

**Minutes of the Rivers Council Meeting held
9 March 2005, 9:00 AM**
Conference Room B
William E. Powers State Administration Building
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present

Stephen Kearns
Guy Lefebvre
Kevin Nelson
Will Riverso
Jane Sherman
Mike Walker

B. Members Absent

Kevin Cute
Diane Feather
Elizabeth Gowell
Dale Grogan
Dante Ionata
Meg Kerr (Chair)
Scott Millar (Vice Chair)

C. Watershed Councils in Attendance

Ann Morrill, Kickemuit River Watershed Council
Harold Ward, Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association

D. Guests in Attendance

Juan Mariscal, Warwick Sewer Authority
Don Pryor, Brown University
Greg Gerritt, Friends of the Moshassuck
Christopher Frechette, Friends of the Moshassuck
Allison Sobel, Brown University

CALL TO ORDER:

Acting Chair, Kevin Nelson, called the meeting to order at 9:20 AM

ACTION ITEMS

1. Approval of minutes February 9, 2005 – Copies of the minutes were not available to be distributed at the meeting therefore approval was deferred until the next meeting.

PRESENTATIONS FROM POTENTIAL NEW WATERSHED COUNCIL APPLICANTS

2. Greenwich Bay Watershed Council – Mr. Nelson reported that the head of the Council, Leah Robinson, passed away last week. It is uncertain at this time whether the Council will be able to complete the application for this solicitation round.
3. Friends of the Moshassuck – Mr. Freschette stated that the FOTM are working on an application but had not been aware of the application deadline until recently. They do not expect to be finished before May. They are also faced with the problem that they are a small Providence based organization that currently does not have representation throughout the watershed. They asked the Rivers Council for assistance in outreach to other communities in the watershed (especially Smithfield). Mr. Gerritt gave a brief history of the Moshassuck as a “working river” and the work of the FOTM. The Moshassuck is heavily degraded. The FOTM have been working on clean-ups, small restoration projects, greenway planning, and speaking in schools.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

4. Allison Sobel of Brown University gave a presentation of her Masters thesis on the Hunt River Aquifer. The Hunt contains seven public water supply wells that withdraw an annual average of 82 million gallons of water.
 - Does this withdrawal result in a streamflow problem? Yes, there is significant depletion and infiltration of the waterways.
 - Does the Hunt have a healthy fish population? The lower region of the Hunt is certainly degraded. Reasons for this are not clear.
 - Water use conflicts occur among the communities containing the aquifer. For example, North Kingstown passed a wellhead protection ordinance but East Greenwich and Warwick did not. North Kingstown residents use more water to water lawns than in surrounding communities despite institution of certain demand management techniques in North Kingstown.
 - Quonset Point / Davisville (QDC) draws from the Hunt and contends that they are entitled to up to 4.6 million gallons per day (MGD). If they were to withdraw at this level and other users remained the same, the Hunt River would be virtually dry.
 - Significant misinformation surrounds the amount of water available from the Hunt. A 1968 USGS reported a “sustained yield” of 8 MGD. However, withdrawal at that level would drain the river during dry months. A 1995 Wellhead Protection Plan report misquoted the 1968 report and cited an 8 MGD “safe yield”. (A safe yield must maintain the streamflow; this is not possible at 8 MGD).

Ms. Sobel offered three primary recommendations:

- 1) QPD should seek new water sources e.g.
 - a new well not on the Hunt River
 - purchase water from Providence or Kent County
 - institute waste water reuse (especially at the golf course which is owned by North Kingstown)
- 2) North Kingstown should institute additional demand management strategies e.g.
 - fines for exceeding a certain amount of water use
 - an additional increase in water rates
 - financial incentives for installation of water conserving lawn irrigation systems
 - further promotion of the Healthy Landscapes Initiative
- 3) The River Council should:
 - support the Water Resources Board and DEM efforts to set streamflow standards

- in the absence of a local watershed council, directly act as an advocate for the Hunt River Watershed
- advise the Economic Development Corporation (QPD) to develop new water sources for future development of the industrial park
- officially state the Council's concern for the Hunt River's water flow

Mr. Nelson requested Ms. Sobol to provide a final copy of her report to the Council so that the Council would have the technical information necessary to follow-up on her recommendations.

REPORTS

5. Policy Committee (Jane Sherman, Chair) – Ms. Sherman reported that Mr. Millar has been asked to develop a set of land use and community design recommendations; Mr. Cute has been asked to develop recommendations for coastal access.
6. Legislative Committee (Will Rivero, Chair) – Mr. Rivero distributed copies of three pieces of legislation relevant to the Council:
 - Dam Management Districts – This would allow municipalities to adopt ordinances creating management districts for the purpose of dam repairs, maintenance, management and/or removal.
 - Elimination of MBTE from gasoline – This would prohibit the sale of gasoline with more than 0.5% MBTE by volume.
 - Cesspool phase-out – This would phase-out the use of cesspools based on a tier of risks by 2020.

Mr. Walker raised questions concerning the Dam Management Districts. He generally was concerned that the language of the Act is vague. He specifically raised questions as to how the proposed districts might add to regulatory burdens of small businesses and the legal aspects of the districts being able to “sue and be sued”. He recommended that the Council seek additional information and proceed with caution. Mr. Lefebvre stated that there is a critical need for a mechanism to fund repairs and maintenance of dams. The sense of the Council was, in the absence of needing to take an immediate position, to see if more information becomes available.

The Council supported the MBTE elimination but Ms. Sherman wondered why the MBTE bill would allow 0.5% MBTE rather than 0%. Mr. Rivero was not sure.

The Council was strongly supportive the cesspool phase-out but wondered if the timetable could be more aggressive.

Mr. Kearns reported that there was going to be a hearing today on a bill that would set qualifications for being appointed to the Rivers Council. Mr. Kearns said that he was going to testify at the request of the Chair. Ms. Sherman said that it would be inappropriate to represent the Council without the Council first having the opportunity to review the bill. Any comments at this time should note that the Council has not reviewed the legislation.

7. Funding and Development (Steve Kearns, Chair) – Deferred until the next meeting

Please delete:

8. Professional Development/Training
 - Watershed Stewards Program (Guy Lefebvre) – Mr. Lefebvre reported that the program is set to go. Proposals have been submitted to EPA to support future sessions.

Please insert:

9. Professional Development/Education

- Watershed Stewards Program (Guy Lefebvre) – Mr. Lefebvre reported that the program is set to go and provided members the program recruitment and registration flyer. He also reported Ms. Kerr prepared and submitted a new proposal to EPA to produce four sessions per year rather than two sessions per year as currently planned.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:10 AM. **Next meeting April 13, 2005 at 4:00 PM**