-day review period)
Public Info Meeting – DRAFT PEA
Posting of Round I Solicitation (90-day solicitation period)

2006

- Feb: Deadline for Receipt of Proposals and Ideas
All Proposal and Ideas Provided for Public Review
- Mar: MA SubCouncil Applies Threshold Criteria
Release of FINAL PEA
- Apr: Review Team Begins Evaluation of Applications
- June: Review Team Concludes Evaluation of Applications



Project Schedule – subject to change

2006 (continued)

- July: Public Meeting – Results of Evaluation
Public Comments Due on Applications
- Sept: MA SubCouncil Determines Preferred Alternatives
- Oct: Release of DRAFT Restoration Plan (30-day review period)
- Nov: Public Meeting – DRAFT Restoration Plan
- Dec: Release of FINAL Restoration Plan

2007

- Winter: Beginning of Funding Disbursement for Restoration Projects