



The Rhode Island Rivers Council
c/o RI Water Resources Board
235 Promenade Street, Suite 394
Providence, RI 02908

**Minutes of the Rhode Island Rivers Council Meeting
October 13, 2010**

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present

Guy Lefebvre (Chair)
Ted Callender (Vice Chair)
Claudia Staniszewski (Secretary/Treasurer)
Emily Cousineau
Paul Gonsalves
Lisa McGreavy
Jane Sherman
Charlie Vandemoer

B. Members Absent

Mike Walker

C. Guests in Attendance

Ann Morrill, Kickemuit River Council

1. Call to Order:

Mr. Lefebvre called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m.

2. Discussion and vote on minutes for the August 11, 2010 meetings.

The minutes were distributed to the board prior to the meeting. There was no discussion and with a motion by Ms. Sherman, seconded by Mr. Vandemoer, the minutes of the August 11, 2010 meeting were approved.

3. Review & Approvals - Grant Applications from Watershed Councils

The Rivers Council had previously allocated \$21,000 to grants for the 2011 grant program year. Ms. Staniszewski presented summaries of the six proposals submitted to the RI Rivers Council for 2011 funding. \$20,500 in requests were received from the following watershed councils:

Friends of the Moshassuck (FOTM)

\$500 - *Collyer Field Restoration*. This is a 30-year project currently in year ten. The project involves suppression of the invasive species Knotweed through the creation of a forest canopy (shade). Funds were requested to buy six trees plus transport them.

Kickemuit River Council (KRC)

\$4,000 - Submitted for three projects totaling \$4,000.

1. **\$1,961** to analyze the data already collected from sewer line cameraing to provide the Town of Warren justification for lining the leaking sewer line.
2. **\$720** to review the Stop and Shop Gas Station plans for impact on the storm drains and aquifer. KRC plans to make suggestions as to where gas and oil

filtering devices should be installed. Currently the plans do not show where these devices will go.

3. \$1,319 for KRC brochures, hats, caps, bumper stickers, calendars, and raffle tickets

Ms. Morrill was questioned about who would do the analysis of the Stop and Shop gas station plans. She confirmed that Green Environmental would complete the work. The consultant gave KRC an estimate of \$320-\$720. Fuss and O'Neil will conduct the analysis of the sewer cameraing data. The Council then advised Ms. Morrill that raffle tickets would not be an appropriate use of River Council funds and would not be approved for funding.

Salt Ponds Coalition (SPC)

\$4,000 - *Estimation of Benthic Flux of Nutrients to a Southern RI Salt Pond*. SPC proposed to monitor dissolved nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations in Quonochontaug Pond, commonly called Quonnie Pond (4 x in summer) and Green Hill Pond (1 sample) through sediment core analysis using a core incubation chamber. The purpose is to investigate if the main source of ammonia is produced by internal recycling within the ponds rather than coming from external sources. Mr. Callender explained that previously, nitrate has been believed to be the main contributor to fertilization of the pond but, from his research, it is in fact the nitrate plus the ammonia. The nitrate is an external source and the ammonia is an internal one. Ms. Sherman asked why SPC is sampling four times from Quonnie Pond and only one time from Green Hill Pond. Mr. Callender explained that logistically it will be much simpler to sample from Quonnie Pond but because Green Hill Pond is most at risk, it is important to get at least one sample from that pond.

Wood Pawcatuk Watershed Association/Narrow River Preservation Association (WPWA/NRP)

\$8,000 – *Watershed Science for Educators*. WPWA/NRP proposed to offer a 3-credit, graduate level course for RI teachers titled *NRS 591 Watershed Science for Educators*. The curriculum is based on the AWESOME! curriculum. It is the same course conducted in the spring of 2009 with great success. Mr. Callender asked if the Rivers Council could get a copy of the curriculum to post on the its website. Ms. McCreavy noted that the syllabus was included with the proposal. It was agreed, however, that since this was the second year the Council was funding this class it would be beneficial to have the full curriculum made available on the website. Ms. Sherman noted that last year we asked to make the class available to all watershed council members and that WPWA/NRP should be requested to do this again as soon as possible so that the watershed councils can plan ahead. Mr. Callender offered to talk with Ms. Poyer of WPWA to see what would be best to put on the Rivers Council website (the syllabus, the curriculum, etc).

Woonasquatucket River Watershed Associated

\$4,000 - *Promoting Stewardship Through Recreation and Monitoring*. WRWC proposal was to cover the costs of paddling (15 events), biking (4 events), a bike-A Thon (1 event), water quality monitoring (3 sites), and migratory fish passage monitoring (1-2 sites). They also requested funds to cover the costs of having two staff certified to lead paddles. There was no discussion on this proposal. Ms. Sherman moved to approve the grants as proposed. Ms. Staniszewski seconded. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

4. Communications & Facilitation Regarding Hunt River Groups

Mr. Lefebvre reported that the Rivers Council received a one page letter plus attachments from Barry Martasian of the Friends of the Hunt River Watershed (FHRW) in which he appealed for consideration for designation and requested a meeting. Mr. Lefebvre distributed the letter plus a summary of attachments prior to the meeting. The letter also stated that FHRW might be willing to engage in dialogue and mediation with the Hunt River Watershed Association (HRWA). Mr. Lefebvre noted that the 2010 watershed designation round is completed, and that each watershed group that applied was duly notified of the Rivers Council's decision. Any group interested in designation would necessarily have to wait until the next round in 2011. (There will

be four watershed councils up for redesignation in 2011: Kickemuit River Council, Friends of the Moshassuck, Pawtuxet River Authority and Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council.) Mr. Vandemoer reminded the Council that the FHRW had been asked to submit additional information during the application process and they did not submit all of it. Mr. Lefebvre noted that as part of the designation application, a schedule of events and a budget were required that were not included in FHRW's application and emphasized the designation criteria was provided to applicants. HRWA did not submit all of the required information either and their application was significantly incomplete. Discussion followed. Mr. Callender suggested that the Council send FHRW and HRWA a letter explaining that we will consider their applications again if they agree to submit applications that follow the Council's criteria and are complete.

Mr. Vandemoer raised the issue of designating two watershed councils in the same watershed, which has been a concern of the Council all along. Ms. Sherman emphasized the need for the Council to have a discussion about what our position is on the divisions within a watershed and what we would find acceptable if two groups were to be designated. The core issue of HUC (Hydrologic Unit Codes) delineations arose and the treatment of these in the Council's designation criteria. Mr. Lefebvre read the criteria referring to HUC 10 and HUC 12 areas. Mr. Callender then noted that it was unclear if the Council ever decided on the issue of one group working with the ground water and one with the surface water as the two organizations in question have suggested. He continued that it is clear for the Hunt River in particular, that when you pump ground water excessively, there is a significant draw down on major streams and rivers, especially in summer. There is an interaction/overlap and perhaps this is where the two groups can work together in a way that might be acceptable to the Council. Ms. McGreavy suggested that a mediator might assist the groups to elect one spokesperson. There could be one umbrella organization, with one spokesperson, with two separate areas of interest. Discussion followed. FHRW wishes designation for the HUC 12 Hunt River watershed whereas the HRWA wishes designation for the Hunt-Annaquatucket-Pettaquamscutt (HAP) aquifer. Mr. Lefebvre pointed out that designation of HRWA for the HAP aquifer would involve overlap with both FHRW and the Narrow River Preservation Association.

Mr. Lefebvre stated that his preference was one designation per HUC delineated watershed, but he was open-minded about coming to some customized agreement. Mr. Vandemoer noted that the criteria enable us to do that. Mr. Callender explained that FHRW would work the western and eastern part of the watershed. The western part is underlaid by glacial till, so it is mostly surface run off, and the eastern part is glacial sand and gravel and there is significant interaction between ground and surface water, whereas the HAP aquifer, which is the HRWA's requested area is essentially ground water. FHRW asked for designation for the HUC 12 Hunt River Watershed delineated area. It was also noted that the HRWA is focused on ground water and the work would be very expensive requiring the HRWA to work with the town in order to accomplish much. It was noted that this is an important watershed that needs substantial assistance and advocacy and it is critical that the Council work with these two watershed groups to come to a resolution.

Mr. Lefebvre questioned if the Rivers Council was amenable to a customized agreement on where the two groups' areas overlap. Ms. Sherman asked if the criteria give us flexibility as far as if the Council designates HUC10 or HUC 12 areas. Mr. Vandemoer noted that the criteria do give the Council the latitude not to use HUC12 when more effective advocacy and efficient organization and management would result.

After much discussion, Mr. Lefebvre and Ms. Sherman suggested the Council request the assistance of Walt Galloway of the USEPA to facilitate a discussion and resolution. Ms. Cousineau noted that it is important for the Council to be clear on its decision as this will lay the groundwork for the revised criteria, particularly since this happened twice, first with the Salt Ponds Coalition and the Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition and now with the Hunt watershed (although the two instances have significant differences). Discussion followed about various options and structures that would resolve the circumstances surrounding the differences between these two organizations.

It was noted that a fine tuned agreement is needed that outlines exactly what steps the two organizations can take. Unfortunately, there is no simple scientific way to differentiate the territory.

It was noted again that both groups are willing to talk to each other.

There was not general agreement among Council members regarding which is preferred, a joint application from both organizations, or a customized agreement, which would be more difficult to sustain into the future. It was decided that the Council would benefit from a consultation with Mr. Galloway to clarify the designation criteria prior to another round of applications from the two organizations.

Mr. Vandemoer asked if designations can include parameters, such as having the two organizations work with a mediator if there are differences of opinion that would impact policy or actions associated with the watershed. References were again made to the Saugautucket group and the Salt Ponds Coalition but there were distinct differences from this situation and parameters were not formally in place as a condition of designation. These two groups resolved their differences on their own. After additional discussion the Council decided that the best course of action would be to review these concerns and other considerations with Mr. Galloway. There was general agreement.

5. Designation Criteria & Schedule

It was agreed that this agenda item would be addressed as part of the process involving Mr. Galloway. Ms. Cousineau noted that if the two groups cannot come to a sustainable agreement, the two organizations can resubmit applications and the Council has the authority to choose only one organization for designation for the Hunt River Watershed. She also suggested that as a caveat, Mr. Galloway is given background on the situation from a member of the Council prior to his meeting with the Council. All agreed that the purpose of the meeting with Mr. Galloway is to have him assist the Council in finding a solution on how the circumstances with the FHRW and HRWA might be resolved and then secondly, to alter the Council's watershed designation criteria to address circumstances when two groups apply for the same watershed.

6. Draft Narragansett Bay Region Integrated Plan

Mr. Lefebvre reported that the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program is working on the regional integrated plan. RI Statewide Planning is part of the process as is Ames Colt and the Coordination Team. A draft of the plan was issued in September. A series of workshops were scheduled for the purpose of getting input from stakeholders on the plan. The Rivers Council was invited to provide input. Mr. Lefebvre read the plan and reported that the group seems to be making progress on Massachusetts and Rhode Island forging out an agreement. The majority of the Narragansett Bay watershed is in Massachusetts and the bay is mostly in Rhode Island. Mr. Lefebvre's comments focused on getting a good agreement between the two states. Statewide Planning, however, hopes to also get a new statewide plan element with the document. Mr. Lefebvre believes that if an interstate compact is being developed, the NBEP and partners in this plan should focus on the interstate compact and not dilute the process with a Rhode Island document that may interfere with a good interstate document. He also noted that the draft plan was very technical and he suggested that the authors include short capsule descriptions of the watersheds' rationale for caring about the watersheds and include some activities of the watershed councils, adding a more 'human' element to the plan.

Mr. Lefebvre went on to report that Ken Burke wrote a letter to the plan's authors expressing his concern about the limited fresh water element, a concern the Rivers Council has had. The letter asks that water supply be integrated with estuary issues. Without this integration the document reads more as an environmental protection document than an integrated plan. Mr. Lefebvre and Mr. Burke have not yet received an official reaction to their letters. Ms. Sherman suggested that

Mr. Burke attend a Rivers Council meeting in the future to discuss fresh water planning around the state and thanked Mr. Lefebvre for reviewing all of the documents.

7. Flood Prevention & Remediation Developments

Mr. Lefebvre noted the cover story in the Sunday, October 10, 2010 Providence Journal about the 2010 floods. He reported that approximately 24 million federal dollars have come into the state toward recovery. It is still not clear about what has been proposed for flood plain recovery but it is something to which the Rivers Council should pay attention. Ms. Sherman asked if any of the watershed councils have done anything proactively after the floods. Ms. Staniszewski mentioned the Pawtuxet River Authority's work with FEMA on the clean up of the Pawtuxet, with the watershed council as the point organization.

One result of the floods is the attention that is being given to wetlands. DEM has been formulating a new wetlands restoration policy. Ms. Sherman and Mr. Lefebvre have been attending these meetings. Ms. McGreavy reported that Carol Murphy sent note to her thanking the Rivers Council for their input. Ms. Sherman asked Ms. McGreavy if she could send members of the Council the minutes of each of these meetings. Ms. McGreavy agreed. Mr. Lefebvre reported that a process was being developed to improve wetlands management.

8. River Biodiversity

Mr. Lefebvre reported that a recent climate change bill passed regarding assembling a large group to address climate change in Rhode Island. There will be 30 people on this council, officially called the Climate Change Commission. Ms. McGreavy will send a link to the bill, which is very detailed. It also lists some of the agencies that are involved with the Commission. Mr. Vandemoer asked if there was a lead agency. Ms. McGreavy responded that she did not think there was one officially yet but the Brown University Center for Environmental Studies has been centrally involved.

Mr. Lefebvre went on to discuss an article in *Nature* on river biodiversity, water security and use. He made a list and distributed it to the Council of the twenty-three 'stress drivers' that were discussed in the article. These 23 variables are what are used by a large group looking at river concerns globally. Mr. Callender said that in his opinion, thermal alteration is probably the main driving factor likely due to hot temperatures in summers. He noted the gravity of the loss of biodiversity and the exceedingly long time it takes an ecosystem to recover. Mr. Lefebvre noted that a lot of work on watershed management in Rhode Island and the nation happens under the framework of the Clean Water Act.

9. Officer & Committee Reports

Treasurer's Report. Ms. Staniszewski reported on two expenditures, one for stamps and one for renewal of the Council's membership in the River Network Partnership. There were also several reimbursements. Other than these transactions, nothing was notable. The account balance as of 9/30/10 was \$4,774.49. Ms. Sherman moved acceptance of the financial report. Ms. Cousineau seconded. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Report. Mr. Lefebvre reported on the progress of the TF Green Airport Improvements Environmental Impact Statement. The RI Airport Corporation (RIAC) is requesting to fill 7.5 acres of wetlands near the headwaters of Buckeye Brook on airport property. With the Army Corps of Engineers formula for wetlands loss mediation, RIAC should be appropriating approximately \$250,000 per acre for a total of approximately \$4 million for a wetlands remediation plan. Mr. Lefebvre will attend a meeting on October 14 at DEM with government agencies, after which there will be a bus trip to the site and discussion with local groups. He also explained that the airport EIS is not just about the runway extension and includes a number of improvements like safety zones at ends of every runway. Buckeye Brook is at the eastern end of the short runway.

Mr. Lefebvre noted that the FAA, RIAC and the consultant VHB are being responsive and plans are moving along. It was agreed that the Council acted responsibly in commenting. Mr. Lefebvre

sent a letter to the FAA during the Draft EIS comment period which he copied to Buckeye Brook Coalition, but he has not heard back from the watershed council. The FAA must respond to all formal comments made on the Draft EIS.

10. Other Business

Ms. McGreavy had spent some time gathering materials that the Council could use for educational purposes. She found an editable version of watershed map placemats that had been in circulation some time ago. She asked the Council members to review the information for accuracy. A discussion followed on improvements that could be made to the placemat. Ms. McGreavy went on to show a large map that Paul Jordan had enlarged for the Council. It is similar to the one that is found on the placemats. Once the Council approves the map for accuracy, she will have Mr. Jordan laminate it. Mr. Lefebvre suggested that the Council should selectively and appropriately align co-sponsors for the placemats such as US Fish and Wildlife.

Ms. McGreavy agreed to email Council members to see if anyone is interested in joining her on a committee to work up materials that the Council can use at events. It was noted that Mr. Callender has materials in storage from last year's Beach Day. Other ideas for materials discussed included website links to a fresh water restoration information kit; Scott Millar's reports and his conservation development manual; websites for designated watershed councils as well as a display board. Ms. McGreavy will research costs. The Council agreed to continue to review the materials to determine which ones they were interested in developing.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:59 p.m.