



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF
WATER

Dr. Joseph Costa, Director
Buzzards Bay Project
2870 Cranberry Highway
E. Wareham, MA 02538

JAN 20 2006

Dear Dr. Costa:

The purpose of this letter is to provide a summary of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 2005 Implementation Review (IR) and to thank you and the Buzzards Bay Project (BBP) staff, as well as your partners, who contributed to the 2005 IR report. You put considerable effort into the implementation review submission and the responses to our follow-up questions. Thank you also for the participation of you and your staff in the meetings and field trips and for arranging for the on-site visit by the IR Team.

The implementation review process, now scheduled every three years, continues to prove to be extremely valuable for determining each National Estuary Program's (NEP) progress and effectiveness and thus, each program's funding eligibility. It has added considerably to EPA Headquarters and Regional staff knowledge of each individual NEP, and will promote sharing of effective and innovative initiatives and approaches across all 28 NEPs as well as with other watershed programs around the country. EPA also is using the implementation review process to assess how the NEPs support the core elements of the Clean Water Act (CWA), and to evaluate the extent and effectiveness of the NEPs' contribution to achieving the goals in EPA's *2003 Strategic Plan*. The NEPs' efforts are particularly relevant to Goal 4: Healthy Communities and Ecosystems, Objective 4.3, Protect and Restore Ecosystems, and Goal 2: Clean and Safe Water, Objective 2.2, Water Quality on a Watershed Basis.

The implementation review featured the participation of a volunteer ex-officio NEP Director, Lisa Beaver, Director of the Charlotte Harbor Estuary Program (CHEP). Lisa's participation provided the EPA team members with an NEP perspective of the perceived strengths and challenges of the program undergoing the review. In addition, Lisa shared ideas from the CHEP that should be useful for the BBP.

Based on the IR Team's findings, we believe that the BBP continues to make significant progress in implementing its Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). We are pleased to report that the BBP "passes" the 2005 Implementation Review and will be eligible for FY 2006, 2007 and 2008 funding authorized by the CWA §320. As provided for in our FY 2006 budget appropriation for the NEP, we are providing \$500,000 for FY 2006.

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Buzzards Bay Project 2005 Implementation Review Findings

Following is a summary of the key findings identified by the reviewers regarding the BBP strengths as well as some recommendations regarding potential areas for improvement. The review comments are intended to applaud the Project's successes and support efforts to further strengthen the BBP. The Project's response to these recommendations will be evaluated in the 2008 Implementation Review cycle.

Strengths

It was clear from the IR submission and the discussions with the BBP and local government staff during the site visit that the BBP is playing a key role in many critical watershed protection and restoration efforts in the Buzzards Bay watershed. The IR Team was particularly impressed by the Project's direct technical assistance to municipalities and land trusts, providing targeted approaches to open space planning and preservation, wetlands protection, and nitrogen management. The Project also showed strong leadership in helping partner organizations identify and apply for grant funds for CCMP implementation.

Highlighted below are several implementation efforts that the IR Team found especially noteworthy.

1. **Technical Assistance:** The IR Team was especially impressed by the BBP's intensive program for providing direct technical assistance. The IR documents and discussions with the BBP stakeholders and partners indicate that the Project has demonstrated its capacity to provide very effective technical assistance, including: (1) excellent use of Geographic Information System mapping information that assists local governments and land trusts with stormwater programs and land use planning, enhancing municipalities' capacity to identify priority habitats and major pollution sources, and enhancing the capacity of partners in CCMP implementation to successfully compete for grants; (2) working to further develop and coordinate the oil spill response capabilities of Buzzards Bay municipalities; and (3) continued support for Low Impact Development (LID) and stormwater projects like those we saw in Marion. The stormwater atlas of all Buzzards Bay discharges has clearly proven useful in identifying shellfish beds that can be opened if Best Management Practices are installed. The success of the projects in Marion, where the harbor master has both managed the no-discharge zone and worked with the BBP staff to address stormwater impacts, is evidenced by the fact that monitoring indicates that the harbor can safely support swimming.
2. **Strong Partnerships:** The Project has taken a targeted, coordinated approach to addressing issues with three different organizations focusing on different aspects of CCMP implementation. The BBP focuses on project specific technical assistance to municipalities and land trusts, the Coalition for Buzzards Bay emphasizes advocacy and public education, and the Buzzards Bay Action Committee is dedicated to programmatic training and capacity building. These

coordinated efforts are clearly getting results, as demonstrated by numerous successful projects and programs on the ground in the study area.

3. **Leveraging Buzzards Bay Project Resources:** The Project has carved a niche for itself in providing critical in-kind technical assistance that effectively allows local entities working to achieve water quality improvements to successfully apply for funding and implement projects that support CCMP recommended actions. EPA commends the BBP for successfully building the capacity of stakeholder and partner entities to implement core CWA and Safe Drinking Water Act programs, so that they qualify to receive funding to realize water quality improvements. Examples of CWA technical assistance provided by the BBP include:
- Phase II stormwater training workshops
 - Helping municipalities comply with Phase II stormwater permit task requirements
 - Supporting the stormwater Collaborative Mapping Program
 - Assisting with securing and implementing Section 319 grants for the towns of Bourne, Dartmouth, and Westport

Progress Made in the Areas Highlighted in the 2002 Implementation Review

The IR Team was impressed with the extent to which the BBP, the Buzzards Bay Action Committee, and the Coalition for Buzzards Bay effectively work together to implement the CCMP. The IR Team believes that as these partnerships evolve and the Project undertakes its review and update of the CCMP, there is an opportunity to re-evaluate BBP, Coalition and Action Committee priorities and work together to publicize CCMP implementation progress and improvements in watershed water quality to the broadest possible audience.

Challenges

EPA believes that the BBP's overall progress in implementation and its many achievements are very impressive. The five challenges identified here build, in part, on themes raised in the 2002 Implementation Review, which we recognize that the BBP continues to address. The BBP's response to these recommendations will be evaluated in the 2008 Implementation Review. The challenges the 2005 IR Team identified are:

- (1) Staff resources available to the Project: BBP uses its small staff to leverage a tremendous amount of environmental protection in the watershed, but with its limited staff, the Program cannot be everywhere all the time. Boosting the number of project staff will increase the BBP capacity to leverage even more environmental results.
- (2) Implementing Total Maximum Daily Loads. When TMDLs for the Buzzards Bay area are completed, BBP should play a very important role in helping communities set strategies for necessary nutrient load reductions.
- (3) Revising the CCMP as an opportunity to re-energize various stakeholders in the watershed: EPA considers CCMPs "living documents" that periodically need to be revisited and updated. Since BBP's CCMP was written over a decade ago, we commend

the Project's recent effort to review and update the CCMP. The update process should give the program an opportunity to reflect on past accomplishments, updated science, and institutional roles, as well as to further develop specific management-oriented actions and stakeholder buy-in. As always, it will be important in this process to communicate successes and the future direction of the Program to the public, the Buzzards Bay Action Committee, the Coalition for Buzzards Bay, and other key stakeholders.

(4) Identifying the most effective way to distribute the excellent information included in the atlases to those who will act on it to implement on-the-ground projects, like the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and Army Corps.

(5) Continuing to ensure adequate coordination between the BBP, Buzzards Bay Action Committee, and the Coalition for Buzzards Bay. These strong partnerships were identified as a strength on Page 2 above, but the review team recognizes that maintaining these strong relationships, and doing the institutional coordination among three organizations with three different purposes is likely to be an ongoing challenge.

Project Recommendations to EPA

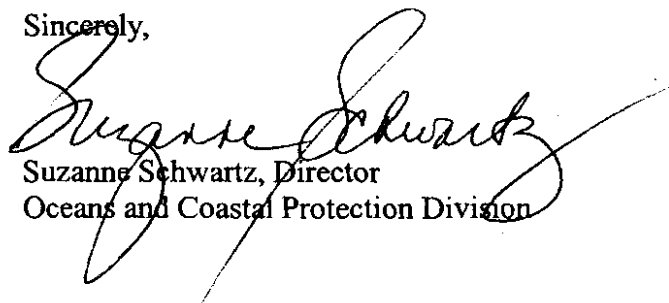
The IR Team and EPA want to thank you for providing EPA with several suggestions for enhancing NEP effectiveness. You recommended to the IR Team members that EPA:

(1) change the IR guidance to encourage or allow a 100% electronic submission;
(2) investigate the possibility of working with the BBP and the National Resources Conservation Service on an agreement that would allow the development of runoff curves for TR-55 for several LID techniques to further encourage their use locally, including green roofs, gravel parking lots, rain gardens, amended soils, and street trees;
and

(3) consider piloting a competitive program that would place interns or fellows in NEPs. We appreciate you making these suggestions, and we will work with you to follow-up on them.

Thank you again for participating in the implementation review process. We welcome any additional thoughts you may have either about the review process itself or about EPA's involvement in the BBP's CCMP implementation. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me or Darrell Brown, Chief, Coastal Management Branch, at telephone number (202) 566-1256.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Schwartz, Director
Oceans and Coastal Protection Division

cc:

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