



The Rhode Island Rivers Council
 c/o RI Water Resources Board
 One Capitol Hill
 Providence, RI 02908
 www.ririvers.org



Minutes of September 10, 2014 Meeting - 4pm
 RI Department of Environmental Management
 Conference Room 280 - 235 Promenade Street
 Providence, RI

ATTENDANCE:

- A. Members Present:
 Veronica Berounsky, Chair
 Rachel Calabro, Vice Chair
 James Cole
 Walter Galloway
 Paul Gonsalves
 Judith Hadley
 Chuck Horbert
 Guy Lefebvre
 Lisa McGreavy, Secretary
 Elise Torello

- B. Guests in Attendance:
 Alicia Eichinger, Salt Ponds Coalition
 Tom Borden, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program
 Courtney Schmidt, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program
 David Urban, Kickemuit River Council
 Ernie Panciera, RI DEM

1. Call to Order: Dr. Berounsky called the meeting to order at 4:03 pm.

2. Review and approval of August 13, 2014 meeting minutes: Mr. Lefebvre moved to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Cole seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Speaker Series: RIRC member Chuck Horbert from DEM Office of Water Resources, RI Blueways Alliance, and the RI Canoe and Kayak Association: *Paddle Across RI - 2014*

Mr. Horbert presented a slideshow of the "epic trip" - *Paddle Across RI* that he and fellow RIRC member Jim Cole embarked upon in July with two other experienced paddlers. The trip which is also photo-documented on Facebook and in Canoe tripping.net was dedicated to promoting blueways and water trails throughout the state and becoming a resource for other paddlers. The team launched their



The RI Rivers Council is an associated function of the Rhode Island Water Resources Board
 Public Contact Information: Veronica Berounsky, Chair; Rachel Calabro, Vice Chair; Lisa McGreavy, Sec.

APPROVED 10/8/14

canoes at The Meadows Town Park on the Blackstone River in North Smithfield and 8 days, 10 rivers, 19 cities and towns, and 100 miles later, arrived at the coast and pulled out at the Barn Island boat ramp in Little Narragansett Bay in Stonington, CT. DEM Director Janet Coit credited the group with leading a "Recreation Revolution" and while there were many obstacles along the way including hot weather, strong winds, a 10 mile portage that had to be walked, and sedge-choked waterways that slowed them down, there were also some unexpected discoveries especially in the urban rivers including an amazing diversity of wildlife along the Route 95 corridor with sightings of many painted turtles, mallards and wide variety of birds including an American Bald Eagle at Belmont Park on the Pawtuxet River; surprisingly clean water in rivers historically documented for poor water quality, and a feeling of camping in the wilderness while only feet from main streets and railways. The group was grateful to everyone who helped them pull the trip together and for the "trail angels" who came out to cheer them on.

4. Reports by RIRC Representatives on State Committees:

- a. Narragansett Bay Estuary Program -
Mr. Borden presented an overview of the *2015 State of the Bay Report* that he will distribute to the council for input. The report will provide details on the status and trends of the environmental health of the Narragansett Bay watershed and will serve as the update to the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program's 2009 status and trends report. Mr. Borden introduced Dr. Courtney Schmidt who was recently hired as the program's staff scientist. Dr. Schmidt is requesting input specifically on the types of environmental indicators to be used and is also looking for available data sources.
- b. State Guide Plan Advisory Committee –
Mr. Panciera presented an overview of the Rhode Island Nonpoint Source Management Plan update which he will be distributing to the council for review and comments. Mr. Panciera explained how the management plan relates to the State Guide Plan, DEM's plans to develop watershed plans for all 26 watershed planning areas, as well as how eligibility for federal Program 319 funding will be limited to those cities and towns in watersheds with approved plans. Watershed plans have been completed for 2 of the 26 areas to date: the Bristol-Kickemuit River Planning Area and the Barrington-Palmer-Warren Rivers Planning Area. Aquidneck Island will be one of the near future priority areas for DEM watershed plan development. The department will be prioritizing the order of the remaining planning areas based on a number of factors including whether a particular watershed has an active council.
- c. Bays, Rivers & Watersheds Coordination Team –
Dr. Berounsky reported that she and Ms. Hadley attended the BRWCT meeting held earlier today whereby the Annual Work Plan for 2015 was presented. The plan which is also available on the BRWCT website

at <http://www.coordinationteam.ri.gov/documents/fy15work.pdf> outlines five implementation priority areas and eleven projects receiving funding this year including the BRWCT grant to the RI Rivers Council entitled Fostering Stormwater Management. "The RIRC, utilizing \$40,000 of BRWCT funding over two years, will work with select watershed councils to identify and implement small-scale projects that alleviate or address stormwater. The goal of this two-year project is that all RIRC watershed councils will undertake a concrete initiative in stormwater management, ranging from source remediation to education to leveraging smaller projects into much larger ones that could provide major benefits to river water quality and hence river users." The RIRC will be planning a series of meetings beginning this fall. More information to follow.

5. News of activities in Local Watershed Councils:

Blackstone River Watershed Council / Friends of the Blackstone: Ms. Hadley reported that \$400 was raised through a clothing donation drive at local Savers stores. Council members attended two meetings on the proposed reuse plan of the Proposed Cleanup Plan for Peterson/Puritan Superfund Site in Cumberland and Lincoln. The public comment period has been extended into October.

Kickemuit River Council: Dave Urban reported that the fish ladder model has been completed and will be presented at the October Rivers Council meeting. Council members have been very active in a number of areas including efforts to rectify a leaking sewer pipe adjacent to the Kickemuit River.

Friends of the Moshassuck: It was noted that a *Providence Journal* article by reporter Scott Turner featuring Greg Gerritt and the sighting of numerous menhaden in the river this year was posted in the September 20, 2014 edition:
<http://www.providencejournal.com/opinion/commentary/20140920-scott-turner-silver-dollars-in-providence-waters.ece>

Narrow River Preservation Association: Dr. Berounsky reported that NRPA's 44th Annual Meeting will be held on October 2 at the URI By Campus and will feature keynote speaker Dr. Ken Payne who was instrumental in the formation of the R.I. Rivers Council and the group's first Chair. Dr. Payne will recount the early years of the Council and discuss "the evolving and specifically important role of local watershed organizations." He will also talk about vital importance of ecosystem functionality in Rhode Island, especially in face of the uncertainties of the effects of climate change. More information is available on the website at www.narrowriver.org.

Salt Ponds Coalition: Ms. Eichinger reported on many Coalition activities taking place. The last kayak trip of the summer season will be held in September. Water quality sampling is almost done for the year. The SPS's annual meeting was held on August 17 with keynote speaker Pam Rubinoff from the URI Coastal Resources Center. The SPC planned an event with writer and artist Ardi Schneider who discussed her popular book entitled "Salt Pond Sleuths: Heron Brothers Encourage Conservation

Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association: Mr. Galloway was pleased to report that the WPWA recently received a U.S. Department of Interior Sandy Coastal Resiliency Grant to work with project partners to develop a comprehensive flood and storm damage resiliency management plan for the Pawcatuck River watershed. The project will benefit communities in Charlestown, Exeter, Hopkinton, Richmond, Stonington, and Westerly and help protect critical community infrastructure. Additional paddle events are planned through the fall. See www.wpwa.org for more information.

6. Committee Reports:

-Committee to review the new *DEM Fish & Wildlife Freshwater and Anadromous Fishing Regulations for the 2015-2016 Season*, dated August 1, 2014 and *2014 Rhode Island Freshwater Fishing Abstract*:

Mr. Cole reported that he had an informative and productive meeting with representatives of DEM Fishing and Wildlife Division on September 2, 2014 to discuss concerns that the new freshwater fishing regulations may unintentionally impact small paddling groups and other non-fishing activities. DEM provided clarification on the rules that were not intended to impact small non-organized groups and accepted Mr. Cole's recommendation to issue a public notice to the paddling community to further clarify the intent of the rule. Mr. Cole also recommended ways to improve communication with the paddling community in the future.

-Committee on new and re-designations:

Ten Mile River: Ms. Calabro attended the annual meeting of the Ten Mile River Watershed Council which is planning to apply for official designation to the Rivers Council.

Branch River: Mr. Horbert and Mr. Cole announced that Eugenia Marks of the Audubon Society of RI and the Blackstone River Watershed Council is inviting the public to an evening meeting to look at the Branch River's potential as a recreation and tourist hotspot on Wednesday, October 15 from 6 – 8 p.m., at Burrillville Middle School.

-Committee on RIRC Legislative grants:

FY2014 Grants: Ms. McGreavy reported that final grant reports that have been received for the FY2014 grants have been posted on the Rivers Council website at <http://www.ririvers.org/programs.htm>

7. Officer Reports:

Treasurer-Ms. McGreavy distributed the monthly financial report.

8. Other Business: None

9. Chair's Report: Dr. Berounsky reported that while the council has been functioning very well since the transition to many new members last summer, there is now a need to redistribute duties and one way to do this is through forming subcommittees of council members to work on specific projects and duties. Discussion ensued and members stepped up to volunteer for various posts. Ms. Calabro who will lead the Designation Committee which Ms. Hadley and Mr. Horbert joined. Ms. Calabro will also lead the Legislative Grant Committee which Mr. Cole joined. Dr. Berounsky will be contacting other members who have not been able to attend meetings to seek possible additional volunteers.

10. Adjournment: There being no further business, Mr. Horbert moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Hadley. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 pm.