



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



Minutes of April 9, 2014 Meeting - 4pm
RI Department of Administration
William Powers Building - One Capitol Hill
Conference Room B
Providence, RI 02908

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present:

Veronica Berounsky, Chair
Rachel Calabro, Vice Chair
Walter Galloway
Paul Gonsalves
Judith Hadley
Chuck Horbert
Guy Lefebvre
Lisa McGreavy, Secretary
Elise Torello

B. Guests in Attendance:

Alisa Richardson, RI DEM
Eugenia Marks, Audubon Society of Rhode Island
David Urban, Kickemuit River Council

1. **Call to Order:** Ms. Calabro called the meeting to order at 4:15 pm.

2. **Review and approval of March 12, 2014 meeting minutes:** Mr. Horbert moved to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Galloway seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. **Speaker Series:** Alisa Richardson, RI DEM: *"Hydropower: Do it or Dam it ~ A Sustainability Perspective"*:

Ms. Richardson offered an informative and entertaining presentation on the impact of severe storms on flooding such as Superstorm Sandy, the state's goals for increasing renewable energy through the use of hydropower, the siting of suitable locations for hydropower in the future, current status of hydropower projects and USFERC licenses, the advantages and disadvantages of hydropower, and the pros and cons of dams and dam removal. A lively discussion followed. Mr. Lefebvre said that RIRC's long standing policy has been to evaluate proposed dam related projects on a case by case basis and suggested further discussion occur on whether this policy should be changed to reflect the growing consensus that for the purposes of balancing water quality, fish passage and hydropower, dam removals are preferable to fish

ladders and should be advocated by RIRC. Ms. Richardson said hydropower potential in Rhode Island is minimal and concurred with the view that RIRC should consider favoring dam removal in most cases as a matter of ongoing policy. In some cases, dams are necessary for water supply, recreation, high value wetlands, historic value, and hydropower. In general, for fish, free flowing rivers are better than rivers with dams and fish ladders; and for water quality, free flowing rivers are better than rivers with dams.

4. Reports by RIRC Representatives on State Committees:

a. Narragansett Bay Estuary Program - Walter Galloway:

Mr. Galloway attended a meeting of the Management Committee which included presentations by Nick Wildman from MA Division of Ecological Restoration, and by Lynne Hamjian and Mel Cote from EPA New England. A new \$2 million federal funding initiative for fiscal year 2014 for coastal watershed restoration has been announced that will support the Southern New England Coastal Watershed Restoration Program (SNECWRP). The NBEP is requesting the RIRC provide a onetime state match of \$15,000 for the Restoration Program's grants, based on the RIRC grants which support the 2012 Update to the NBEP Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan. More information will be forwarded for consideration.

b. State Guide Plan Advisory Committee - Rachel Calabro:

The Advisory Committee recently met and completed a preliminary draft of the Water Quality element of the State Guide Plan. Nancy Hess from RI Statewide Planning will attend the next RIRC meeting on May 14 to present highlights of the report to the RIRC.

c. Bays, Rivers, & Watersheds Coordination Team – Veronica Berounsky:

On April 3, a subcommittee of Dr. Berounsky, Ms. Calabro, and Ms. McGreavy submitted a grant proposal to the RFP for the BRWCT FY2015 Work Plan Implementation Project Grant Program. The scope of the proposed project is two-fold: 1.) Identify potential projects in each of the 9 designated watersheds that directly address BRWCT goals and objectives for future implementation; and 2.) provide grant writing services to the watershed groups to build capacity and help watershed councils achieve their stated mission. A series of three meetings will be scheduled with three groups of three designated watershed councils to identify implementation projects in their watersheds that would be related to habitat improvement, stormwater management (including low impact development and green infrastructure techniques) or climate change adaptation recognizing that some watershed groups may instead have a need for a capacity building that would help expand education programs, update use of technology or enhance fundraising. At the end of the process, 6 projects would be identified that can be completed with funding assistance from the RIRC legislative grants or other funding sources. The RIRC would contract with a qualified environmental consultant who will develop conceptual designs and cost estimate for three projects. Today Dr. Berounsky met with members of the BRWCT to discuss the proposal and announced that the BRWCT conditionally approved grant funding of \$20,000 for 1 year subject to meeting with representatives of the BRWCT to further focus the grant scope of work. The BRWCT also approved putting a "placeholder" in their FY 2016 budget for additional funding which would be dependent on receiving positive feedback on the first year's activities and progress. Dr. Berounsky is scheduling to meet with the BRWCT

and will report back on the outcome of the meeting. The revised proposal is due before the next BRWCT meeting on June 11.

5. News of activities in Local Watershed Councils:

RIRC Grant Program Project Status reports: Ms. McGreavy reported that at this time she has received six of the 9 status reports that were due March 28, 2014 and will be sending follow up reminders. Final reports are due by June 30, 2014.

Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone reported by Ms. Hadley
The BRWC's Fish in the Classroom program has distributed fish eggs to five local schools. Checks have been distributed to four schools participating in the grant. The marketing and outreach segment of the grant is progressing with a design for a retractable banner and a rack card.

Salt Ponds Coalition reported by Ms. Torello:
Members are gearing up for another sampling season. The Spring 2014 newsletter was completed, distributed and posted on the SPC website.

Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association by Mr. Galloway:
The renovation of WPWA space is near completion and will be the venue for the WPWA Annual Meeting on May 28th, with Senator Sheldon Whitehouse the invited speaker. An ad hoc committee of the Board has been planning a three part series of presentations on inland climate change issues to be offered in June and July.

6. Committee Reports:

Outreach: Ms. McGreavy distributed the RIRC flyer that was previously circulated for comments and requested funding approval of \$90 to cover printing costs.

7. Officer Reports:

Treasurer: Ms. McGreavy distributed the monthly financial report.

8. Other Business:

Funding Request: On behalf of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, Ms. Eugenia Marks presented a request for funding of \$300 to explore the possibility of gathering a group together who would establish a Branch River Watershed Alliance. The funds would be used to cover postage, copying, gasoline/travel necessary to hold three meetings to try and interest residents of Glocester, Burrillville, and North Smithfield in organizing for water sampling, awareness of TMDL development in the watershed, and establishing a watershed group. It would be up to others to pursue designation with the RIRC. Mr. Galloway clarified from the RIRC watershed designation policy that watershed councils can encompass either 10 or 12 HUC level watershed areas; however, the sub-watershed group must obtain the blessing of the larger watershed which in this case would be the dual group of the Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone. Ms. Marks noted that it was not her intention to replace the functions of the existing watershed groups but rather to partner with them in focusing specifically on the Branch River. Ms. Marks offered to contact representatives of the BRC/FOB to present her idea and garner their support. Mr. Horbert made a motion to fund the \$300 grant request to the Audubon Society of Rhode Island/Eugenia Marks with the stipulation that Ms. Marks report on the outcomes by the end of January 2015. Ms. Calabro seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

9. **Chair's Report:** Dr. Berounsky noted that the RIRC plans to participate in the following upcoming events:
- Friday, April 25th Party for the Planet, RWP Zoo
 - Saturday, April 26th Earth Day Festival, EPA Lab in Narragansett
 - Saturday, July 12th Narragansett Environmental Awareness Day
10. **Adjournment:** There being no further business, Ms. Calabro moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Galloway. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:16 pm.