



The Rhode Island Rivers Council

c/o RI Water Resources Board
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DRAFT FOR REVIEW- Minutes of RIRC Meeting
Wednesday, October 10, 2018, 4 pm
DEM Office of Water Resources – Conference Room 280C
235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present:

Veronica Berounsky, Chair
Rachel Calabro
Paul Gonsalves, RIDOA
Chuck Horbert
Eugenia Marks
Jenny Paquet, RIDEM Water Resources

B. Guests in Attendance:

Dr. Courtney E. Schmidt, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program
Eivy Monroy, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program
Richard Grant, Narrow River Preservation Association
Douglas Stevens, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 4:10 by Chairwoman Veronica Berounsky. The five voting members in attendance did not make quorum (six are needed), and thus the 9/12/18 minutes await approval at the next meeting. The Chair commended Alicia Eichinger for her notes of the September meeting.

Guest Speaker: Speakers Eivy Y. Monroy, Watershed and GIS Specialist; and Dr. Courtney E. Schmidt, Staff Scientist, both of the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP) presented a powerpoint, "Environmental Indicators for Narragansett Bay and its Watershed". The powerpoint will be posted on the RIRC website.

- a. Review of history of NBEP which started as Narragansett Bay Project in 1985 and in 1988 was subsumed by U. S. EPA as part of the National Estuaries Program. Two to 3 million dollars were spent in research initiatives, implementation of protection programs, and evaluating data. In 2013 New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPC) was selected as administrative home.
- b. The bi-state geography of the Narragansett Bay watershed, 60% of which is in

- MA, prompted bi-state meetings, inter-institutional research, rich and diverse sources of information, and effective leveraging efforts.
- c. Sixty-four partners cooperated on this latest publication of data (2017) and subsequent data analysis and evaluation for significant relationships between the two major stressor categories – indicator stressors and condition stressors. Key filters for categorization were whether the collected data inform one of the indicators selected for Narragansett Bay ecosystem and public health; how frequently data sets are connected; how compatible is methodology; whether the data are qualitative or quantitative.
 - d. Data scale is waters of Narragansett Bay and tributaries and watershed, and range is from small to large. A continuous cycle of sharing information, evaluation and feed-back creates a huge database management opportunity, as well as opportunity to strengthen partnerships. The data is open and publicly shared.
 - e. Questions were invited:
 - i. Greatest overall problem? Dissolved nutrients and resulting low DO.
 - ii. Is “red tide” a problem here? We don’t have the same species of algae nor intense agricultural run-off as in Florida, but other brown algal blooms in Bay can cause toxic conditions. Wastewater treatment plants are greatest source of nutrients in Narragansett Bay.
 - iii. Are biological agents monitored in Bay? Pharmaceuticals via wastewater and other emerging contaminants are targeted for detection and protocols. As result of monitoring and analysis, Trichlorosan, an agent in hand-sanitizers, is being phased out. Dr. Rainer Lohmann at URI leads research in emerging pollutants with his STEEP grant. Look to graduate student papers for front-line research.
 - iv. Health impacts? On-going research and alerts through network address health issues.

Reports by RIRC Representatives on State Committees:

Narragansett Bay Estuarine Program: As reported by Ms. Monroy:

- a. Dr. Schmidt and Ms. Monroy reported that
 - i. the new director for NBEP, Stephen Tucker, will assume role on 10/29/18.
 - ii. 40 attended the Webinar on indicators week of October 9. Webinar can be accessed through NBEP website.
 - iii. Event about the Taunton River watershed, held in Fall River, was attended by 82 people.
 - iv. Kickoff for Partnerships in Natural Resource Restoration Implementation in Narr. Bay, Southwest Coastal Ponds, and Little Narragansett Bay will be held in Taunton. The product will be an on-line display of projects.

State Guide Plan Recreation Committee: Paul Gonsalves reported that

- Public comments are invited ASAP through website:
<http://dem.ri.gov/programs/planning/scorp/>
- Focus groups continue to meet with Boating/ Paddling/ Shore Access at URI Bay Campus 10/23; Trails/Mtn.Biking at Kettle Pond 10/30; Parks/Playgrounds/ Urban Rec 11/1 P'tucket Boys & Girls Club; Health at Thundermist Health Ctr. West Warwick; etc. See attachment for full details.

Water Resources Board - Eugenia Marks reported that legislation is being developed for 2019 session and that RIRC through Chairwoman Berounsky is negotiating for our interests.

Bays, Rivers, & Watersheds Coordination Team Funds – Veronica Berounsky reported 2nd year of funds have been completed.

Officer Reports, Financial Report, Committee Reports:

Financial Report: No changes since September

Written Reports of Activities Received from Designated Watershed Councils:

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

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

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

Greenway Maintenance & River Rangers

WRWC Engagement Coordinator, Amanda, began a walking club, known as the Weekly Woony Walk! This initiative includes elderly and people who may not normally walk the greenway to join each other in a group walk. The walk runs from 133 Delaine St at 10:30am, then walk to 80 Curtis Arms, arriving at 11am, then walking back to Delaine St.

The City of Providence has completed construction of the parking lot at Riverside Park as well as a new picnic area. They are still working on stormwater management for the new parking area.

The bike community and advocates have been attentive because the Kinsley/Promenade Redesign project is currently on hold until the City of Providence and RIDOT determine how to allocate funds for this project and two bridges in Providence. The latest from the Providence Planning Department is that they are planning to request that the funds for project design be allocated immediately so that we can begin working with our consulting team.

Water Quality/River Monitoring:

Centredale Superfund: EPA is keeping us posted on progress. The consultant for the responsible parties has already begun the research and planning for the remedy and is moving quickly. Alicia and Lisa are talking to the EPA project manager about opportunities to incorporate a bike path extension through the site as they start to plan for the remedy.

Water Quality Monitoring: Water quality monitoring is still going through October. Doug Stephens

is still coordinating this project. Thank you, Doug!

Electrofishing Monitoring: Is complete for the season. Kassi is confirming identification results with Alan Libby, RI DEM.

Green Infrastructure:

We are pleased to have signed an agreement with RIDOT to develop green infrastructure projects over the next 5 years in the Woonasquatucket Watershed! Currently WRWC is working with RIDOT and their on-call consultant to develop a prioritized list of projects.

Education Programs:

High School and Middle School programming is taking place. Field trips for urban high school students helped youth become comfortable and actually happy to be in the woods. Middle school students in the after-school program will go on more field trips than ever before!

Red Shed:

Our 6th year of bike camp is all wrapped up and it was our most successful summer yet. The connection between the river, our environment and our bike activities were strengthened by the addition of Sara Canuel as our head environmental bike camp counselor (WRWC Environmental Educator) and the addition of canoeing to each week of camp.

Another successful change was the addition of permanent program bicycles for camp. By having all children on our bikes, we were better able to teach all the important safety and handling skills without having to worry about reliability issues or bike incompatibility (i.e. gears, and hand brakes).

Upcoming programs for this fall include:

- 'Fun Fridays' with the Manton Avenue Project
- Two bike field trips with the River Adventure afterschool program
- A collaboration with Recycle-A-Bike's October after school recreation program - This will bring students from Vincent Brown and John Rollins Rec center to the Red shed and the Fred Lippitt Woonasquatucket River Greenway bike path.
- Youth bike safety activity at upcoming Jump Bike Safety class in late October.

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

-Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone – No report.

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 – No report

www.themoshassuck.org

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

NRPA 48th Annual Meeting

On Tuesday, October 2, NRPA welcomed more than 50 people to our 48th Annual Meeting. Alicia Eichinger staffed the RIRC display during the reception prior to the meeting.

Dr. Bruce Corliss, Dean of the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography, welcomed guests as the host of the event and spoke about how the November bond for higher education (Question #2) would improve the Bay Campus – where NRPA meets.

Jenny Paquet of RI DEM spoke about the Narrow River Watershed Management Plan, currently in development.

Environmental Canine Services, LLC and RI DEM presented on the recent Canine Detection project in the Narrow River. The presentation described the program, how it works and the scientific support for the accuracy of the detection.

Long time NRPA field trip associate, Sheldon Pratt, who is an expert on benthic animals received the 2018 W.E.R. La Farge Memorial Friend of the River Award *“for his decades spent studying the Narrow River and its watershed, for using his expertise in benthic ecology to enlighten and inform hundreds of students and adults for NRPA, and for his years of service to the Narrow River Land Trust”*

NRPA President Richard Grant also recognized two members in the audience: long-time board member (now retired) Rob Leeson for his years of support and RI state Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee for her legislative support and advocacy.

Kayak Raffle

Also at our Annual Meeting, Jason Considine, Owner of Narrow River Kayaks (NRK) drew a ticket from all of our kayak raffle tickets to determine who would win the kayak that NRK donated. The winner, Joan D’Agostino is a watershed resident and is very excited to go kayaking with her friends. NRK generously added a paddle and life jacket (PFD) to the prize.

Narrow River Cleanup

Over the past few weeks, about 25 volunteers removed trash from the Narrow River including the marshes of Upper and Lower Pond, Gooseberry Island, the areas around Sprague Bridge, the mouth of the river and more. By boat and on foot, they picked up tons of cigarette butts, broken glass, food wrappers, cans and bottles. Interesting items included: 3 tennis balls, 1 ping pong ball, 1 pair of men’s underwear, 2 fish hooks, 3 corn cobs, a helmet, part of a garden hose and half of a flip flop. NRPA plans to host river cleanups each spring and fall going forward.

www.narrowriver.org

-Pawtuxet River Authority and Watershed Council – written report submitted, presented by Chuck Horbert –

Chair Bob Nero has been researching more on the statute that created the Pawtuxet River Authority, and more needs to be done. There is evidently a convoluted history that also involved other groups such as the previous Pawtuxet River Commission and afterwards, in 1988, the Pawtuxet River District Commission. This later commission was evidently formed to explore the connection of sewers in the Pawtuxet watershed all the way to Fields Point. But, rather than create this connection, funds were made available to the treatment plants through revolving loan funds that allowed them to make significant improvements and avoid the need to connect to Fields Point. These funds were originally supposed to be administered through the Pawtuxet River Authority, but this responsibility was later assigned to RIDEM. But, when the Pawtuxet River District Commission was disbanded following improvements to the treatment plants, all powers and responsibilities of that District were transferred to the Pawtuxet River Authority...including the power of eminent domain. We are currently still researching whether we still have this power and, if so, what limitations may have been placed on exercising it.

We performed a big cleanup at our Pontiac Canoe access and Howard Preserve property. The business that is required to perform Supplemental Environmental Projects as part of a settlement with EPA came in and removed over 30 tires, a huge amount of other assorted trash, and a couple telephone poles for us. We will have more fall cleanup and property improvements planned for the rest of the fall, into the first weekend of November.

The stone for a Guy Lefebvre memorial has finally been delivered to the stone engraver. We hope to soon have it back to the site and ready for a memorial ceremony.

BASF is currently working on a number of cleanup and remediation projects at the former Ciba Geigy facility in Cranston. They would like to collaborate with us to explore restoring anadromous fish access up into Roger Williams Park. We will be exploring this opportunity further.

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

-Salt Ponds Coalition –written report submitted by Alicia Eichinger and read by Chair Berounsky
SPC just released its 3rd video under the EPA grant which chronicles the work of URI researchers who have been conducting the study on advanced septic systems.

Water quality monitoring is continuing to go well; next week is our last sample day for the season. The following week we will host a thank you party for all of our Pond Watchers (as well as the rest of our volunteers).

SPC's next Tidal Pages newsletter is almost complete and will be ready for publishing shortly. We hope to have it out to our members later this month or in early November.

SPC is working with a URI Watershed Watch student to help update our status and trends report, and to see how our AHI Index might be adapted to compare the ponds to other salt water bodies in the state.

SPC has been working with a professor from Northeastern as well as some of his students. We have been working on an economics project focused on the value of the salt ponds. The first set of research is just about completed, and we are getting ready to start on another phase. We will use the data to create some informational articles for our members; as well as to have the data on hand should it be helpful otherwise.

SPC plans to welcome two new members to our board. Our hope is to have them appointed at this month's board meeting (next week).

SPC is still anticipating that Quonnie Breachway will be dredged this winter, and that the corresponding marsh restoration will be started as well. There was some issue with late contractor bids, but that has been sorted out.

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. Hopefully, we can improve the water circulation between Champlin Cove and Long Cove in Point Judith pond. In addition to water quality benefits, this project would help prevent storm flooding on the road which poses safety hazards to the island's residents. www.saltpondscoalition.org

-Ten Mile River Watershed Council – No Report.
<http://www.tenmileriver.net/>

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

- a. A symposium of citizen-monitoring projects will be held Friday afternoon (10/26) at UMASS Dartmouth under the sponsorship of New England Estuarine Research Society (NEERS). \$85 Registration. Contact Courtney Schmidt.
- b. A Legislative Grant to RIRC of \$2,000 has been sponsored by Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee and Rep. Robert Craven and will fund a banner and information outreach publication. *Liz Garofalo will contact each RIRC member organization for content for publication.*
- c. Volunteers to take minutes for RIRC are sought, with Paul Gonsalves volunteering for November and Chuck Horbert for December.
- d. Exhibit by Lorena Pugh "Painting the Bay" is on display at Dryden Gallery, Providence until December 2. Includes paintings of some rivers in RI.

Adjournment:

Adjourned at 5:54 p.m.