

**Minutes of the Rivers Council Meeting held
13 April 2005, 4:00 PM**
Conference Room B
William E. Powers State Administration Building
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present

Diane Feather
Stephen Kearns
Meg Kerr (Chair)
Guy Lefebvre
Scott Millar (Vice Chair)
Kevin Nelson
Sharon Pavignano
Will Riverso
Mike Walker

B. Members Absent

Kevin Cute
Elizabeth Gowell
Dale Grogan
Dante Ionata
Jane Sherman

C. Watershed Councils in Attendance

Ann Morrill, Kickemuit River Watershed Council
Judy Hadley, Blackstone River Watershed Council
David Newton, Blackstone River Watershed Council
Anne Preuss, Salt Ponds Coalition
Steve Insana, Buckeye Brook Coalition
Christopher Tomkins, Narrow River Preservation Assoc.

D. Guests in Attendance

Don Pryor, Brown University
Sue Barker, Washington County Regional Planning Council
David Gregg, RI Natural History Survey
Laura Ernst, ESS Group Inc.
Chip Young, Coastal Institute

CALL TO ORDER:

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Approval of minutes February 9 and March 9, 2005 – Mr. Kearns made a motion to accept the minutes of the Council's 9 February 2005 meeting, Mr. Nelson seconded. Mr. Nelson asked the Council to change "old" to "oil" on pg. 5. All agreed and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Kearns made a motion to accept the minutes of the Council's 9 March 2005 meeting, Mr. Nelson seconded. Ms. Kerr gave edits from Dale Grogan. On pg. 2, change QPD to QDC and note that the golf course at Quonset is owned by the Town of North Kingstown. Changes were approved and all approved the motion.

PRESENTATION:

2. RI Watershed Report – Channel 10, Chip Young, Chair PAC

Channel 10 is featuring watershed stories on Thursday evening weather reports. This year they have covered the Gilbert Stewart herring run and the opening of Greenwich Bay shellfishing areas. In order to have events covered, the "action" needs to happen on Thursdays between 10 AM and noon. Channel 10 is interested in seeing people at work, doing real activities in the field. When thinking about a story, think about "so what?" – why should your neighbors care about this story? What is important about it? Watershed Council should send their story ideas directly to Chip (cyoung@gso.uri.edu). He will keep a file of potential stories and will pitch them to Channel 10.

ACTION ITEMS (Continued):

3. Blackstone Watershed Council Grant

The Blackstone grant requests funds to cover 501 c 3 costs, start up costs for monitoring the Blackstone and supplies for the watershed council. Mr. Nelson asked if the council could get assistance from other watershed councils and save the consulting costs. Mr. Newton said that the group is in a hurry to complete the 501 c 3 as they have recently become independent from the tourism council. Ms. Kerr said that the Rivers Council has paid start up costs for other watershed councils. She also reiterated the urgency since the Blackstone Watershed Council's recognition by the Rivers Council depends on them being a 501 c 3. Mr. Kearns asked if the Council is considering merging with other organizations in the Blackstone Valley. Mr. Newton said that there is a lot of overlap, and that discussions are ongoing. It is difficult to merge existing groups and it takes time. Mr. Kearns said that he is in favor of volunteers doing the work, but he understands the sense of urgency. Mr. Walker asked if the Rivers Council has a match requirement and Ms. Kerr said that no match is required for these grants. Mr. Nelson said that he is concerned about purchasing equipment that could end up in someone's home. Mr. Newton said that the Watershed Council will meet and present the Rivers Council with more detailed information on purchases to assure the Council that the equipment is valid and that low cost options were explored. Mr. Walker made a motion to approve the grant request, Mr. Millar seconded. All approved.

4. Pawtuxet River Authority Grant

Ms. Kerr distributed the PRA end of year report and pointed out that it was incomplete. She recommended that the Council hold off on approving the grant request. Mr. Nelson made a motion to table the grant request until the PRA complies with the Rivers Council reporting requirements. Mr. Kearns seconded. During discussion, Mr. Nelson said that he would not vote to support the project as presented with out a lot more information on the equipment being

purchased. Ms. Kerr said that Ms. Grogan had made the same comment. Mr. Lefebvre said that he would like the record to show that he was not at the PRA when the 2004 grant was submitted to the Rivers Council. Ms. Kerr asked the Rivers Council to move the PRA \$5,000 grant to the RINHS since DOA has indicated that the funds will lapse on June 30. Mr. Nelson amended his motion to move the money to the RINHS and table the request for funds until the 2004 report is complete. Mr. Kearns seconded, all approved.

5. Kickemuit River Council Grant

Ms. Pavignano has been working with the Kickemuit River Council (KRC) on their grant proposal and presented the request to the Council. The KRC is concerned with pollution of the Kickemuit from sites along Metacom Ave. No one on the Council has the time or technical training to read and fully understand the technical reports and studies at DEM on these sites. With help from Sharon and Don Pryor (Brown U), the KRC would like to hire a Brown University student for the summer to read and synthesize the information and to study other sources of contamination in the area. Ms. Kerr said that the project is supported by DEM (Jeff Crawford) and DOH (Bob Vanderslice). Mr. Walker asked whether the student is a summer employee or doing the project for a class grade. Mr. Pryor replied that the student has not been pre-selected, but he expects that the project will be for paid summer work. Mr. Walker questioned whether students should be paid for work that connects to their studies. Mr. Millar said that he has hired students in the past. Mr. Nelson asked if \$5,000 is enough and Mr. Millar said that it should be more than sufficient. Ms. Morrill asked if water testing could be included and Mr. Pryor said that it could be if the study indicated it is needed. Mr. Nelson asked for a description of the final deliverable. Ms. Pavignano said that there will be a complete written report for the KRC, the towns and for DEM. Mr. Riverso made a motion to approve the grant, Mr. Walker seconded, all approved.

6. Move remaining funds to RINHS

Mr. Millar made a motion to move the remaining funds to the RINHS, Mr. Nelson seconded. Mr. Walker asked for clarification. Ms. Kerr explained that Mr. Tom DeFazio (DOA Business Office) urged the Rivers Council to spend the funds before June. Since we are not ready to spend the money, we will move the funds to the RINHS with our other funds. The motion passed.

7. Notice/Funding Rule

Mr. Nelson asked the Rivers Council to add our existing funding procedure to the Notice Rule and go to public hearing with the package. Mr. Millar asked when this rule can go to notice. Mr. Nelson said that it could move forward within a week. Mr. Millar reviewed the rule and questioned whether the correct version was included. He agreed to check it. Mr. Kearns asked if we should include language on grant reporting. Mr. Nelson said that it is best to keep these specifics in the contracts and not the rule. Mr. Walker made a motion to approve the rule pending addition of correct information. Mr. Millar seconded, all approved. Ms. Kerr agreed to email the final version to all Rivers Council members.

PRESENTATIONS

8. RI Natural History Survey collaboration with Watershed Councils, David Gregg, ED RINHS

The RINHS is a 10 year old non-profit dedicated to documenting scientific information on the flora and fauna of RI. The Survey often leverages volunteer expertise on natural systems

through their bio-blitz program and others. They are developing a new monitoring program to examine impervious cover for the NB watershed using remote sensing data. With funding from the BayWAG program, they are piloting the monitoring on the Branch River in partnership with the Blackstone Coalition. Program components – 1) remote sensing of the Branch River (led by Mr. Wang), 2) compared to historical data and field data collected through rapid assessments. Mr. Kearns said that there is significant development proposed for the Slatersville Mill. This data will be helpful. Mr. Walker asked if the project can be replicated through time and at other locations. Mr. Gregg said that they think the program is replicable. Mr. Lefebvre asked if a watershed council has a 5 – 10 acre buffer, can the RINHS help with documenting existing conditions. Mr. Gregg said it would cost money, but can be discussed. Projects with land trusts cost between \$1,000 - \$6,000. Mr. Lefebvre said that the buffer assessment would include less acreage.

9. RI Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership, Laura Ernst, ESS Group Inc.

The RI Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership is a public-private partnership to restore RI's aquatic habitats. It was founded in 2001 and is led by ESS Group, Inc and Narragansett Electric with other corporate, non-profit and government partners. The fund is primarily used to close gaps in restoration funding in order to leverage other funds. The Partnership is open to requests from Watershed Councils as long as the projects are sponsored, have plans and funds identified. The Partnership is focusing on building members within corporations. Mr. Walker asked how the Partnership is legally structured. Ms. Ernst said the Partnership is a project under Coastal America, a 501 c 3. Ms. Hadley asked if the Partnership only works in RI; Ms. Ernst said yes.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

10. Report from Chair (Meg Kerr, Chair)

- Bay, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team

Ms. Kerr reported that Richard Ribb has been appointed Chair of the Coordination Team. This appointment needs Senate approval. The Team is going through a strategic planning process with the EPC.

- Rivers Council awards (June)

Ms. Kerr said that there is support among the watershed councils for a June awards event recognizing local watershed "heros". Mr. Kearns has agreed to organize the event. Mr. Kearns made a motion to sponsor an awards event in June, recognizing designees from each watershed council, and authorizing Ms. Kerr and Mr. Kearns to plan the event. Mr. Millar seconded, all approved.

11. Professional Development/Education (Dante Ionata, Chair)

- Watershed Stewards Program (Guy Lefebvre)

Mr. Lefebvre reported that the Watershed Stewards program is moving forward. There are 12 registered participants. Mr. Millar offered to help with printing the manual. Mr. Lefebvre asked the Rivers Council to consider reconstituting the Professional Development/Education committee, as Mr. Ionata has not attended a series of meetings. Mr. Kearns said that he would like to recognize Mr. Lefebvre and Ms. Pavignano for their work on the Stewards program.

12. Funding and Development (Steve Kearns, Chair)

- Funding activities (RIF, State)

The Rivers Council has applied for 2 EPA grants for the Stewards program, but has not heard. The grants are likely not successful. The Council has also submitted information to the RIF for continued funding in 2006. The Council will mail annual reports to all legislators with a request for increased state funding.

13. Legislative Committee (Will Rivero, Chair)

The Rivers Council sent letters on the Cesspool Phase-out bills. Mr. Rivero distributed copies of H5816 with new language on the membership of the Council. Discussion on the bill followed. The Council agreed by consensus that the present structure of the Rivers Council is functioning well. Ms. Kerr was asked to let the House and Senate Policy Office staff know that the Rivers Council should stay as it is presently constituted. Ms. Morrill stated that she thinks watershed councils should be voting members of the Rivers Council.

14. Policy Committee (Jane Sherman, Chair)

The next policy committee is scheduled for April 14.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 6:00 PM.

Next meeting June 8, 2005 at 4:00 PM