



The Rhode Island Rivers Council

c/o RI Water Resources Board
235 Promenade Street, Suite 394
Providence, RI 02908

www.ririvers.org



RI Rivers Council

Minutes of October 9, 2013 Meeting
RI Department of Administration
William Powers Building - One Capitol Hill
Conference Room B
Providence, RI 02908

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present

Veronica Berounsky
Rachel Calabro
James Cole
Paul Gonsalves
Judith Hadley
Chuck Horbert
Guy Lefebvre
Lisa McGreavy
Elise Torello

B. Guests in Attendance

Ann Morrill – Kickemuit River Council
Ames Colt – Bays, Rivers & Watersheds Coordinating Team (BRWCT)

1. Call to Order

In her first meeting as Chair of the Rhode Island Rivers Council (RIRC), Dr. Berounsky called the meeting to order at 4:11 pm and recognized guests Ann Morrill of the Kickemuit River Council and Ames Colt of the Bays, Rivers & Watersheds Coordinating Team.

2. Review and approval of September 11, 2013 meeting minutes

Ms. Hadley moved to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Torello seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Update on Local Watershed Councils Designation Process

Re-designation requests were received from two councils: the Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone and the Narrow River Preservation Association. Copies were distributed to the full council via email. Dr. Berounsky established a subcommittee of Ms. Calabro as lead, Mr. Lefebvre, and Ms. McGreavy to review the re-designation requests and report to the full council with a recommendation. A public hearing will be held at 4pm on November 13 directly followed by a regular meeting which will include the subcommittee's recommendation followed by a vote of the council. Due to their association with the watershed councils, Dr. Berounsky and Ms. Hadley will abstain from voting on the re-designations. Ms.

Calabro will contact representatives from the two councils and encourage them to attend the public hearing.

4. Local Watershed Councils Grant Program

Grant proposals were due on or before October 15, 2013 and three have been received to date. Dr. Berounsky established a subcommittee of Ms. Calabro as lead, Mr. Lefebvre, and Ms. McGreavy to review the grant requests and report to the full council with a recommendation. The grant proposals will be voted on at the RIRC meeting on November 13, 2013 directly following the public hearing on re-designations. Due to their association with the watershed councils, Dr. Berounsky, Ms. Torello and Ms. Hadley will abstain from voting on their respective grant requests. Ms. Calabro will schedule a grant review meeting of the subcommittee and a grant summary sheet will be distributed to the full council prior to the November 13th meeting.

Discussion ensued regarding possible adjustments needed if the total grant requests exceed or fall below available funds. G. Lefebvre added that in the past funds were reserved to offset costs associated with special projects members hoped to advance such as printing of RIRC brochures. A suggestion for this year would be to gather documents, studies and maps currently stored in boxes at DOA and fund the creation of a library resource area for use by watershed councils. Dr. Berounsky asked Mr. Lefebvre to research the possibility and report back to the full council with findings and recommendations.

5. Reports by RIRC Representatives on State Committees

Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP): Dr. Berounsky noted that Mr. Galloway who is now the RIRC representative on the NBEP was unable to attend today's meeting and asked Dr. Colt to provide an update on NBEP activities. Dr. Colt reported that the NBEP is expanding its management committee which will consist of 24 members from Rhode Island and Massachusetts with Mr. Galloway being one of the recent Rhode Island appointees. The management committee met in September and approved the hiring of Tom Borden as the new director of the NBEP who will start next week. The management committee will be developing a number of initiatives including a review of the recent status and trends report and creation of a science advisory committee. The group will be focusing on bi-state issues (MA-RI) likely starting with the Blackstone River, and work closely with the BRWCT. Ms. Morrill asked whether the management committee would be reviewing the impact of failing septic systems on the Kickemuit River. Dr. Colt and Mr. Lefebvre clarified that although some members on the committee represent state regulatory functions and would be involved in specific regulatory and enforcement issues, the role of the NBEP is more of a planning and advisory function. Mr. Lefebvre inquired whether the BRWCT provides financial support to the NBEP and Dr. Colt responded that the BRWCT provides a non-cash match to the NBEP where missions of the two groups coincide. Dr. Colt added that due to sequestration of the federal budget, funding for the NBEP which has been reduced to \$525,000 will be shared with Massachusetts. Other operational changes taking place is that the NBEP fiscal agent role will be transferred from URI to NEIWPC and the NBEP will be moved to an office at the Foundry office building in Providence. The next management committee meeting is scheduled for December 18, 2013.

Bays, Rivers, & Watersheds Coordinating Team (BRWCT): Dr. Berounsky who is now the RIRC representative on the BRWCT reported that she and Mr. Colt attended the September 25, 2013 meeting of the BRWCT and asked Dr. Colt to provide an update. Dr. Colt reported that a new brochure was created to get the message out about the BRWCT's mission. Also, the BRWCT assisted in developing the RI Environmental Monitoring Collaborative 2012 Summary Report on environmental monitoring which identified 21 priority monitoring areas. More information is available on the BRWCT website at <http://www.coordinationteam.ri.gov/index.htm> The report highlights the growing concern that reductions in federal and state funding for environmental monitoring threaten our capacity to collect essential data for evaluating health (such as in monitoring water quality) and risk (such as monitoring for potential floods), guiding environmental management, and ensuring economic sustainability and development. Currently there is a 2 million dollar budget shortfall projected. Recognizing that the need for alternative funding

sources has reached a critical point, the BRWCT will be submitting a white paper budget request to the Governor's Office to demonstrate how the lack of freshwater beach monitoring, fish tissue sampling, and stream gauges directly impact public safety and economic development in the state. The RIRC and watershed groups who are connected to grassroots organizations could be extremely effective in helping the state address the lack of funding for environmental monitoring by contacting legislators and their membership to spread the message. Ms. Torello recommended that as a first step, each watershed group send out an email blast to their subscribers and others highlighting the issues and calling for action. The next meeting is scheduled for December 11, 2013.

State Guide Plan Advisory Committee (SGPAC): Ms. Calabro who is now the RIRC representative on the State Guide Plan Advisory Committee stated that she also plans to address the concerns raised by Dr. Colt in future meetings especially regarding the need for stream gauges, freshwater beach monitoring, and the importance of habitat protection. Ms. Calabro attended the September 24, 2013 meeting of the SGPAC and reported that a draft table of contents was developed and while the RIRC is not included as a direct part of this guide plan element; the Rivers Policy and Classification Plan should be included. Ms. Calabro and Mr. Lefebvre provided a brief background on the classification system used in the plan. Ms. Berounsky noted that the goal of the SGPAC is to issue a report before the end of the fiscal year in June 2014. Sue Kiernan of RIDEM is the committee chair; the next meeting is scheduled for October 22, 2013.

6. News of activities in Local Watershed Councils:

Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone reported by Ms. Hadley

- BRWC/FOM purchased a 4-wheel vehicle for trail maintenance and clean ups
- Cumberland/Lincoln Boys & Girls Club Blackstone River Duck Race 10/20/13

Friends of the Moshassuck as reported by Ms. Hadley

- FOM's Exec. Dir. Greg Gerritt's 60th Birthday Conference & Extravaganza 10/12/13

Salt Ponds Coalition as reported by Ms. Torello

- SPC Director Art Ganz has been very involved in the state's Shellfish Management Plan
- PC Board vacancies are being addressed
- Water Quality Monitoring continues
- Working on building relationships with URI faculty to form a "Science Advisory Council" including a civil engineer and others (subaqueous soils, wildlife, algal ecology, etc.)
- Work continues on the status and trends report focusing on 2008-2012
- The partial government shut down has affected SPC since they are locked out of their offices at the Federal Fish and Wildlife Kettle Pond Visitors Center for the duration.

Kickemuit River Watershed Council as reported by Ms. Morrill

- Additional KRWC brochures were printed for distribution & included in the Warren Times
- The interpretive sign at the Kickemuit River has been completed
- Plans for creating a 3D model for the schools are proceeding

Narrow River Preservation Society as reported by Dr. Berounsky

- Annual meeting held on 10/3/13 with excellent keynote presented by NRPA Board member Jon Boothroyd And former NRPA Board member Rosemary Smith was presented with the 2013 Friend of the River award
- Demonstration of a new free-standing display with a map of the watershed showing points of interest within the watershed such as Blueways trails and fishing access. The display is approximately 7' tall, lightweight, folds easily into a portable carrying bag and

costs less than \$250. Other watershed councils may be interested in purchasing one in the future and Ms. Berounsky offered to send more information on where the display could be purchased.

- Planning a speaker series for the months of January, February and March

Pawtuxet River Authority and Watershed Council as reported by Ms. Calabro

- The Natick Pond Dam Hydroelectric Project public meeting is scheduled for 11/7/13 with a walking tour from 2-3pm and joint public meeting from 3:30-6pm at the

Other Contributors:

- Mr. Lefebvre: Book presentation – *A History of the Providence River: With the Moshassuck, Woonasquatucket & Seekonk Tributaries* by Robert Geake. Ms. Berounsky asked Mr. Lefebvre to continue to monitor historical points that would be of interest to the RIRC.
- Mr. Cole reported on the successful completion of the Hope Valley Mill Dam at Mechanic Street in Hopkinton and presented an idea for a signage project at canoe/kayak crossings and launching locations throughout the state similar to those found throughout Connecticut. The signs would be small like “no-parking” signs but eye-catching to improve safety at crossings as well as to help locate canoe/kayak launching areas. Ms. Berounsky asked Mr. Cole to research possible locations and cost estimate and report back to the RIRC.
- Ms. Calabro reported that she is working with the RC&D Council on a river crossing continuity project taking place on the Blackstone River, is interested in its application to salt ponds, and will be providing more information to the RIRC.

Communication:

Dr. Berounsky initiated a discussion regarding the importance of the RIRC and watershed councils to communicate with each other and the public about our mission and activities. Suggestions include distributing RIRC meeting minutes to council members to help keep them informed on issues, holding monthly RIRC meetings in other watershed council locations when possible and invite speakers to attend, and increasing good content on the RIRC website including posting activities of councils such as annual meetings and events. Dr. Berounsky asked Mr. Lefebvre and Ms. Torello to look into what is required of the website hosting and report back with suggestions.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 6.02pm.

