

In-Person Stormwater Workshop Q&A

Morning session

Q1: How can we access the WPS toolkit?

Answer:

Sarah explains that the toolkit is still in draft form and has not yet been published online. However, it will likely be available on the SNEP website once finalized, expected around November.

Q2: How does WPS account for fire department requirements like cul-de-sacs?

Answer:

The presenters explain that they did not directly consult fire departments, but they recognize this as a common challenge. They note that there are alternative designs, such as smaller turnaround areas or permeable surfaces, that can meet fire department needs while reducing impervious coverage. If traditional cul-de-sacs are required, other stormwater strategies can be used to offset their impact.

Q3: How are municipalities expected to actually adopt and enforce WPS?

Answer:

The presenters emphasize that adoption must begin with regulation. They suggest that pilot communities could help test and refine implementation. While the toolkit provides guidance, it is not a complete solution, and municipalities will need to adapt it to their specific contexts.

Q4: Why are phosphorus levels still increasing despite stormwater improvements?

Answer:

The response explains that new development continues to add impervious surfaces, which increases pollution. Additionally, earlier mapping methods underestimated impervious areas, meaning the problem is larger than previously understood. Even with treatment systems, not all pollution is removed, leading to accumulation over time.

Q5: Can regulations be adjusted based on local conditions?

Answer:

Yes. The speakers explain that future regulations should be flexible and responsive to local conditions. They also emphasize that regulations must evolve to address climate change, not just water quality.

Q6: How should communities deal with high groundwater conditions?

Answer:

The presenters explain that in these cases, non-infiltration BMPs should be used, focusing on pollutant removal rather than infiltration. They also suggest that some existing regulations may be overly restrictive and should be reconsidered when appropriate.

Q7: How does WPS fit within existing regulatory frameworks?

Answer:

The presenters explain that WPS was designed with New England in mind and aligns with emerging standards like the 1-inch retention requirement. It is not meant to replace existing regulations but to complement them. They also note that designers should not be overly constrained by outdated standards when they do not apply.

Q8: Why remove curbs, and when are they still necessary?

Answer:

Removing curbs allows water to flow into soil and improves infiltration. However, curbs may still be necessary in certain situations due to space constraints, plowing requirements, or drainage design. In urban areas, they are often used to direct water into underground systems.

Afternoon session Q&A

Question 1: Is a regional stormwater utility feasible in Massachusetts given strong municipal independence?

Answer:

The speaker explains that while Massachusetts has a strong tradition of local control, regional approaches are still possible. As funding needs increase and infrastructure challenges grow, municipalities may become more open to collaboration. She emphasizes that large-scale problems, such as flooding and climate change, may require solutions that go beyond individual towns.

Question 2: Could existing watershed organizations help facilitate regional collaboration?

Answer:

Yes. The speaker notes that watershed organizations can serve as a platform for collaboration. They can bring municipalities together, facilitate communication, and help coordinate efforts without necessarily controlling them.

Question 3: How are costs handled when municipalities are in different watershed areas?

Answer:

The speaker explains that fees can be structured differently depending on location. For example, properties within a watershed may pay higher fees if they contribute more directly to pollution. This allows funding to better reflect environmental impact.

Question 4: What drives collaboration more, regulation or funding?

Answer:

The discussion suggests that both play a role. Regulation can push municipalities to act, while funding opportunities can incentivize collaboration. In many cases, access to funding is a key driver of regional cooperation.

Question 5: How do you fairly distribute costs for regional projects?

Answer:

The speaker acknowledges that this is one of the most difficult challenges. Projects may benefit some communities more than others, making it hard to determine fair cost-sharing. Centralized models can help address this issue, but in decentralized systems it remains complex.