



The Rhode Island Rivers Council
c/o RI Water Resources Board
One Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908
www.ririvers.org
info@ririvers.org



DRAFT FOR REVIEW- Minutes of RIRC Meeting
Wednesday, May 9, 2018, 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
Paul Gonsalves
Eugenia Marks
Jenny Paquet, for Ernie Panciera of RIDEM Water Resources
Elise Torello

B. Guests in Attendance:

Richard Grant, Narrow River Preservation Association
Keith Gonsalves, Ten Mile River Watershed Council
Sally Johnson
Eivy Monroy, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program
Douglas Stevens, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council

Call to Order: Chair Veronica Berounsky called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. and asked for introductions.

Review and Approval of April 4, 2018 Annual Meeting minutes: Motion made to approve the minutes, seconded. Motion passed unanimously

Guest Speaker: Patrick McGee, Fisheries Biologist at RIDEM-Division of Fish & Wildlife, West Kingston, RI, speaking on “Restoring Migratory Fish to Rhode Island Rivers”.

Mr. McGee spoke about DEM’s efforts to restore American shad, river herring, and American eel populations in Rhode Island. He began by explaining the difference between anadromous and catadromous fish and outlining the reasons for population declines (habitat loss/degradation, dams/blockages in rivers, overharvest of fish, predation, and disease). He showed a chart depicting the dramatic population decline in migratory fish populations in the early 2000’s, and the fluctuations that have occurred since.

Mr. McGee then described restorations efforts involving DEM’s many partners. These efforts include fish stocking, monitoring migration runs, maintaining and adjusting fishways, performing

stock assessments, and harvest regulations (moratoria):

- Monitoring: DEM monitors returning adult herring and shad in the spring directly and also using volunteer fish counters. In the summer and fall, juveniles are monitored returning to the sea. This monitoring fulfills Federal aid requirements.
- Restoration: Efforts involve partners including NGOs, government, and private groups. These efforts include: dam removal (eg, White Rock dam on the Pawcatuck); fishways (eg, Potter Hill on the Pawcatuck); rock ramps (eg, Bradford on the Pawcatuck); Horseshoe Fall eelway and fishway on the Pawcatuck; additional fishways (eg, Ten Mile River, Woonasquatucket River, Factory Pond/Brook, Saugatucket River)
- Stocking brood stock: Adult river herring are brought in from out of state to supplement brood stocks. Juveniles then imprint to their home river and return in 3-4 years.
- American shad: DEM is continuing US Fish and Wildlife Service's fry program. Over 16 million fry have been stocked in RI.
- US Fish and Wildlife Service monitoring grant: Pawcatuck River fish runs are monitored using radio telemetry, plus wetland vegetation and river morphology are monitored.
- American eel: Annual glass eel surveys are performed in the Narrow and Annaquatucket Rivers, plus data gathering at other sites (Pawcatuck, Hunt, Woonasquatucket). Eels don't imprint and return to a home river so they are harder to assess at a specific site—there are good years and bad years at a site, but that doesn't necessarily mean it was a bad eel year overall. Eels are being affected by a Japanese parasite that destroys the swim bladder and causes mortality on the way to the spawning grounds in the Sargasso Sea.

Results:

Herring: Should spawn 3-4 times in their lives, but sampling is showing about 90% of spawners are first-time.

Shad: More difficult to restore, as they like larger rivers, there are few of them to start with, and it's harder to get fry from out of state. DEM is targeting the Pawcatuck for restoration.

Herring and shad are present in the Blackstone, but restoration there would be a massive project. A question and answer session ensued.

Reports by RIRC Representatives on State Committees:

Narragansett Bay Estuarine Program: As reported by Eivy Monroy:

There has been no director since October, and the person hired rescinded their acceptance of the position. A new job description goes out next week.

Results from the Status and Trends report are getting more scientific study, and they are moving forward with indicators. They are presenting the report at conferences and are very well received.

They are working with partners for SNEP proposals. A proposal with Save the Bay in Hundred Acre Cove has moved to the final stage grant round.

They are looking at how to work with RIRC on projects with watershed partners.

State Guide Plan Recreation Committee: As reported by Paul Gonsalves:

They met with the contractor and working group in DEM's office. The 12 member advisory

committee will meet next month. The project should be a little over a year from start to finish.

Water Resources Board: As reported by Ms. Eugenia Marks:

The WRB staff, Acting General Manager Kathleen Crawley and Supervising Civil Engineer Robert Bailey, have moved to offices in Division of Public Utilities and Carriers at [89 Jefferson Blvd., Warwick, RI 02888](#).

There have been four meetings with the Senate Commission on Water Resources looking at the functioning of the Water Resources Board – to continue as an independent agency or be absorbed into the DPUC? The Board has gone from nine staff to two (but have three FTEs). Ms. Marks' interest in the Commission is to assure that the RI Rivers Council, which is a ward of the WRB, be accorded adequate support for its work that could help to protect watersheds of mutual interest to WRB. She says DPUC and staff seem open to leaving RIRC as part of the WRB.

A discussion ensued about RIRC designated watershed councils not being notified by towns about issues affecting the watersheds. Watershed councils are supposed to provide assessor's sized maps to the towns for use in notification, so that towns know which projects should trigger notification. It was discussed who is responsible for notification and what mechanisms could be used to facilitate such. It was decided that this is a topic which requires much more discussion.

Bays, Rivers & Watersheds Coordination Team (BRWCT) Funds as reported by Dr. Berounsky: This is done, just waiting to see reports from the Watershed Councils on their sampling last season. Reports are due in June.

Officer Reports, Financial Report, Committee Reports:

Ms. Torello provided the Financial Report. There were multiple reimbursements for refreshments for the annual meeting. Also, there were expenditures from the grant for the tri-fold display and 1,000 brochures. The current balance is \$3,907.38.

Written Reports of Activities Received from Designated Watershed Councils:

-Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association – written report submitted and presented by Elise Torello

Trail Advisory Committee Grant for Urban Children's Paddles

WPWA is once again grateful to have received a grant from the RI Trail Advisory Committee to continue offering kayak paddling programs on the Wood River for urban children. Planning is currently in the works—there are at least five programs booked so far. WPWA is also eternally grateful to our dedicated volunteers, who make these programs possible.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Study and Flood Resiliency and Management Plan

The draft of the Stewardship Plan is complete and has been sent off to the towns in the watershed for review. A rollout event was held Monday 5/7 to present the report to the project's many partners, including RI's entire congressional delegation in Washington, D.C. The event was very

well publicized and attended and went extremely well. The next step is to get an amendment to the Wild and Scenic Rivers law passed and signed this fall.

Water Quality Monitoring

We retrieved all ten conductivity recorders from ten sites in the watershed, but unfortunately three were no longer functioning. We will try to have the data retrieved by Hobo, who makes the meters. In addition, our water quality monitoring season started late the week of 5/1.

River Paddling Safety

WPWA is in the process of clearing blowdowns from the Wood and Pawcatuck Rivers thanks to a grant from the RI Trail Advisory Committee. WPWA is committed to keeping the rivers safe from hazardous portages while preserving the ecological value of fallen trees and their important role in encouraging the meandering of rivers.

Annual Meeting

WPWA's annual meeting will be held at the Malted Barley in Westerly on Thursday May 17th at 6 PM. All are welcome!

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

-Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council – written report submitted by Kassi Archambault, presented by Doug Stevens

Greenway Maintenance & River Rangers

The 2018 spring Ranger team is in full swing. The team includes 1 Greenway Manager, 2 seniors and 2 juniors. They engaged in spring training. We plan to recruit and hire temporary workers for the summer.

Clean Days on the Greenway Series -2018 Clean Days Series is underway!

Mark your calendars and join us!

Saturday, May 12 – Cricket Field Clean Day – 10a-2p

Friday May 18 – San Souci Clean Day – 12p-4p

Saturday May 19 – Olneyville Shines – 10a-2p

Water Quality/River Monitoring:

Herring Return Count: Thanks to John Hake and the returning river herring, spring fish counters have been trained and counting fish as they return to the Woony. Numbers of fish have been coming in steadily. Counting will be over in the end of May, then the state will take data and provide actual count. We are hopeful that this year we will see increased numbers of herring returning to the river thanks to state stocking that took place four years prior.

Water Quality Monitoring: Doug Stephens is still coordinating this project and six people are volunteering this year! Many thanks! They did first sampling last Saturday the 5th, including a full sample of both DO and the samples brought down to URI. There are 4 locations along the Woonasquatucket, starting in Smithfield down to Waterplace Park.

Green Infrastructure:

Green Infrastructure Tour of Olneyville this Friday, May 18th at 9am at Riverside Park.

Along with a variety of partners, WRWC has been implementing nature-based solutions for stormwater management in the Olneyville neighborhood. To showcase the variety of green

infrastructure practices, the WRWC has created a walking tour, complete with explanatory signs, that showcases a green roof, rain gardens and bioswales at Riverside Park and the adjacent neighborhood. This tour will be led by WRWC Executive Director Alicia Lehrer, supported by a several other members of the Green Infrastructure Coalition.

Education Programs:

Fish in the Classroom:

2 Education staff maintain three tanks in two schools. By June the educators will teach 5 – 9 lessons to 14 classes, totaling about 310 elementary school children. The goal is to sustain this and grow it.

River Adventurers

2 Education staff engage 8-13 middle school youth two times a week for six weeks this spring. They walk the parks and greenway and even will paddle and bike ride.

Environmental Leaders:

1 WRWC Educator has engaged 30 high school youth this school year in learning, researching and finally teaching others about a project that particularly interests them. Currently, youth are planning their own presentations in places as diverse as their own school, a kindergarten, an elementary school and others.

Red Shed:

Summer Bike Camp registration is open! Sessions start June 25th and run to mid-August. Camp runs Monday-Friday from 9am-3pm and is held in Riverside Park at the Red Shed Bike Shop, 50 Aleppo St, Providence, RI 02909. Cost is \$250 per week; scholarships are available for youth in need.

Campers can bring their own bikes or use one of ours during camp. Camp fee includes a new helmet and bike lock.

Every week includes:

- Scenic group rides on the Woony Bike Path
- Bike Mechanics lessons
- Smart Cycling instruction
- Environmental education and stewardship
- River paddles with skilled instructors

EVENTS

ALL EVENTS LISTED at <http://wrwc.org/events.php>

Upcoming:

- a. Green Infrastructure Tour – Riverside Park, Friday, May 18th, 2018, 9am
- b. Clean Days on the Greenway – Cricket Field, Saturday, May 12th , 2018, 10a – 2p
- c. Yellow Perch Cocktail Party Thursday, May 17th, 2018, 5:30pm- 8:30pm Skyline at

Waterplace

- d. Clean Days on the Greenway – San Souci, Friday, May 18, 12p-4p
- e. Clean Days on the Greenway – Olneyville Shines, Saturday, May 19, 10a–2p
- f. Rain Barrel Workshop – Sustain PVD Fair, Saturday, May 19, 1p – 3p. Buy and Make your own Rain Barrel for \$30. Must be a Providence resident. Register online.
- g. Paul McElroy Bird Walk –Riverside Park, Saturday, May 19, 9am

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

-Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone – written report submitted by Judy Hadley and presented by Chair Berounsky

With the advent of spring and nice weather, the BRWC/FOB activities are ramping up. Our annual meeting and election of officers will take place on Wednesday May 16, 2018 at the Friends of the Blackstone River Environmental Center 100 New River Road in Manville, RI @ 6:30 PM. We will have a guest speaker, Megan DiPrete former Director of the Blackstone Heritage Corridor, now with the RIDEM. She will speak on some of the recent accomplishments with the BHC, and partnerships. The public is welcome.

We have 2 fundraisers scheduled for June. The first will be held at the Five Guys restaurant in Lincoln on Wednesday June 13th from 5 to 8 PM. A percentage of all sales during that time period will be donated back to our organization. Board members will be on hand to inform the public of our activities.

Our second fundraiser is a repeat of our successful Savers clothing drive. We are asking everyone to start saving your old, unwanted clothing, accessories, bedding, curtains, throw rugs, couch pillows, etc. and place them in 33 gallon trash bags. We will have 2 collection days at our educational center at 100 New River Road in Manville, RI. Saturday June 16th and Saturday June 23rd, from 9-2 PM. Savers pays 20 cents a pound for all soft goods collected. Our goal this year is \$500. Each event is advertised on our Facebook page. For more information, contact Judy Hadley at: treelady@cox.net.

The BRWC held several major clean-ups recently. The first was on Saturday April 4th, when the BRWC participated in the Valley Breeze Yellow Bag Day. Five people cleaned a one mile section of Albion Road in Cumberland. The next was on April 21st at Heritage Park in Valley Falls. It was a joint effort with members of the Cumberland Land Trust. 36 man hours were put in removing fallen trees and dead brush from a very steep embankment.

The most recent effort took place Sat. May 5th when 6 of our members contributed 18 man hours when they joined forces with the Cumberland DPW, to clear brush from a section of roadway on Mendon Road.

The BRWC is in the process of redesigning their website. We are also looking into several grant opportunities.

www.blackstoneriver.org/blackstone/

-Buckeye Brook Coalition – No report
<http://www.buckeyebrook.org/>

-Kickemuit River Council – No report
<http://www.kickemuitriver.org/>

-Friends of the Moshassuck – written report submitted by Greg Gerritt
For full report on “Adventures at the Rainwater Pool”, please email Greg Gerritt
gerritt@mindspring.com An excerpt follows:

About 10 years ago, I and some neighbors convinced the City of Providence that it should unlock the walk-in gates to the North Burial Ground and invite the neighbors in. So I started walking more often in the Burial Ground. In 2011 I came across a small wetland (I thought it was a pond) that had huge numbers of small black tadpoles. I visited several times in the next couple of weeks and realized they were so photogenic that someone should make videos of them. Then they were gone.

I continued to visit each spring and after 2 years realized that the person to take the video was probably going to be me, since no one else was so inclined. So Friends of the Moshassuck asked for money for a video camera in our annual Rivers Council application and then bought a \$200 video camera. I had never owned any sort of camera so learning how to use it was an interesting experience. In fact it took about 3 years before I was comfortable with the camera (my hand is still not steady) and the movie editing software on my computer, but from day one I decided to learn about video in public and started sharing on Youtube crudely made videos (1,2) of the little pond/rainwater pool, the tadpoles, and whatever else in the North Burial Ground caught my eye. I call the project and channel Moshassuckcritters as the Moshassuck River, that runs through the Burial Ground, is what got me started on all of this.

www.themoshassuck.org

-Narrow River Preservation Association –written report submitted by Alison Kates, presented by Richard Grant.

Osprey Educational Programs

NRPA recently held two osprey educational programs for local fourth graders.

The addition of our new osprey mount (a one-year female) has been incredibly well received. In addition to the fourth grade presentations, our bird is available for the public to see at special events, including our upcoming Road Race and What Lives in the River programs.

NRPA is looking into the possibility of installing a 24 hour live-streaming camera on one of the osprey nests in the watershed.

Kayak Fishing Challenge on Narrow River

NRPA is planning its first ever kayak fishing tournament. To be held on a Saturday in October, up to 50 participants will fish by kayak in the Narrow River in a “catch, photo and release” style competition. The goal will be to catch as many types of the four target species of fish as possible. The target species are bluefish, winter flounder, striped bass and shad. The winner will be the person who catches the most species of fish, with combined length of the largest of each species they catch as the tiebreaker.

NRPA is using the event to educate the participants on proper fish handling and responsible fishing methods.

UPCOMING NRPA EVENTS:

May 12, Saturday – 31st Annual Narrow River Road Race, 10am at Narragansett Town Beach

June 16, Saturday – What Lives in the River, 9:00am–1:30pm @ Middlebridge Marina, Narragansett

June 23, Saturday – 13th Annual Turnaround Swim, check in starts at 7:45am @ URI Boathouse, 166 Walmsley Lane, North Kingstown

July 14, Saturday – 15th Annual Environmental Awareness Day at Narragansett Town Beach 10am-1pm

July 20, Friday – 11th Annual Pettaquamscutt Paddle, check in at 5pm @ Narrow River Kayaks (rain date Saturday, July 21)

August 4, Saturday - Art on the River, 9:00–11:00am @ Middlebridge Marina, Narragansett

September 8, Saturday – NRLT Land Trust Days Guided Plant and Insect Walk, 5:00-8:00pm @ Middlebridge Marina, Narragansett

September 15, Saturday – What Lives in the River (9-11am) and Guided Marsh Walk (10am-noon), 'Gansett Days @ Middlebridge Marina, Narragansett

www.narrowriver.org

-Pawtuxet River Authority and Watershed Council – written report submitted, presented by Chair Berounsky

We have recently elected a new Treasurer, Jennifer Ryan, who replaces Rita Holahan who served the board as treasurer for many years. Rita will be staying on board to help with the books and to assist Jen in her new duties.

We are continuing efforts to get assistance for a couple homeless occupants of one of our properties, and a third has recently moved onto the property as well. Progress is being made with the first pair but is slower than we would like and we are starting to get more complaints from nearby homeowners. We will be informing all occupants that they need to be off the property by the middle of June, after which we will be contacting police to assist in removing them from the property. We are hoping for an amicable solution.

We have had a busy schedule of cleanups with a lot of success. We have done cleanups and property maintenance at Tongue Pond, both segments of our Riverwalk at Arkwright-Harris-Phenix, Riverpoint Park in West Warwick, and at our Randall Pond property. We will have our fourth annual Family Fishing Derby Day at Tiogue Lake in Coventry on Saturday, May 12th. The following weekend we will be joining the Town of Johnston for a cleanup at their Memorial Park on the Pocasset River.

We have attended several meetings concerning the old Arkwright Bridge that carries Hill Road over the North Branch Pawtuxet River between Coventry and Cranston. DOT has closed this one-lane bridge years ago, and there has been talk of converting it for use as a pedestrian overlook/walkway

with benches and flower containers. At a recent meeting, however, a bridge engineer pointed out the difference between one car going over the bridge at a time and potentially many people occupying the same bridge at the same time, and that the bridge was not designed to handle that sort of static load. It brought up an interesting liability question. There would be an additional cost to evaluating the bridge for such a use. This project idea is starting to get expensive, and it is likely that nothing will come of it now since neither municipality wants to invest a lot of money towards it. We are watching for opportunities for funding in order to finish up the rest of our dock project at Randall Pond.

We have made progress with a memorial to Guy N. Lefebvre, former Chair of both the RI Rivers Council and the Pawtuxet River Authority and Watershed Council.

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

-Salt Ponds Coalition –written report submitted and presented by Alicia Eichinger

SPC is continuing its work with the Town of Charlestown, Save the Bay, and the University of Rhode Island to address pollution heading into the ponds from onsite waste water treatment systems. This month we went goose egg oiling with the Town of Charlestown on Quonnie and Ninigret Ponds. We helped in the oiling process, but our intern also filmed our excursion so that we can use the footage as a teaching tool. Our first video about the grant is almost complete and will be debuting on our social media soon. One interesting thing that we noticed is that there are fewer nests than previous years.

We are all set to start our water quality monitoring next week. We have samplers in place at all of our monitoring sites. We added Maschaug Pond this year – it is an old site that we used to sample in Westerly.

Our spring newsletter is just about done and will be sent out to our membership soon.

Our summer safari and kayak schedule is set for 2018. This year we will be hosting 10 free public safaris and 3 paddle trips. All of our safaris will be held at Ninigret Wildlife Refuge, and this year we will be exploring Pt. Judith, Quonochontaug, and Winnapaug Ponds on our paddle trips. The schedule is on the calendar page of our website www.saltpondscoalition.org. We will also be at Narragansett Environmental Awareness Day and hosting private education programs for camps and local neighborhood groups.

We attended the Charlestown Earth Day celebration and had a booth there. We debuted our new kids activity – painting with seaweed. We also used the opportunity to try to talk about our work with Charlestown under the EPA grant.

This year RI Natural History Survey will be doing is BioBlitz on Point Judith Pond, and SPC will be participating in the event and we are recruiting volunteers.

www.saltpondscoalition.org

-Ten Mile River Watershed Council – written report submitted and presented by Keith Gonsalves

We have spent the last month counting and watching herring pass the Hunts Mills ladder, we also did a quick lift of herring, it seems to be a good year for returning fish. We had a front page article in the Attleboro Sun Newspaper about the health of the river and they liked our new map. We had

our first clean up of the season, Our Book was delayed but should be here by this weekend
<http://www.tenmileriver.net/>

Chair's Report: by Dr. Veronica Berounsky, Chair

Ms. Berounsky and Mr. Galloway will meet with Acting General Manager Kathleen Crawley and Supervising Civil Engineer Robert Bailey at the Division of Public Utilities about RIRC.

There was some discussion about trying to get a Saugatucket River Council back on the RIRC. Ms. Torello will work on convening a meeting with interested parties in South Kingstown to try to get this going. Ms. Berounsky and Ms. Eichinger will also attend the meeting.

Dr. Rick McKinney's application to the RIRC was rejected by the Governor's office as being over-qualified. Ms. Calabro suggested Sally Johnson who works at the RI Department of Health and has an extensive background of interest in environmental issues. Chair Berounsky interviewed Ms. Johnson and agreed she would be a good choice for the vacant "General" position, Ms. Marks moved, Ms. Torello seconded, nominating Sally Johnson to the RIRC.

The summer meeting will be in July or August somewhere up north, maybe at the Kickemuit.

Narragansett Environmental Awareness Day is July 14th. Ms. Berounsky and Ms. Torello will be there, as will Ms. Eichinger at SPC's table.

Mr. Gonsalves will be rules coordinator for Statewide Planning.

Chair Berounsky would like to thank everyone involved with putting together last month's successful Annual Meeting at the State House.

Other Business:

Adjournment:

Ms. Marks moved, Mr. Gonsalves seconded. Adjourned at 6:25 p.m.