



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



Minutes of February 11, 2015 Meeting - 4pm
RIDEM - Conference Room 280C
235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present:

Veronica Berounsky, Chair
Rachel Calabro, Vice Chair
James Cole
Walter Galloway
Paul Gonsalves
Chuck Horbert
Lisa McGreavy, Secretary
Elise Torello

B. Guests in Attendance:

Melissa Deciantis, RI DEM
Alicia Eichinger, Salt Ponds Coalition
Alicia Lehrer, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council
Denise Poyer, Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association

1. Call to Order of RI Rivers Council Meeting: Dr. Berounsky called the meeting to order at 4:07 pm. and introduced Ms. Deciantis who works with Ames Colt (BRWCT) in the DEM Director's Office. Ms. Deciantis has been assisting the Rivers Council with many administrative and grant related responsibilities. Ms. Deciantis' phone number will be listed as the RIRC contact phone number (222.4700 x2412) on the RIRC website and she will be receiving RIRC emails sent to info@rirc.org. Ms. Deciantis is also assisting efforts to locate a RIRC library space in the Director's Office

2. Reports by RIRC Representatives on State Committees:

-Narragansett Bay Estuary Program – Mr. Galloway said that there was no news to report

-State Guide Plan Advisory Committee – Ms. Calabro said there was no news to report

-Bays, Rivers, & Watersheds Coordination Team (BRWCT) –Dr. Berounsky reported that yesterday Dr. Ames Colt had a meeting with representatives of Governor’s Office and was told that he was not being re-appointed as Chair of the Bays, Rivers, and Watersheds Coordination Team. His last day in office is March 10. It is not known who or when anyone will become Chair. The BRWCT was established by the RI General Assembly, Section 46-31-3 and is primarily funded by septage disposal fees. The BRWCT remains in existence until terminated by the General Assembly.

- i. BRWCT funds to RIRC: Dr. Berounsky reported that she has been discussing with Dr. Colt about the status of the BRWCT funds that are already allocated for the RIRC. He will do all he can to make sure those funds remain for the RIRC. The last Stormwater Project Workshop takes place Thursday, Feb 19 and after that the RFP will go out.

3. Reports of activities in Designated Local Watershed Councils:

-Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone – no report

-Buckeye Brook Coalition – Mr. Horbert reported that one excavator is still stuck in the wetlands at Green Airport.

-Kickemuit River Council – no report

-Friends of the Moshassuck – Dr. Berounsky reported that she attended the Annual Meeting which was held at Greg Gerritt’s home on Saturday January 31. Ms. Hadley of RIRC also attended. There was a discussion about the Moshassuckcritters project and the upcoming tree planting project. There was interest expressed in water quality monitoring and also a Run & Walk event to increase awareness of the River.

-Narrow River Preservation Association as reported by Dr. Berounsky: The South Kingstown High School Science Fair (the only fair in the watershed this year) has been judged for environmental projects and the winner will be recognized in a reception at the March Board meeting. The Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership, part of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, today held a webinar on river herring restoration in Narrow River, particularly the Gilbert Stuart Stream and the freshwater headwaters. The fish ladder at Gilbert Stuart Stream needs minor repairs. The Shady Lea Dam will be removed. There is funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to develop restoration priorities to conserve river herring in six watersheds along the Atlantic Coast, including the Gilbert Stuart/Narrow River watershed.

-Pawtuxet River Authority- no report

-Salt Ponds Coalition as reported by Ms. Eichinger: They are working on aquaculture plan for the Ponds. Ms. Eichinger just finished a GIS course to learn



how to better map the Ponds. They are preparing for summer programs and are looking for additional children's program. They are also working on their membership drive. They expect to have some summer interns for research projects.

-Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association as reported by Ms. Poyer: RIRC member Ms. Torello has accepted a part time position as WPWA Program Coordinator. The bill for the National Wild & Scenic Rivers study passed last September and the National Park Service has schedule a kick-off meeting in March with representatives from RIDEM, CTDEP, The Nature Conservancy, and Save The Bay. The three-year study is expected to begin in the fall. The new 2-year Pawcatuck Watershed Flood Resiliency and Management Plan Project which was funded by a \$720,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Competitive Grant Program will develop a watershed management plan focusing on flood resiliency. The WPWA will be meeting with cities and towns with the goal of developing a set of actions and tools they can use to protect themselves from weather related events. The White Rock Dam Removal Project which is being led by The Nature Conservancy is proceeding and consultants for the project will be submitting an application to the DEM Wetlands Program soon. Many recreation programs are underway. Unfortunately the council was unable to secure funds for a very popular Urban Kayak Summer Program for children and is looking for alternative funding sources.

-Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council as reported by Ms. Lehrer: In addition to the many activities reported at the last meeting, cross country skiing has been popular along the bike path. Nicole Vance has been hired to replace Amada Blevins as Program Director to work on design initiatives and to coordinate volunteer groups of which there are 1,300 registered volunteers to date. The Council is looking to fill a new part time Education Director position and has received many qualified applicants. Ms. Lehrer and Ms. Poyer will be attending the National River Rally which will be held in New Mexico in May and will give their presentation on fish monitoring.

4. Speaker Series: Alicia Lehrer of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council and Denise Poyer of the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association: *Volunteer Fishing Monitoring – It's Shockingly Good!*

Ms. Poyer and Ms. Lehrer presented a slideshow illustrating a successful project they developed to create a volunteer based community fish restoration program using electro fisher backpack equipment. The goals of the project were to actively engage the community in water based issues; increase the knowledge of baseline water quality and habitat conditions in urban rivers; and disseminate information about rivers in urban areas. The project grew out of a Narragansett Bay Partnership called "Watershed Counts" and a USEPA Small Urban Rivers grant. Partners include the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association, Friends of the Moshassuck, and the Ten Mile River Watershed Council. The electro fisher backpack equipment is available for other councils

to borrow. For more information about the project and photos, see the WRWC website at http://www.wrwc.org/fish_monitoring.php

5. Committee Reports:
Mr. Cole provided an update regarding plans by the DEM Division of Fish & Wildlife to amend portions of the *2014 Rhode Island Freshwater Fishing Abstract* noting that a public hearing and workshop will be scheduled soon.

6. Officer Reports:
Treasurers Report: Ms. McGreavy distributed the monthly financial report.
New Designations: Ms. Calabro has been in contact with Clean Ocean Access which has been joined by the Aquidneck Island Watershed Council. The group indicated their interest in joining the RIRC in the fall. The Ten Mile River Watershed Council previously indicated their interest in joining the RIRC this fall. Ms. Calabro will coordinate with these groups in the future.
Branch River: Ms. Marks indicated that she would be submitting a final report this month.

7. Other Business:
 - Discussion on article "DEM Proposes Filling River Section to Build Bike Path", February 2015, ECO RI News. No action is needed at this time.
 - Discussion regarding recent correspondence with RIRC's Go Daddy webhosting account. Ms. Torello will forward correspondence.
 - RIRC Operations Manual & Calendar is needed.
 - The Rhode Island Flower Show is scheduled for February 19-21. Ms. Torello will be hosting a display for the RI Environmental Education Association.

8. Review and approval of January 15, 2015 meeting minutes: Ms. Torello moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Cole seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Chair's Report:
Dr. Berounsky reported that the Narragansett Bay Water Quality Stakeholder meeting is scheduled for February 27 at RIDEM. Discussion on RIRC official address and meeting locations but any changes will wait until after the BRWCT situation is clarified. RIRC has been invited by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council to hold our summer meeting on the Blackstone Explorer, there was interest but that will be considered at a later date. The 2015 RI Land & Water Summit is scheduled for March 14 at URI. RIRC will be hosting a table with the BRWCT.

10. Adjournment: There being no further business, Mr. Galloway moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Horbert. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 pm.