

Martha's Vineyard Beach Management Plan Working Group

Meeting Summary

Session 3 | December 1, 2022 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM ET

Meeting Objectives

- Hear presentations regarding regulations and priorities conservationists to further inform Working Group conversations
- Discussion of clear areas of convergence and divergence in Working Group

Welcome & Overview

Dorit Price-Levine, Consensus Building Institute, welcomed Working Group (WG) members to the third session of the BMP (Beach Management Plan) WG. She welcomed the members of the public who were in attendance, reviewed posted materials, the meeting agenda, and the agreed upon WG community agreements.

To see the full list of WG members, attendance, and WG staff please see Appendix A.

Presentation: Cynthia Ditbrenner

Dorit introduced Cynthia Ditbrenner, Director, Coasts and Natural Resources, Trustees, to give a presentation discussing spatial and data analysis of Martha's Vineyard Beaches and the impacts of climate change. She touched on topics such as beach erosion and accretion, beach migration, salt marsh loss and migration, and habitat loss. At the end of her presentation she opened the discussion to questions and comments from the WG which focused on the following topics:

- Beach Resilience: When asked by WG members if she had any recommendations for the group as they move forward in this process, Cynthia stressed the importance of protecting the beaches and dune that are currently there. One WG member noted that the Beach Management plan should be looking at incremental changes over time, instead of focusing our efforts now on predictions we have for things that might happen in 2050.
- Norton Point: Members asked questions about Norton Point, specifically what Cynthia thought would happen in the future. While she explained this is not a professional opinion, she stated that Norton Point will likely continue migrating. She explained that the Norton Point dune restoration project completed last year is a five-to-ten-year solution, but would need to be re-nourished if it is to last over the long term.
- Erosion Rates and Sea Level Rise: One member asked what the distinction was between impacts over time on the bay versus the open coast. Cynthia explained that the beach facing coastlines are more dynamic and always changing whereas the bayside is more protected so support

different types of habitat and recreation. The combined impacts of sea level rise and erosion, however, could impact both sides of the barrier beach if it were to breach.

Discussion: Next Steps

After the presentation, Dorit opened the discussion to WG members to talk about the topics they feel need to be addressed in the coming weeks of this project. Members outlined the following topics as priorities:

Bay Side Access

Multiple members agreed that bay side access was important to a lot of community members for a number of reasons including fishing and a safe place for kids to enjoy. This led to an interesting discussion about what "access" meant to the community. While some people felt that walking or bike access by trails was enough, others wanted to clarify that they wanted "practical access" (the ability to get there via car). One member emphasized that access does not have to just mean car access but acknowledged that that could cause limitations for some. Another member thought it was also important to consider frequency of access, and how limiting the type of use or measure of intensity could achieve similar goals.

Paths and Roadways

One WG member suggested that The Trustees investigate making changes to paths before they become untenable but that still provide access to the bay side. There was disagreement on if the pathways should be relocated, as one WG member pointed out that bayside travel allows visitors to spread out and not group together. One member suggested the Trustees consider bayside/beach trails and leave the interior trails alone to build resiliency. Cynthia pointed out that the goal should be to consider which trails would have the least environmental impact, and that beachside trails could be closed for months because of shorebirds. A Trustee member also noted that the interior trails that exist are the ones we want to protect because they are going to be the most resilient. Moving paths incrementally might not be the choice for least impact that allows access. One member noted that the interior trails are what give managers flexibility, and that it leaves room for compromise and ways around Plovers, so they should not be abandoned.

Aesthetics

Some WG members felt it was important to consider the aesthetic impacts of OSV's and crowding on the beach. One member noted that especially during the high season in the summer, the number of people and OSV's ruins the natural beauty.

Options

Dorit then directed the group to consider what possible options we see coming from this discussion. She noted the tradeoffs of wanting to keep up with regulations and not ruin the aesthetics of the beaches, but that the community also wanted to honor the legacy of people's ability for meaningful access. The following options were suggested:

- A shuttle to give people access to the beaches while limiting the number of OSV's.
- Lowering the frequency of people who can access the beaches in a given time period while still meeting everyone's needs.
- Increase staff presence on the beach to properly limit the number of vehicles on the beach and implement agreed upon policy.
- Expand on the idea in the past BMP around "zones", and create practices and policies based on the zones. Zone 2, Zone 7, and Zone 11 were identified as important Zones that need to be discussed.
- Create a phased approach to the plan over the next 5-10 years so community members can anticipate closures.
- Support scientific studies that will inform the recommendations.

WG Caucus

In the Working Group Caucus, members continued discussion on possible options and management strategies. Members discussed putting caps for day-to-day management, implementing weekly passes that require video training on best practices and car inspections, or gate systems that physically limit the number of vehicles allowed. One member argued that bayside access is more important to year-round residents because of bird closures. One member emphasized that the discussion of bird closures is still a pressing topic for the WG. Another member noted that the plan should not only consider zones, but that it should also consider seasonality in how it regulates usage and management. Lastly, a WG member asked if the Trustees has access to information around the number of people or OSV's they get in a season, and if the WG could have access to that information. The Trustees said they would investigate it.

CBI noted that in the beginning stages of this process, they went through 100's of public comments that talked about increased vitiation. The number of people coming to MV has a significant impact on the Beach Management Plan, and The Trustees and WG members should consider the changing conditions going forward.

Close and Next Steps

Dorit thanked everyone for their thoughtful feedback and considerations on the topics discussed in the meeting. She reviewed the following next steps:

- CBI will create a meeting summary and send it to WG members for their comments.
- The Trustees will make a document answering any questions asked by the public.
- All materials will be posted to The Trustees website.

Appendix A: Working Group Members and Attendance

Working Group Members Present

Peter Sliwkowski, MV Beach Access Group

John Piekos, MV Fishing Derby

Liz Olson, BioDiversity Works

Mark Osler, Cape Poge Resident

Martina Thornton, Dukes County Manager

Bill Brine, Partial Landowner, Cape Poge

Ross Kessler, MA Division of Marine Fisheries

Chris Kennedy, Consultant

Nina Coleman, Town of Barnstable

Ray Williams, Vice President, Tribal Council

Megan Landeck, Chappaquiddick Resident and Chappaquiddick Island Association

Rachel Self, DCPC Representative

Darci Schofield, The Trustees

Elizabeth McDonough, The Trustees

Russell Hopping, The Trustees

Working Group Staff

Dorit Price-Levine, Consensus Building Institute

Nate Lash, Consensus Building Institute

Simenesh Semine, Consensus Building Institute