



# Rhode Island Rivers Council

c/o RI Water Resources Board  
235 Promenade Street  
Providence, RI 02908

Meeting Minutes  
April 14, 2010  
RI Department of Administration  
Conference Room B  
Providence, RI 02908

## ATTENDANCE:

### A. Members Present

Ted Callender (Vice-Chair)  
Emily Cousineau  
Guy Lefebvre (Chair)  
Lisa McGreavy  
Jane Sherman  
Charlie Vandemoer

### B. Members Absent

Paul Gonsalves  
Claudia Staniszewski  
Mike Walker

### C. Guest in Attendance

Ann Morrill, Kickemuit River Council

## 1. Call to Order:

Chair Mr. Lefebvre called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

## 2. Discussion and vote on minutes for the January 2010 meeting

The minutes were distributed to the board prior to the meeting. Ms. Sherman recommended approval of the minutes, seconded by Ms. McGreavy. The minutes were adopted as written.

## 3. Flood Abatement Alternatives and Watershed Management

Mr. Lefebvre distributed copies of four articles from the *Providence Journal*, dated April 8 and April 11, discussing the causes and impacts of the "Great Flood" of 2010. He also distributed a copy of a letter dated April 5 from Save the Bay to the US Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) requesting that ACE study remedies and take actions to address flooding in the Pawtuxet River watershed. Ms. McGreavy distributed a copy of emails from Chuck Horbert and Scott Millar of DEM, reporting on DEM activities and issues relating to this year's flooding. Ms. McGreavy will follow up with Mr. Millar regarding two upcoming products that could help reduce flooding from new and re-developed sites: 1. Report regarding impervious cover impacts on flooding and watershed health with recommendations for towns to reduce the cover via compact growth, and 2. RI Community Low Impact Development (LID) Guidance Manual with design standards to reduce impervious cover and maintain pre-development hydrology. Mr. Lefebvre will send DEM a letter in support of these planning initiatives.

Mr. Horbert noted that the new RI Stormwater Manual includes requirements for new developments, including LID practices, infiltration, volume control, and certain redevelopment projects for runoff control. He also suggested that the RIRC urge FEMA to update their floodplain maps since current maps are outdated and likely underestimate the extent of a 100 year flood. Since DEM rules refer to FEMA floodplain elevations, updated maps will result in better implementation of DEM rules. Ms. McGreavy noted that recent updates were of a technical nature and were not intended to update elevation data. She will inquire as to the status of flood map updating with FEMA and report this information to Mr. Lefebvre so that he can prepare a letter to FEMA requesting map updates with inclusion of climate change impacts. FEMA will be meeting with state agencies on April 21 at the Dept of Health. A question was asked about the current status of enforcement activities at DEM (e.g. wetlands violations). Ms. McGreavy stated that the enforcement division has lost personnel and recently requested personnel assistance from the permitting division. The RI DEM is in the process of implementing a grant that will make certain types of approved wetlands plans and permits available through the department's website in order to share information with local municipalities and others. It will also improve enforcement efforts by making it easier for interested groups to identify any violations of the permits granted. Ms. McGreavy will also update the RIRC on the department's policy of "no net loss of wetlands." Mr. Callender reported that a USNRCS Pocasset River flooding study stated that wetlands loss was the primary cause of flooding along the Pocasset River in Cranston and Johnston. Mr. Lefebvre noted that one recommendation of this study was to raise dam heights for headwater area ponds to hold storm water for later release. He also noted the Gainer Dam at the Scituate Reservoir has a spillway that automatically releases water when the reservoir is full. Members further discussed that the first wetlands general law in RI was passed in 1971 and the USEPA retains jurisdiction over major takings under the 404 section of the Clean Water Act. It was suggested that RC request information from watershed councils about specific impacts from flooding in their watersheds.

#### **4. Annual Report for 2009**

The 2008 RIRC Annual Report is at the printer. Mr. Lefebvre will contact Ms. Staniszewski to expedite its distribution. Mr. Vandemoer and Ms. Sherman volunteered to work on the 2009 report, with help from Ms. Staniszewski. Ms. Sherman suggested a combined report for '09/10, and Mr. Vandemoer suggested that RC might include information about the impact of flooding on the state's rivers and watersheds in the report.

#### **5. Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team (CT) Implementation Plan**

Mr. Lefebvre reported that Mr. Ames Colt has added statutory authority and priority categories to the plan. Also at the meeting earlier today, there was discussion about the use of CT funding (source: septage pumping fees). Mr. Mike Walker, representing RIEDC, opposes the repeated annual use of \$75,000 of the CT funds for stream gauges. Ms. Crawley (WRB), Ms. Kiernan (DEM) and Mr. Lefebvre noted that we are at a minimum level for monitoring and stated the gauges should be retained. USGS reports that the cost of maintaining the gauges could decrease with improved technology for transmitting the data. (The cost is approximately a 50:50 share between USGS and RI, but varies in different agreements.)

#### **6. Reports**

Mr. Lefebvre distributed the financial report. The portion of the legislative grant supporting administrative costs of the RIRC is still to be received (\$2,244). The current balance is \$3,277.10.

Mr. Lefebvre reported that he sent a letter of support for the Abbott Run EPA CARE grant to the Northern RI Conservation District.

Ms. McGreavy reported that there have been discussions at DEM regarding possible bond funding for public land acquisitions, and she will check with DEM Planning & Development Deputy Chief Lisa Primiano about

possible bond funding for Rocky Point and other potential locations and projects that could be included in a state bond ballot item.

Mr. Lefebvre and Mr. Callender discussed the designation for the Hunt River watershed. A chart was distributed demonstrating the compliance with RIRC guidelines for applicants. Mr. Callender requested that a letter be sent to both applicants (Friends of the Hunt River and the Hunt River Watershed Assn) indicating that their applications were incomplete. There is an overlap in the interests of both groups, and the sense of the RIRC is that the council would be reluctant to designate two organizations with overlapping geographic areas. The RIRC would be willing to provide a facilitator to work with the groups to help resolve their differences. It was noted that the two groups representing the Blackstone have merged efforts, and the Saugatucket and Salt Ponds groups reached a clear understanding prior to the designation of the Salt Ponds Coalition.

Mr. Lefebvre distributed a copy of South County portion of the RI Official State Map prepared by the RIEDC Tourism Division in conjunction with RIDOT. Mr. Lefebvre noted the success of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, under an effort lead by Eugenia Marks of the Audubon Society of RI, to have five stream names recognized by the USGS. It is thought, in theory, having and using stream names increases awareness and stewardship of water bodies. The RI Official State Map does not indicate the names of the Chipuxet and Usquepaug Rivers which flow southerly into the Great Swamp. He recommended that RC further investigate having RIEDC and RIDOT include labeling these two rivers on future editions of the map.

A motion was made, seconded and approved unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:30 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2010.