



The Rhode Island Rivers Council  
c/o RI Water Resources Board  
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DRAFT FOR REVIEW Minutes of RIRC Meeting  
Wednesday, April 10, 2019 Meeting – 4 pm  
DEM Office of Water Resources – Conference Room 280C  
235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI

**ATTENDANCE:**

**A. Members Present:**

Veronica Berounsky, Chair  
Alicia Eichinger, Vice Chair  
Walter Galloway  
Eugenia Marks  
Ernie Panciera

**B. Guests in Attendance:**

Keith Gonsalves, Ten Mile River Watershed Council  
Douglas Stephens, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council  
Mike Gerel, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program  
Richard Grant, Narrow River Preservation Association  
Jenny Paquet, RIDEM

Call to Order: Dr. Berounsky called the meeting to order at 4:12 pm

It was noted that there is no quorum.

Review and Approval of March 13, 2019 meeting minutes: A quorum was not present. No vote taken.

Introductions: All attending board members and guests introduced themselves.

Guest Speaker: Mike Gerel, new Program Director at the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program – NEIWPC. Topic: “The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program Moving Forward.”

Mr. Gerel talked about his previous experiences (25 years) and observations with other estuary programs (mostly in Oregon and California). He noted he is interested in restoration work. He talked a bit about himself and reasons for coming to New England. He discussed the mission of the NBEP and his connection with it, including the aspect of collaboration. He noted he wants to move NBEP forward and talked about his observations of the Narragansett Bay watershed and its breadth. He discussed that he wants to move forward on partnership building, plan writing, and technical assistance for on-the-ground projects. He noted he’s been hearing organizations say they need funding, but they are really saying that they need to know what they need the money for and what to do. He wants to help people decide better what they need. He explained that NBEP will continue to do outreach, which in the past

was very technical, and that he wants to make sure it is actionable and understandable and that he wants NBEP to be a resource. He noted the questions to ask to find out what NBEP can do are:

- What resources do you most need (more than money)?
- How has NBEP been supportive – what works and what doesn't work?
- How can NBEP help moving forward?

Mr. Gerel noted that he will be listening to these over the next year to find out how NBEP can be of assistance, and how to find a niche and provide what others are not providing. He noted the 4 things that NBEP does are: collaborative bringing people together, GIS, share information with people, and implementation.

Mr. Gerel noted NBEP also needs to do a new Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), which is required by EPA every 10 years. He talked about how he plans to go about doing it.

The Board members then asked questions.

Ms. Marks noted her concerns of freshwater flow and that no one is looking at how a watershed can support a large subdivision with private wells and issues of managing water by watershed. She asked about advocating for a system like the idea of watershed management by watershed and how NBEP can provide data to the watershed councils that can help at the municipal level to make decisions on the capacity of an aquifer to support withdrawals. Mr. Gerel discussed differences in laws and the way things are managed east vs. west of the Mississippi. He noted that issues of water quantity are understudied.

Mr. Galloway discussed that RI used to have a watershed approach steering committee and coordinating council and noted that this group had looked at the issue of water withdrawals. He also discussed the history of the CCMPs.

Mr. Gerel discussed the importance of convening people with competing interests and issues and also the need to prioritize projects.

Mr. Stephens asked if NBEP is a subdivision of EPA. Mr. Gerel explained that they are not, and that they are fiscally hosted by NEIWPCC and they are an independent non-profit that is funded with an appropriation from EPA. He noted that they should bring in additional funding sources due to the uncertainty and restrictions with federal funding. He also noted that the NBEP is 1 of 27 Estuary Programs with a mission to restore and protect.

Mr. Gerel asked for people to send him any ideas and to contact him if they have any questions. He noted he will be coming back to the RIRC and the watershed councils for input on the CCMP.

#### Reports by RIRC Representatives on State Committees:

**Narragansett Bay Estuary Program:** As reported by Walt Galloway:

Mike Gerel just gave a good report. Eviy Monroy has left NBEP and is now in Massachusetts. It was noted that the position has been posted.

**State Guide Plan Advisory Committee (Outdoor Recreation):** Mr. Gonsalves was not present to report.

**Department of Environmental Management Watershed Section.** Mr. Ernie Panciera reported that the Freshwater Wetland Rules will be put to the public this summer. He noted that there will be workshops and outreach and then public comment.

**Bays, Rivers & Watersheds Coordination Team (BRWCT) Funds:** Dr. Berounsky noted that there are still outstanding reports.

**Water Resources Board:** Ms. Eugenia Marks reported that she is concerned about what is happening to the Water Resources Board. She explained that there is talk of not funding it and of creating a new agency. She urged people to contact their Senators on this, as this is a Senate Commission. She discussed the surcharges that get scooped into General Fund and how the staff of WRB has dwindled over the years. She noted that if they got the surcharge funds they could have adequate staff, and that it wouldn't make sense to create a new agency. It was noted that this is political and has to do with political will. She noted that the Big River Reservoir Plan has been brought up within the past two weeks and that the Big River Management Area is being put under Capital Management.

#### Officer Reports:

**Financial Report.** Ms. Eichinger reported that after reimbursement to Eugenia Marks and herself of some expenses for the annual Rivers Council meeting, \$2,461.17 is the current balance.

**President's Report.** Chairwoman Berounsky announced that Richard Grant of Narrow River Preservation Association is the recipient of the Environmental Law Institute's National Wetlands Award for 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Lifetime Achievement. It was noted that this is a very prestigious award and that it has only been given out 3 times in the past 30 years. Congratulations to Richard (and the NRPA)! (President's report continues later in the meeting)

#### Reports of Activities from Designated Local Watershed Councils:

Reports were given at the meeting by the following:

**Narrow River Preservation Association** – Report presented by Richard Grant. Written report submitted by Alison Kates.

#### *Richard Grant to be Awarded Lifetime Achievement Award by Environmental Law Institute*

As part of the 2019 National Wetlands Awards, the Environmental Law Institute will award Richard Grant, NRPA President, with their 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Lifetime Achievement Award. Their Lifetime Achievement award has only been given twice before.

Richard has served on the board of directors of NRPA since 1972 and has been President for the last 22 years. Under his leadership, NRPA has grown in every way, developing a water monitoring program, engaging the public through education programs and influencing development and preservation in the Narrow River watershed.

Richard will be presented his award at the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual National Wetlands Awards on Tuesday, May 7, 2019 at the US Botanical Garden in Washington, DC. He will be joined by his wife, two adult children and their families as well as colleague and NRPA Vice President Veronica Berounsky.

### *NRPA 2019 Science Fair Awards*

NRPA recently presented certificates to the winners of the 2019 NRPA Science Fair Awards.

At South Kingstown High School, Christopher and Connor Daly-LaBelle won the award for their science fair project "Water Quality".

Renee Fontaine won the award for North Kingstown High School for her project "pH Effects on Hatching Rates of Brine Shrimp".

All three students presented their projects at NRPA's March 5, 2019 board meeting, where they were presented with certificates from NRPA.

### *ArcGIS of Narrow River Watershed*

NRPA Board Member Barry Devine has been collaborating with the Geosciences Department at the University of Rhode Island on developing a GIS map of the Narrow River Watershed. The map already includes more than 50 data layers, including imagery, town parcel maps, elevation data, and wetlands classifications. More data layers are in development, including River Watch data.

NRPA will use the GIS system to do research internally and plans to make a simple version of the GIS available to the general public on our website.

### *2019 NRPA Events*

All are welcome to attend NRPA's 2019 events.

April 28, Sunday (rain date Sunday, May 3) – Narrow River Cleanup Day, noon at various sites

May 18, Saturday - 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Narrow River Road Race, 10K run, 5K run and 5K walk

June 15, Saturday – What Lives in the River, 9am – 1:30pm, Middlebridge Preserve

June 22, Saturday – 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Narrow River Turnaround Swim

July 19, Friday - 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Pettaquamscutt Paddle (rain date Saturday, July 20)

August 3, Saturday – Art on the River, 9-11am, Middlebridge Preserve

September 14, Saturday – 'Gansett Days What Lives in the River, 9-11am, Middlebridge Preserve

September 27 & 28, Friday evening and Saturday all day – Kayak Fishing Challenge on Narrow River

October 3, Thursday - NRPA's 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, 7:00pm, URI GSO Bay Campus Auditorium

[www.narrowriver.org](http://www.narrowriver.org)

**Salt Ponds Coalition** –Written report submitted, and report presented by Alicia Eichinger.

SPC has joined forces with members from the Harbor Island Improvement Association and the Town of Narragansett to plan for improvements along the Foddering Farm Causeway. We applied for one grant, and didn't get funding. We applied for the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program SNEP funds as well, and hope that we move onto the second round of the grant.

SPC members are already starting to gear up for this year's water quality sampling. We have a schedule in place and most of our volunteers as well. We plan to have our training day in April.

SPC has begun planning for its summer activities – including dates for safaris and kayak trips. We have also begun to plan our summer fundraiser which will be held at the Matunuck Community Association Fieldhouse this year.

We are trying to take on as many of the Frosty Drew Nature Center school field trips as we can this year. They stopped doing their field programming as of 2019.

We are partnering with the Town of Charlestown and applying for more EPA grant money to do additional septic system upgrades and study.

[www.saltpondscoalition.org](http://www.saltpondscoalition.org)

**Ten Mile River Watershed Council** – Report given by Keith Gonsalves. No written report submitted.

<http://www.tenmileriver.net/>

**Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council** – Report given by Doug Stephens

*Greenway Maintenance & River Rangers*

We are now hiring two new rangers for the season.

*Ranger Enterprise Program*

With the help of a grant from Councilwoman Sabina Matos, we purchased landscaping equipment from ONE Neighborhood Builders of their unused equipment. We will use this equipment in any and all non-RIDOT jobs for the Rangers. Our purchase includes blowers, mowers, spreaders, a water tank and a trailer.

*Clean Days on the Greenway*

Our Downtown Clean Day on April 22<sup>nd</sup> has over 200 people registered. Our Riverside Park Clean Day on Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup> has 25 registered. We are planning projects and will be working both on land and in the water.

*Organization Updates:*

We have hired Chuck Gordon, New Kensington Group, to coach us in all aspects of a new development program. We have also hired Tony Simon, of Simon Consulting Services, to engage with local leaders and stakeholders to help us find replacement funding for RIDOT. This includes government relations, communications and strategy.

*Water Quality/River Monitoring:*

*Centredale Superfund:* Cleanup has begun!

*Water Quality and Electrofishing Monitoring:* John Hake has started our fish counting, which will continue until the end of May. We are looking for volunteers to fill about 14 remaining spots.

We plan to continue monitoring water quality at 4 locations on the river. All volunteers confirmed through watershed watch.

*Green Infrastructure:*

We are developing projects quickly now with RIDOT. Five exciting green infrastructure projects will be

constructed this year. Right now, we have agreements in place to design and install Citizens Bank, Manton Avenue, and Greystone Mill Social Club. Construction will begin in April or May for the Pleasant Valley Stream project, and Dicenzo has been selected to construct tree filters and scuppers.

*Education Programs:*

*Environmental Leaders:*

Our 31 high school students from the MET are now transitioning into the Teach One portion of the class and will complete our projects. Projects include making a more handicap accessible garden at Pleasant View Elementary, painting storm drains murals at Riverside Park, creating an educational sign of Monarch butterflies at Riverside Park, running a clean day, facilitating educational lessons on recycling / pollution / GMO's and more.

*River Adventures:*

Spring session will begin April 23<sup>rd</sup>. We are planning to kayak, bike, and explore the local parks.

*Fish in the Classroom:*

Fish in the Classroom lessons have been running great at both D'Abate and Paul Cuffee Lower Elementary. 12 classes and approximately 294 kids are participating in the program this year. WRWC will be running an additional program in the Spring at Whelan Elementary in North Providence through Kids Klub Inc.

Our Fish Release Celebration for D'Abate Elementary will be taking place on June 6<sup>th</sup>, with a rain date of June 12<sup>th</sup>. Our Fish Release Celebration for Paul Cuffee will be taking place one June 10<sup>th</sup>, with a rain date of June 13<sup>th</sup>.

*Trash Skimmer Outreach:*

WRWC is the educational partner for the Marina Trash Skimmer project. Our first major educational event at the skimmer will be on April 16<sup>th</sup> with Kids Klub. We will be planning one educational trip to the skimmer per month and one community outreach trip to the skimmer per month.

*Red Shed Bike Shop:*

Youth bike educational program will start up in April and continue until Summer Bike Camp. We are planning to work with the Manton Avenue Project, YWCA, Henry Winters School, Agnes Little School, River Adventurers Afterschool Program and the Meeting Street School.

Girl's bike camp will take place April 16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> from 9-1 at Riverside Park. The camp is already completely full. Summer Bike Camp registration is live on our website.

*Upcoming Events:*

*Clean Day on the Greenway Kickoff –Monday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> Downtown and Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, Riverside Park!*

<http://www.wpwa.org/>

**Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone** – No written report submitted.

[www.blackstoneriver.org/blackstone/](http://www.blackstoneriver.org/blackstone/)

**Buckeye Brook Coalition** – Written report submitted by Michael Zarum

For this report, the Buckeye Brook Coalition is glad to report that we have begun to implement our activities for calendar year 2019.

BBC held its 2019 Annual Meeting at the Warwick Public Library on March 4, 2019. The Buckeye Brook Coalition Annual meeting went very well. Michael Zarum, president and chair, provided opening remarks and a summary of what BBC has accomplished over the previous year and what the organization plans to do for the upcoming year. The business part of the meeting included review of BBC's 2018 annual financial report, a discussion and promotion of membership for those who want to join and support the Buckeye Brook Coalition, its mission and goals. That was followed by the annual election of officers. The slate of officers for the 2019 election, included Michael Zarum for President and William P. Aldrich for Secretary, for a two year term beginning April 1, 2019. The slate of officers was approved by written ballot with no votes to not approve the slate of officers.

Following the election of officers, there was an announcement of volunteer activities for BBC's upcoming Earth Day Clean Up, there were speakers from URI Watershed Watch and RI DEM's Fish & Wildlife Division. BBC announced 2019 volunteer opportunities for water quality monitors needed for 3 additional sites in the watershed, and volunteer opportunities for our continued cooperative participation in the Annual River Herring Fish Count, which BBC has done with RIDEM Fish & Wildlife since 2003.

Paul Earnshaw, our Vice President, talked about our annual Earth Day Cleanup plans to add additional sites for this year. Volunteer sign-up sheets were made available for recruitment. Then it was on to our guest speaker, John Torgan, Director of the Nature Conservatory in RI, who spoke about rivers restoration and fisheries as well as some local projects in Rhode Island.

Since the BBC Annual Meeting, there has been follow-up with URI WW, RIDEM Fish & Wildlife, and our Earth Day Clean Up partners to ensure another successful year of activities.

It is also noted herein that a local resident, who previously verbally threatened to take control and designation away and have such granted to himself, and had stated "watch what I am going to do to you" and stated that he wanted to get BBC grant monies for his own use, and that he would take action to deride BBC and supplant designation of the Buckeye Brook Coalition, which has successfully existed with several re-designations for approximately 15 years due to BBC's being an experienced and successful local council under RIGL 46-28-8, we would like RIRC members to be aware that the person considered to be hostile and antagonistic continues to act in a manner that appears to intentionally defame myself and the BBC, for their personal gain, by issuing false and misleading statements to his blind carbon copy distribution list. BBC would like RIRC members to be aware of this situation, and the false claims this person is making, and asks that the RIRC seek the truth regarding such activities, including the referenced blind carbon copy Emails which contain non-factual statements. That person's blind carbon copy Email distributions contain false and misleading statements, which the BBC has evidence to the contrary and our position can be verified with factual evidence recorded at said annual meeting. For now, we have been professionally advised on measures to deal with hostile people, and are implementing such measures. Thank you for understanding.

BBC recently began to receive water quality test results obtained using our 2017 grant monies, which were used to obtain data for a section of the watershed that was restored as part of compensatory mitigation for large volumes of fill that were placed adjacent the southeast end of the airport's crosswind runway. The test point locations were chosen with BBC coordinating and including input from the City of Warwick and the RIDEM's TMDL staff, with the goal to fill-in data gaps from other areas that have been tested in the watershed over the years. The results are now being tabulated into comparative tables so that pollutant levels in the headwaters section of the watershed, can be compared to areas further downstream. The results were better than results from Warwick Pond and from areas downstream. Once the data is tabulated, it will be shared with the City of Warwick, with RIDEM TMDL staff, and the

public. We are hopeful that the results will be considered for determining stipulations in a now under-review and pending point source discharge permit application from RIAC. BBC will continue advocating for such programs that can measurably show water quality management improvements in the watershed.

BBC has requested legislation to appropriately ensure long term management of invasive vegetation that has interfered with stream navigation, river herring migration, existing habitat, and hydrology including observed higher than average water surface levels. The City of Warwick has proposed a temporary short-term solution, which in the opinions of BBC advisors, the City of Warwick proposed solution is an incomplete solution, in that it lacks sufficient multi-year scope and funding needed for a sustainable restoration.

While long term maintenance scope needed for a successful program is mentioned in their proposal, there is no assurance or guarantee that it will take place, in fact there are no contractual provisions for sufficient scope to successfully complete a needed restoration program, that would address all functions and values lost, such as lost recreational value, lost habitat, damage to the River Herring migration run and fish habitat, and lacks sufficiently restoring the stream to its stream bank limits that existed prior to the invasive vegetation infiltration. It is also noted that, in the opinions of BBC, there is a public law which specifically addresses responsible parties to a remedy, and that public law is not being followed by appropriate parties.

BBC continues to advocate for a sustainable solution to restoring sections of Buckeye Brook that have been physically degraded by invasive vegetation, and has requested that all proposed scopes of work have absolute commitments which include full integration of complete scope, schedule, budget, funding and multi-year management by the land owner of record, which at the present time, records appear to indicate is the State of Rhode Island.

An Application to Alter has been filed by the City of Warwick, (they do not have standing to be an applicant) and we anticipate that that RIDEM will shortly deem that application complete and follow by announcing an official comment period. It is noted that should RIDEM approve said application and issue a related permit, that would not be an endorsement that the proposed scope of work would succeed or be sustainable toward the goals of maintaining the River Herring Run, Recreational Values, Sustainable and Adequate Stream Flow, or fully restoring lost functions and values in the watershed due to invasive vegetation. BBC proposed a full multi-year sustainable and peer reviewed program in 2016, however the City of Warwick, in BBC and other's opinions, has no sustainable plan in place, nor in BBC's opinion, is such work the responsibility of the City of Warwick at this time, and again we direct to the intent of existing public laws for due diligence review.

Beyond the above, today being March 13, 2019, and the RIRC Annual Meeting at the RI State House, we are pleased to participate and have informational materials, photos, and maps on display in the Rhode Island State House Rotunda for discussion with the public and General Assembly members, who we thank for continued support of the RI Rivers Council and RI State Designated Local Watershed Councils in Rhode Island.

<http://www.buckeyebrook.org/>

**Friends of the Moshassuck**- No written report submitted.

[www.themoshassuck.org](http://www.themoshassuck.org)

**Kickemuit River Council** – No written report submitted.

Robin Hagar Aguiar wrote that there was no new news to report.  
<http://www.kickemuitriver.org/>

**Pawtuxet River Authority and Watershed Council** – No written report submitted.  
Chuck Horbert reported that they are still working on the memorial for Guy Lefebvre.  
<http://www.pawtuxet.org/>

**Ten Mile River Watershed Council** - No written report submitted.  
<http://www.tenmileriver.net/>

**Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association** – report submitted and presented by Kassi Archambault:  
*Wild and Scenic Rivers*  
Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers was signed into law 3/12. On Monday 4/8, The Stewardship Council and Congressional delegation, including Sen Reed, Sen Whitehouse, Rep Langevin and Rep Courtney, hosted a Media Event aka Wild and Scenic Rivers Celebration. Over 130 partners, members and volunteers RSVP'd, filling the outdoor space.

#### *Recreation*

Kayak Trip Leading Course has 2 spots available at \$225 each.  
Friday, May 17, 2019 – Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup> at WPWA in Hope Valley  
For details, visit [wpwa.org](http://wpwa.org)  
To register, contact Kassi, [kassi@wpwa.org](mailto:kassi@wpwa.org)  
<http://www.wpwa.org/>

Committee/Legislation Reports: No reports provided.

#### Other Business:

- Discussion of status of nominees for open positions on the RIRC. 2 nominees are waiting for Senate confirmation. Once these positions are filled there will still be 2 open positions.
- Chairwoman Berounsky mentioned that she and Ernie have contacted the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission about the Planning Commission being the designated entity for an Aquidneck Island Watershed Council. The Planning Commission is very interested and indicated that they are the appropriate entity to represent Aquidneck Island.

#### Chair's Report:

- Recap of the Annual Meeting at the State House last month. It was noted that the new RIRC booklet was provided to all of the legislators.
- Chairwoman Berounsky suggested that in order to help increase awareness of the RIRC that the Watershed Councils mention their affiliation with the RIRC whenever practicable in publications and other outreach/communication.
- Thank you to Representatives McEntee and Craven for a new \$2000 legislative grant to the RIRC. Chairwoman Berounsky suggested that these funds be used to update the RIRC webpage. There

were no objections. Work must be completed by the end of 2019.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Mr. Galloway. No need to second since there was no quorum.  
Meeting adjourned at 6:10.