



**State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
Water Resources Board**

Justice William E. Powers Building, Third Floor
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WATER RESOURCES PROTECTION & USE COMMITTEE MEETING

(Formerly the Public Drinking Water Protection Committee)

MINUTES OF MEETING

March 5, 2008

Members Present:	Members Absent:	Staff Present:	Guests:	
Robert Griffith	Frank Perry	Juan Mariscal	Heidi Green	Russ Chateaufneuf
Liz Scott		William Riveroso	Eugenia Marks	Ray DiSanto
William Stamp, III		Beverly O'Keefe	Brenden Ennes	Henry Meyer
June Swallow		Kathleen Crawley	Barry Martasian	Alisa Richardson
Ian Morrison		Romeo Mendes	Nora Buckman	Wayne Sontag
Harold Ward		Emily Wild	Matt Wojak	James DeCelles
			Greg Granato	

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Griffith opened the meeting at 12:05 p.m., and noted a quorum was present.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. January 29, 2008 Meeting Minutes

With a **motion** by Mr. Stamp, seconded by Mr. Ward, the minutes of the January 29, 2008 meeting were approved.

2. January 9, 2008 Meeting Minutes

With a **motion** by Mr. Stamp, seconded by Ms. Scott, the minutes of the January 9, 2008 meeting were approved.

III. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

1. WATER SUPPLY SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT PLANS (WSSMP):

a) City of Pawtucket Water Supply Board (PWSB) 5 - Year Update Report / Request for Extension

Mr. Griffith introduced the item. Ms. O'Keefe reported this request is more appropriately a request to stop the review process of the plan. She stated staff review was completed for the plan and after discussion the General Manager contacted PWSB and requested to stop the review in order to

have additional time to review the plan and work with PWSB on identified areas of concern. She reported a letter was forwarded by PWSB to this effect. She recommended approval of the request to stop the review period, and work with staff on the identified concerns and a meeting be scheduled and an Update be resubmitted within 120 days of Board action. Ms. Scott asked that the other review agencies be informally polled for any concerns. Mr. Mariscal stated that we will invite the other agencies to any upcoming meetings.

Motion to approve the request was moved by Ms. Scott and seconded by Ms. Swallow; the motion was approved unanimously.

2. Presentation: USGS Project Proposal - Field Characterization and Numerical Simulation of Ground-Water and Surface-Water Interactions in Rhode Island Wetlands: Big River Watershed Case Study

Mr. Griffith introduced the item. Mr. Mariscal provided background information noting the Big River Development has been an ongoing project for many years. He stated that the Board formally took action in February of 2006 passing a motion directing staff to initiate the development of a RFQP for consulting services to move the project forward. He stated an ADHOC committee was established to bring this together, a proposal was produced and approved by the Board after many meetings with DEM incorporating their feedback and comments. He reported we requested a proposal from USGS which was received and reviewed by staff and DEM which generated additional comments. The proposal was refined. He noted the USGS proposal will include a bigger study as they are charged in developing a more scientific study producing much more data. This proposal will advance our efforts to address the environmental impacts from wells that would be developed in the Big River area and will also help us define a statewide process that could be used to develop wells in any other area. He recommended approval of the proposal.

USGS presented their proposal noting the goals of the project to be to increase our understanding of groundwater/surface water interactions including stream flow and water levels in the wetlands and in the vicinity of these wetlands. We also want to develop a methodology and the tools to assess the potential effects of pumping in the wetlands. Mr. Granato noted they are choosing the Big River area because there already is a lot of information on that system. He stated the benefits of this project would give us detailed data collection and reconnaissance with model simulations in groundwater/surface water interactions in wetlands and several potential well sites. He discussed the funding sources and timeline of the project. The RIWRB would fund \$320,000.00 over three fiscal years. The USGS is funding \$250,000.00 plus \$25,000.00 in in-kind services. He added that Dr. Goulet of URI will be mentoring and giving technical oversight on the project and USGS will hire a URI graduate student to work in the field.

Ms. Scott reported that DEM forwarded peer review comments to the Board regarding this proposal and they have concerns whether this is really the right step to be taking if the primary interest is to be able to gather the information needed to be able to move forward with well development in Big River.

Mr. Mariscal stated this is not the only work we are going to be doing. We have to lodge the RFQ/P which will compliment and supplement this USGS proposal. We are not asking USGS to put together any type of permit application. What we have here is the opportunity to put together a scientific study with practical applications. Ms. Scott questioned the cost considerations for this project.

Ms. Swallow asked if we were to focus more directly on just the things we need to do to get the wetlands permit how long will it take. Mr. Chateaufeuf of DEM explained first we need to fully understand what USGS is going to do is really a scientific investigation which is not necessarily something that is necessary to be done for permitting of the Big River wells – there are other ways to get information and it is done all the time. He stated he didn't disagree with the USGS proposal in that it would produce a great scientific study but it is important for the committee to understand from DEM's perspective that this work is not something that DEM is saying is necessary to get a permit for this project. He added, if the goal is to move quickly on getting the wells done then there are things that can be done instead of this four to five year study to get the needed information. Discussion ensued.

USGS asked what are the other methods to be used to measure the impacts on the wetlands. Mr. Chateaufeuf stated one can run small scale pump tests. USGS stated these aquifer tests are only snapshots in time and does not have predictive capability for future scenarios like withdrawals and changes in precipitation whereas a model can do – forward looking scenarios.

Mr. Stamp asked if a more complete study would give us better scientific input for us to make a decision because it should not be a decision just to protect the fauna but in terms for people we are trying to supply with water and also the environmental concerns. Mr. Chateaufeuf stated there are other alternatives for getting data that could be obtained in a shorter time frame – if the goal was to get this project out the door sooner than later and there is other data that needs to be gathered as part of understanding what the impacts of the wetlands would be.

Mr. Meyer stated this is a great scientific experiment but expressed his concerns due to the reality of the politics of the day where the WRB should be cautious and use available funds to move forward with wells to develop additional sources for the state. Mr. Morrison stated we should not rush into something until we know exactly what the nuts and bolts are.

Ms. Swallow stated the USGS study is an excellent study and very consistent with the longer and broader vision of the WRB. This should go forward if it can but is feeling sensitive to the Governor's charge and feel we need to move ahead with the permitting of the wells in Big River.

Mr. Griffith stated the General Manger has asked the committee to recommend to the Board that this proposal be approved and the General Manager be directed to do what is appropriate and necessary to initiate the study. Mr. Griffith stated a more appropriate recommendation would be to commend this to the Board for further review and discussion in conjunction with a written presentation by DEM regarding the alternatives they site and the cost of those alternatives so the Board can make a reasoned judgment as to how best to proceed.

Mr. Griffith expressed his concerns regarding resource restraints.

Mr. Ward asked if the state funds are at risk if not committed. Ms. Crawley stated yes and provided a explanation. Mr. Ward added it is relevant to commit the funds quickly.

Motion for the proposed study to be forwarded to Board with the recommendation be considered in conjunction with DEM's alternative proposals both in terms of how they will best meet our requirements to go forward and develop the well field and also with our cost constraints to be presented at the next Board meeting was moved by Ms. Swallow and seconded by Mr. Stamp; the motion was approved. The vote in favor was unanimous and the motion carried.

3. Proposal: USGS: South County Groundwater Well Real Time Monitoring System

Mr. Griffith introduced the item. Mr. Mariscal provided background information regarding discussions of drought conditions especially affecting South County. He explained those discussions made it evident that there is a need for “near real-time” reporting of the 39 groundwater monitoring wells. He noted at this time there is only one well in Richmond that provides this near real-time reporting. He reported a request for a proposal for four “near real-time” internet-based reporting well was made to USGS. He stated that by taking costs into consideration he is recommending the funding of two existing wells be converted to “near real-time” to establish the basis for an early and continuing groundwater alert system for South County with the locations for these wells to be defined based on discussions between WRB and USGS staff. Discussion ensued for clarification on what the project would produce.

Motion for approving converting two wells to near real time internet based reporting was moved by Ms. Scott and seconded by Mr. Ward; was approved unanimously and the motion carried.

4. Statewide Water Conservation Program: Juan Mariscal, General Manager

Mr. Griffith introduced the item. Mr. Mariscal reported that in the next two to three weeks he would hold a workshop to outline a series of actions that we would be recommending towards a statewide Board conservation program. He stated he interested in getting feedback on some concepts before bringing it to the Board.

IV. STAFF REPORTS:

1. Drought Management Program – Drought Condition Update

Mr. Griffith introduced the item. Ms. O’Keefe reported precipitation is increasing significantly. She added preliminary reports are showing groundwater wells are responding. She stated a Drought Steering Committee meeting will be held on March 20th and we continue to monitor conditions.

2. Water Supply Systems Management Plan Program - Update

Mr. Griffith introduced the item. Ms. O’Keefe reported that we continue to receive, review and prepare review comments. Mr. Griffith asked if the Moratorium has begun to be felt in terms of the workload. She reported the six to eight plans that were found to be in non-compliance are beginning to come in and meetings are being held with suppliers. Mr. Mariscal stated we are continuing to do what is required. Discussion ensued on the handling of the “Moratorium”.

3. Groundwater Protection/Acquisition Program - Update

Mr. Griffith introduced the item. Mr. Riverso reported the Board approved project off Heaton Orchard Road is moving forward as DEM Legal staff has been assigned, who is drafting the P & S Agreement. He stated a consulting engineer has been hired to prepare a Class I Survey and we will be going before the Richmond Town Planning Board for subdivision approvals. He added staff has met with the Owners attorney and consulting engineer. He reported that there is an adjacent property on the market to the Richmond Airport well site, which we are looking at for a well site.

He stated more research needs to be done regarding a well site placement on the property. He reported regarding the Town of Richmond application for well site property reimbursement, they have submitted additional but not complete documentation. They did submit quantity evaluations. He stated in their follow up request they are asking for funding under the Watershed Protection and since they do not participate in that program we will be responding they do not qualify for that program. We plan on meeting with the Town Manager or Planner to help them in whatever way we can regarding any additional sites in the area. He reported in regards to well site RIW 696 in the Hope Valley area, follow up conversations tell the owner is still interested in developing his own supply well there. Ms. Scott if the USGS modeling recommendations for the adjacent property to the airport could be forwarded to DEM. Mr. Rivero stated he will forward the information.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS:

VII. ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Griffith adjourned the meeting at 1:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

William Rivero
WRB Programming Services Officer

Note: The complete proceedings of this meeting are available on audiotape by request.
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