



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



Minutes of June 11, 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  
 James Cole  
 Walter Galloway  
 Judith Hadley  
 Chuck Horbert  
 Guy Lefebvre  
 Lisa McGreavy, Secretary

**B. Guests in Attendance:**

Arthur Eddy, Birchwood Design Group  
 Dana Warren, Kickemuit River Council

1. **Call to Order:** Dr. Berounsky called the meeting to order at 4:07 pm.
2. **Review and approval of May 14, 2014 meeting minutes:** Mr. Horbert moved to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Lefebvre seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
3. **Speaker Series:** Arthur Eddy, Birchwood Design Group: *“Green Infrastructure: A Perspective View from a Landscape Architect”*

Mr. Eddy noted that this year marks the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the landscape architecture firm he founded with Ms. Kris Bradner called Birchwood Design Group (BDG) which specializes in the movement of people and water and offers realty-based holistic landscape solutions that connect systems throughout an entire site. BDG has worked on many school projects which are inheritably suitable for green infrastructure and sustainability projects. Mr. Eddy spoke about the role of the landscape architect which is often a veritable jack of all trades. It is not just about plants although proper plant selection is vital. Mr. Eddy provided a general overview of green infrastructure, its challenges, and opportunities for better solutions. The RI Stormwater and Low Impact Design manuals are great resources and have been moving green infrastructure forward. Mr. Eddy said that he looks for opportunities to add green infrastructure whenever possible but there are challenges. One challenge is that some engineers are not yet convinced that green infrastructure will work as designed and is sufficient by itself without adding traditional

infrastructure. They often insist that traditional constructed structures be added to designs as a secondary measure; this is known as grey-green infrastructure. The problem with grey-green infrastructure is that it unnecessarily increases costs that could otherwise be targeted towards buying higher quality plants and adding other features such as seating areas and educational components that would make sites more attractive, usable, and effective. This leads to another challenge for landscape architects which is how to get people to appreciate the aesthetics of something other than green lawns, that is, appreciate native plants in their native habitat such as raingarden installations. Another challenge for landscape architects is that there is a lot of information and photographs on the internet that people see and want but it doesn't always work on their properties due to various constraints. There is often a lack of knowledge and training available to contractors building green infrastructure and therefore the landscape architect needs to provide detailed requirements such as correct soil mixtures and planting practices and be on site to oversee operations to insure the site is built as intended. Oftentimes the problem is with finding the right materials. It is a challenge to find good native stock in the amounts necessary as some jobs call for planting ½ acre sites although Rhody Native™ is improving their plant stock. Plant selection is important to make sure the right plant is selected for planting at the right place. Also, landscape architects focus on selecting plants that have low maintenance requirements and educate landowners that plants require a lifelong commitment to insure proper maintenance. Mr. Eddy presented a slideshow of green infrastructure projects his firm has installed. A lively discussion followed.

4. Reports by RIRC Representatives on State Committees:

**a. Narragansett Bay Estuary Program - Walter Galloway**

Mr. Galloway reported that the NBEP recently hired Courtney Schmidt as the new Staff Scientist. Courtney is a PhD graduate from the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School of Oceanography and has an extensive academic background in the critical issues in and around Narragansett Bay. The federal coastal watershed restoration \$2 million grant program received 20 to 25 proposals in response to the request for proposals. June 7 was the deadline and proposals are now under review. Funds need to be obligated by September 30 so decisions are expected soon. Tom Borden of the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program is asking the RIRC to review the draft Watershed Counts report as it refers to locations in your area and provide him with any necessary revisions.

**b. State Guide Plan Advisory Committee – Paul Gonsalves**

Mr. Gonsalves reported that the State Guide Plan is in the draft stage and the Advisory Committee will be meeting in two weeks to work on finalizing the draft.

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

Dr. Berounsky reported that the RIRC submitted a revised proposal to the BRWCT for \$18,150 and funding was approved for one year for three types of projects: 1.) On the Ground Implementation Projects focusing on small stormwater management projects that do not need permitting and may include Low Impact Development (LID), green infrastructure techniques, and/or riparian buffer projects; 2.) Water Quality Assessment projects to document how existing stormwater related projects are working; and 3.) Educational and Outreach projects including website updates. Funds will be distributed in July. Funding is for one year; however, additional funding of \$18,150 is possible for a second year if projects can demonstrate success.

5. News of activities in Local Watershed Councils

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

Ms. Hadley reported that RIRC grant funds were used to send out membership invitation letters and as a result membership increased by 33%.

Ten Mile River Watershed:

Mr. Horbert met with Ben Cote of the Ten Mile River Watershed who will be applying for designation with the RIRC.

Kickemuit River Watershed Council by Dana Warren:

Ms. Warren reported that the model maker hired with RIRC grant funds to construct a fish ladder model is doing a great job updating graphics and the project is progressing. The repair of a sewer line pipe which resulted in shellfish a closure in the Kickemuit River will cost the town \$350,000 to repair. The KRWC has already donated funds towards research and camering the sewer lines; however, the town currently does not have funding for the repair so they are looking for alternatives. Mr. Horbert referred Ms. Warren to Jay Manning for funding information, DEM, State Revolving Loan Fund.

Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association by Walt Galloway:

Mr. Galloway announced that the WPWA is hosting a lecture series entitled *Adapting the Watershed* on June 26, July 10, and July 24. The lectures are free and open to the public. All attendees will receive a free 12-month membership to WPWA.

Narrow River Preservation Association by Dr. Veronica Berounsky:

Dr. Berounsky reported that the NRPA will kick off a series of summer events starting this Saturday June 14 with "What's in the River?" and a "Sunset Paddle" on July 12. For more information, see the NRPA website at <http://www.narrowriver.org>. Water quality monitors have noticed an increase in algae blooms in the river and are not sure of the cause considering water temperature has been below normal.

Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council:

Mr. Galloway reported on the success of the recent fish count at Rising Sun Mills fish ladder in Providence noting that the DEM/Fish & Wildlife reported 39,000 alewives this year which was an increase from 13,000 the prior year. Jane Sherman, who founded the WRWC and who was prior Chair of the RIRC, received the prestigious International 2014 River Hero award by the River Network at their River Heros banquet in Pittsburgh on June 2.

Turtle Observations by Jim Cole:

Mr. Cole reported an increase in the number of turtle observations this year. Discussion ensued on possible causes and impacts.

6. Committee Reports: None

7. Officer Reports: Treasurer - Ms. McGreavy distributed the monthly financial report

8. Other Business: None

9. Chair's Report:



- Dr. Berounsky noted that the RIRC plans to participate in the following upcoming events:
  - July 12<sup>th</sup> Narragansett Beach Environmental Awareness Day
  - July 6-13 Paddle Across Rhode Island – The first attempt by a trio of experienced canoeists (including RIRC members Chuck Horbert and Jim Cole) to paddle north to south across the state of Rhode Island using primarily an inland route. For more information, see the event’s Facebook page or article in [www.exploreri.com](http://www.exploreri.com) .
- RIRC Grants: Status reports have now been received from all grantees. Final Reports will be due June 30, 2014 and distributed to the RIRC once they are received.
- Next meeting: The RIRC’s August 13 meeting will be held at the headquarters of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Council.

10. **Adjournment:** There being no further business, Ms. Hadley moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Cole. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:51 pm.