



## **RHODE ISLAND BAYS, RIVERS, & WATERSHEDS COORDINATION TEAM**

**Expanded Meeting: Governor's Narragansett Bay and Watershed Summit**

**September 26, 2006  
Save the Bay Center  
Providence, Rhode Island**

### **Meeting Minutes**

CT Members in Attendance: Sullivan, Tikoian, Uva, Kiernan, Mariscal, Kerr, Kaplan, Flynn.

Other Meeting Participants: Governor Donald Carcieri, NOAA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere Timothy Keeney, EPA New England Deputy Regional Administrator Ira Leighton, Save the Bay Executive Director Curt Spalding.

CT Staff: Colt, Stanziale.

Prior to the arrival of Governor Carcieri, Colt called the Coordination Team meeting to order at 8:30 AM at the Save the Bay Center

It agreed to schedule the next monthly meeting to Wednesday October 25 (subsequently rescheduled to November 1) to take place at the Department of Administration and for Flynn to lead a presentation and discussion of Land Use 2025.

It approved the meeting minutes of its previous monthly meeting held August 23, 2006.

Colt briefly reported on his activities and goals as Coordination Team Chair.

- Nominated by Governor Carcieri and approved by the RI Senate in June, 2006; spent July and August transition out of RI Sea Grant to begin full-time as Chair on September 5.
- Considers it important to focus on the General Assembly's mandates for the CT:
  - Develop a Systems Level Plan – a strategic overview plan with flexibility to be updated. Activities of state need to be evaluated based upon the plan. Chair cannot be solely responsible for writing the Systems Level Plan. Need to engage in a stakeholder processor in producing the Plan. Hope to have a draft for public review by the end of 2007. Hopefully can

convene another Summit next fall to discuss a draft plan of no more than 30-50 pages.

- In performance of CT duties good communications will be key.
- \$250,000 of OSPAR funds were allocated by the General Assembly for environmental & economic monitoring. The CT will continue to seek additional funds for monitoring in the next legislative session.

At this point Governor Carcieri arrived and the Governor's Narragansett Bay and Watershed Summit formally commenced.

### **Governor Carcieri**

- Two years ago, he convened the Governor's Narragansett Bay and Watershed Planning Commission that produced a series of recommendations with the overall goal to clean up & preserve Narragansett Bay. The Planning Commission's recommendations were an important start. He welcomed the leadership of Colt to pursue the implementation of those recommendations via the Coordination Team. The Coordination team has lost some time and its agenda has stalled. Need to bring together key players to move agenda forward faster. Was not pleased that monitoring proposals were not passed by the GA the last 2 years. Put ballot initiation forward 2 years ago, which passed. Did again last year but it failed to pass.
- Will submit a Clean Water Bond proposal for \$85 million next year. Need to redouble our efforts to ensure its passage. Need more champions in GA on both sides of the aisle. And we need them in leadership positions. This is an important part of his agenda.
- Implementing separation of powers referendum remains a concern and it is important for the Governor and the public to remain vigilant.
- He is not interested in rehashing accomplishments. We need to move forward. Must develop a plan and a means to identify GA champions.
- He thanked Representatives Roberts, Story, Ehrhardt, and Senator Susan Sosnowski for attending the Summit, as well as Ira Leighton and Tim Keeney.
- CSO abatement project is moving forward on time & on budget. Need to get enthusiasm up. Infrastructure and new Management initiatives are now in place. Let's move forward.

Colt then made some additional opening remarks

- Governor Carcieri requested that the CT organize this summit in order bring together leaders, review accomplishments, challenges, and delineate the next steps
- At 11:45 he will ask Governor Carcieri to make some summary remarks at the conclusion of the Summit. The minutes from the Summit will be distributed via the CT web site.

Colt briefly recounted the recent history of collaborative research and planning for Narragansett Bay:

- 2000 NB Summit: Organized by Tom Ardito and Richard Ribb of the NBEP, the 2000 Summit helped to revive an interest in comprehensive, integrated planning for the Bay and its watershed.
- NB Partnership, 2000 – 2003: Formed immediately after 2000 Summit, with leadership from Pete August as Director of the URI Coastal Institute and many others, The Partnership was intended to serve as a means to promote communication and integration for NB and coastal RI. Funded a series of reports on the History of Planning for NB, economic values, ecological indicators, and development of a vision for the future state of Narragansett Bay.
- Summer of 2003: Beach Closures & Greenwich Bay fish kill: Galvanized public attention on Narragansett Bay. Led directly to creation of Governor's Narragansett Bay and Watershed Planning Commission.
- Governor's Narragansett Bay and Watershed Planning Commission
  - Convened by Governor Carcieri in October 2003 by Executive Order and chaired by former Governor Garrahy.
  - 10 panels reported separately on all major management topics to support strategic planning recommendations produced by the Commission
  - Issued in March 2004 a Report entitled: Phase I Strategic Work Plan: Short-Term Recommendations
- Report to the RI Senate: Habitat-Based Management for RI's Marine Environment.
  - Adopted in February 2004 by the Senate Committee on Government Oversight and the Senate Committee on Environment and Agriculture
  - Addressed Commission recommendations on adaptive management
- RI House of Representatives Bay Trust Study Commission
  - Submitted in March 2004 a Report on Findings and Recommendations to the RI General Assembly
  - Addressed Commission recommendations for better coordination by proposing the Coordination Team as means for executive agencies to develop a more efficient governance framework and facilitate joint legislative oversight, policy development, and support
- 2004 State Legislation
  - Established DEM authority for watershed management and strengthened RI Rivers Council authority to promote and invest in local watershed and river management capacity
  - Broadened capacity of the RI Marine Fisheries Council to cover marine fisheries issues.

- Empowered DEM to develop and implement a plan to manage nutrients and prevent and eliminate conditions of eutrophication.
- Created the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative with a mandate to adopt a statewide monitoring strategy for the waters of Rhode Island to support systems level planning.
- Created a mandate for the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council to develop and implement a Marine Resources Development Plan
- Created the Rhode Island Bays, Rivers, and Watershed Coordination Team with a mandate to:
  - a. Improve coordination and partnership program among state and interstate agencies and programs managing RI's coastal and watershed resources, and between RI.
  - b. Develop and implement a Systems-Level Plan for the state and the Bay's watershed.
  - c. Report to the Governor and the General Assembly on what's required to implement the Plan, and progress toward its vision and goals.
- 2006 OSPAR funding for CT monitoring activities
  - 250K in funding for environmental and economic activities
  - Summer 2006 Appointment of CT Chair
- Near-term CT activities for 2006 and 2007
  - Continued investments in Environmental & Economic Monitoring that will among other goals support development and implementation of a Systems Integration Plan
  - Begin the stakeholder process to develop the SIP
  - Conduct an annual state of the bay and watershed Review

Colt then asked for selected, brief presentations by the CT members and leaders of its four subcommittees:

**Peter August –Environmental Monitoring Collaborative and URI's Coastal Institute**

- Reviewed the membership of the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative including his co-chairs Sue Kiernan of RI DEM & Tom Uva of NBC. The Monitoring Collaborative is a diverse group that promotes communication between agencies – a critical part of its mission.
- Lots happening in Narragansett Bay. CSO abatement, Nutrient reductions. There are scientifically credible projections for a one-meter rise in sea levels over the next 50 years. Monitoring will be needed to track these changes. Beaches, public health and safety, macroalgae tracking.
- The Collaborative has prioritized 13 monitoring needs – fixed sites, enhance stream flow monitoring, etc. Enhance USGS monitoring of rivers coming into the state as ~ 85% of nutrients in NB coming from out-of-state. Rotating fresh water basin monitoring; Enhance capability to get and maintain WQ data; DO

monitoring; Fish tissue sampling- is it safe to eat? Invasive species; Baseline data to determine impacts of spill impacts; Lake and stream monitoring.

### **Mike Sullivan– RI DEM. Nutrient & Bacteria concerns**

- DEM has established goal of attaining Narragansett Bay water quality of swimmable, fishable, playable.
- We have spent all previous bond funds. Open Space Funds almost spent.
- Need to pass Cesspool Phase Out legislation that last year fell 3 votes short of passage in the General Assembly.
- We will need additional funds for clean water infrastructure.
- RI has a strong No Discharge Program.
- Project Clean Sweep-Federally funded project to remove large debris from NB.
- Beach closures down, storm water plans being implemented. Point Sources better controlled.
- NBC spending \$170 million on plant upgrades.
- Other sewer authorities need to step up.
- We need EPA to effectively regulate Mass. WWTF's, particularly with regard to nitrogen control.

### **Tom Uva- Narr. Bay Commission**

- Things have changed-1995 best in this nation WWTF-Best pretreatment systems- Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Providence have the oldest WWTF in the US.
- CSO Abatement Project will provide 62 million gallons in overflow control capacity. Scheduled for startup in October 2008 and will achieve 90% reduction of CSO releases, reducing shellfish closures by 80%.
- Bucklin Point WWTF now equipped latest technology. Major reductions in untreated sewage overflows achieved over the last five years.
- Nutrients:31% reduction this summer in nitrogen discharges with Bucklin Point WWTF having achieved a 65% reduction.
- Massachusetts River Monitoring indicates that NBC is responsible for ~15% of Nutrients in the Bay and Mass. Rivers inputs responsible for 85%.

### **Mike Tikoian-CRMC**

- Habitat Restoration a major goal for CRMC. 25 restoration projects
- 250K annual appropriations from GA for habitat restoration that provides match for leveraging federal funds for projects in partnership with USF&W and ACOE.
- Recent issuance by CRMC of Marine Resources Development Plan; designed to coordinate and develop tools to apply an Ecosystem-based management approach to CRMC's management responsibilities.
- Special Area Management Planning- Currently in place for Greenwich Bay, Salt Ponds and other parts of the Bay.
- SAMP update underway for "Metro Bay area.

### **Kevin Flynn-Statewide Planning**

- Issuance of Land Use 2025. Assess current land use trends and sets goals for what RI will look like in 2025.
- Land currently being developed in RI at 9 times the rate of the population growth. Emphasized need to have sustainable growth. Growth should be directed into areas that are sewerred, have adequate drinking water supplies, and transportation corridors. Urban planning needs to be mindful of the bay.
- Historic tax credit remains important for encouraging development in urban cores of the state. Grow Smart RI Planning Ballot #9-Affordable Housing includes \$550 K in challenge grants to support good planning in RI.
- RI must do a better job to track growth, and work with municipalities up front on comprehensive plans.

### **Meg Kerr-RI Rivers Council**

- The work of the Coordination Team cannot be done without the assistance of local grassroots organizations such as: Save the Bay, Audubon Society, RI's 39 Conservation Commissions, 45 Land Trusts, and 12-15 Watershed Councils. We can not restore our bays, rivers and watersheds without the full support and help of these critically important organizations.
- The core mission of the Rivers Council is to develop policies to enhance and protect rivers and their watersheds and to empower local organizations as partners in policy implementation. Through our work we provide guidance and mentoring to local grassroots organizations.
- Emphasized the importance of fostering partnerships & good planning (projects don't happen without good planning). Planning must be at both the state and regional level and at the local watershed level. The plans must resonate with local community comprehensive plans because these plans direct our development.
- The purpose of the Coordination Team is to facilitate coordination between the agencies involved. The lack of state and regional coordination is often difficult for agencies but is much more difficult for the grassroots organizations who often get tangled in the lack of coordination among these agencies. The participation of the grassroots organization is critical to the advancement of the CT agenda.
- We need to provide resources, and not just money, to local conservation organizations in order to accomplish our goals. A critical piece is , timely access to data and data management assistance.

### **Timothy Keeney-NOAA**

- Stressed that success on regional/local level needs to come from partnerships. Governor is bringing people together such as NOAA, Sea Grant, URI and

- others. Rhode Island has received recently \$29 million in NOAA grants for dredging and disposal, monitoring, and habitat restoration.
- Despite good collaboration between NOAA and RI, RI continues to struggle. Adequately fund programs in habitat restoration and other forms of bay management budget.
  - The NOAA agenda is moving forward slowly even though there has been a lot of work on ocean planning.
  - Warned that a great deal of money is being spent on projects that take nutrients out of the Bay. Where can the money be best spent? What will be the effects of these new nitrogen controls?
  - Called for state support of the Narragansett Bay Windows program. 80% of nitrogen inputs into Bay comes from Massachusetts. Nutrients monitoring were recently added to Bay Windows Program. \$1.2 Million per year is needed to fund the Bay Windows program adequately.
  - NOAA recommends and is developing an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management, including developing NB monitoring baselines. Praises DEM & URI for showing great leadership in working with the NOAA, but Bay Windows is a congressionally earmarked program. This is problematic as future federal funding cannot be assured.
  - Monitoring is an important part of the solution. E.g., Invasive species need to be monitored before they take over.
  - SAMPS are important tools for coastal development/ecosystem planning because they provide a means for incorporating flexibility and adaptiveness in reaching coastal zone management goals.
  - Urged Rhode Island to look beyond its border for regional solutions via the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) that could serve as a way to elevate Rhode Island problems to a regional group. NOAA is looking for regional ocean management priorities to be delineated by NROC.

### **Curt Spalding-Save the Bay**

- It took a community effort to get the new Save the Bay Center built. Will take the same to enhance Narragansett Bay protection and management.
- Emphasized need to improve communications in Bay issues.
- Reviewed the Status of Narragansett Bay
- Not a lot of nutrient reductions: waiting for investments in reduction at point sources to take effect. But progress has so far been marginal.
- Hypoxia is worsening in the bay. What are and will be the consequences of water temperature increases in Narragansett Bay? What will be the impacts of future development?
- Toxics: there have been improvements in the upper bay.
- But Pathogen concentrations are worse, resulting in more beach and shellfish area closures.
- The upper bay has odor problems as well as beach closures.
- A clean Narragansett Bay is essential for economic progress.

- Need stronger point source discharge permits in Mass. & RI.
- Also need Clean Water Bond funds to finance storm water controls, cesspool phase-out, and full implementation of monitoring. Bay monitoring alone estimated to cost \$2 million annually.
- Bottom Fish stocks still show inadequate recovery. Migratory species such as herring, alewife also not recovering. Lobsters down, oysters down. But there is good news on seals
- Fish passage projects need to move forward
- Shoreline habitat up, eelgrass restoration up, salt marshes up. There is better CRMC management program
- Community Connections: Re-open beaches, and enhance recreational fishing access. Need to provide funding to CRMC Program to meet these goals. Upper bay rban beaches: There are great beaches that should be restored for the public.
- The state needs a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Management Strategy for Narragansett Bay.
- Currently Rhode Island is 49<sup>th</sup> in per capita spending on environmental resource management. The only state doing worse is Massachusetts!

#### **Ken Kubic-RI Marine Trades Association**

- RI needs more marinas to meet current and projected recreational boating demand.
- Praised the Jewels of the Bay program
- Only 1 percent of NB can be accessed directly by the public. Thus recreational boating enables people to access the entire Bay.
- Need to re-assess CRMC's water activity classification systems in conjunction with DEM's water quality classification system.
- RI needs regulatory relief: EPA should back off of RI & also help to control MA sources of nutrients entering the bay via the rivers.
- Boating industry does not discharge wastes into Narragansett Bay.
- Can help with Bay management and protection, but the state needs to grow the boating industry in order to ensure a future healthy Narragansett Bay

#### **Saul Kaplan-Economic Development Corporation**

- Economic development and environmental management are not mutually exclusive issues.
- Need to enhance Rhode Island quality of place in order to strengthen its economy, and vice versa.
- Sustainable jobs in Rhode Island: What is the quality of growth? We are not interested in growth for growth's sake. Need steward both Rhode Island's environment and economy. The Econ. Development Corp. and the RI Economic Policy Council support the CT mission.
- There is a need to monitor both the economic and environmental conditions WRT.

- We need to monitor commercial, fish, aquaculture. Port security waterfront, real estate
- Look at 1-5 year time frame for strategically managing Narr. Bay
- Need to scope management strategies and priorities. This is the first step to develop system levels plan.

**Ira Leighton- US EPA: New England**

- o EPA implements NPDES permitting program in MA.
- o Attleboro & North Attleboro WWTF Nitrogen and Phosphorus limits
- o In permitting discharge permit for Brayton Point power plant, EPA N.England took a strong stand working closely with DEM and MA
- o There are forums to discuss nutrients in the region.

**Juan Mariscal-RI Water Resources Board**

- We need to manage in a more consolidated manner water supply resources and infrastructure.
- We need to be more efficient in our water supply system investments and operations. It is important to maintain better current water supply facilities.
- The WRB is partnering with DEM and the RI Environmental Council on Water Supply Safety/Work with DEM/Rhode Island Environmental Council developed at 20-page handout concerning water supply protection and sustainable utilization.

**Comments**

Upon completion of the invited presentations, Colt opened the meeting up to comments and questions from the audience.

**Judith Swift-URI**

- o Our management systems focus too much on the short term and there is an urgent need to consider long-term planning, especially with respect to global warming issues.

**Janet Coit -Nature Conservancy**

- o Thanked state for open space work and funds.
- o Stressed need to protect forests, water, and watersheds. Need to focus on acquisition, restoration, and stewardship.
- o Habitat protection is important.
- o Need to prevent forest fragmentation.

**Michael Rauh-Washington County Trust**

- Sensed a lack of urgency with regard to bay management planning
- The Systems Level Plan needs to be prepared in much less than 18 months.
- Expressed concern that Ames has responsibilities to improve coordination and effectiveness, but no authority to do so.
- There is a lack of support in the Legislature, which needs to form a NB caucus.

### **Scott Wolf-Grow Smart RI**

- Transportation issues were not raised in presentations. If we are to manage non-point sources of pollution, need to look at mass transport opportunities.
- There is a lot happening in Pawtucket, Wickford, etc. Need to reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- Environmental management efforts need more transportation emphasis.

### **Mike McGiveny-RI Shellfish Association**

- CSO discharges have profound industry impacts in terms of area closures. The shellfish industry needs better access to growing areas and better marketing.
- Noted the recent passing of Luther Blount.
- Promoting clams and oysters seeding and cited the hatchery at Roger Williams Univ.
- Called for the expansion of bay shellfish resources as a means of filtering pollutants such as excess nitrogen and improving water quality.
- Noted that \$4,000,000 has been recently invested on state aquaculture industry development via the RI Aquaculture Initiative.

### **Jennifer McCann-URI Coastal Resources Center**

- 21 ft. storm surge up the bay is possible with a major hurricane. Expressed concern that policies developed for Coastal development do not account adequately for this possibility.
- There are best management practices that can be developed for those areas to increase hurricane response and community resiliency.

### **Richard Ribb-NB Estuary Program**

- Short and long term planning orientations have been discussed in the past.
- Resources available to revise the existing CCMP for NB and to coordinate efforts particularly with Massachusetts.
- Need to have a communication plan to energize the public.
- Agreed with Scott Wolf on transportation focus.

### **Don Pryor-Brown Univ.**

- The Science Advisory Committee (SAC) has reviewed the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative's stated priorities and will work to better coordinate research in the state. The scientific community is ready to work together to support this goal.
- Ames needs to work with the CT's four subcommittees to keep the scientists engaged in SAC, Econ, Monitoring Collaborative, Env. Monitoring Collaborative and Public Advisory Comm.
- Through the four subcommittees, grass roots support for CT efforts can be generated.

**Walt Combs-Department of Health**

- The Department of Health needs to continue to work with DEM and the Depart. of Transportation to identify and fund solutions to seasonal beach closures.
- The Depart. Of Health I working on testing procedures and modeling to re-open closed beaches more quickly.

### **Margarita Pryor-US EPA**

- What is governor's view?

### **Governor Carcieri**

- Bay and Watershed Planning Commission Phase I report lists management goals and targets. We know what needs to be done. How do we move faster? Our overall goal should be to make bay clearest and nicest in the USA.
- This bay was a dumping ground for the last 100 years. We are in the process of cleaning up. Invasive species is a problem. Look at plan for details.

### **Linda Green-Watershed Watch**

- 400 citizens working at water quality monitoring around the state. Long waits for monitoring results.
- Important to improve the rate at which monitoring results are assessed and distributed.

### **Curt Spalding- Save the Bay**

- Trends in alewives, bay warming, and scientists dialoging on rising sea levels. Yet as a whole as a public and as a government we react to events. We need to plan and be more proactive to address future issues and threats.
- Need to get the scientific data out, analyzed and keyed into better policy implementation.

### **Angelo Liberti- RI DEM**

- State gives local governments the right to form storm water management districts.
- Building capacity at the local level is an efficient way to address storm water management.

### **David Gregg-Natural History Survey**

- Need to break down stove pipes especially with regard data sharing.
- Invasive species are a problem. Need to develop invasive species plan. Not asking for new organization, just better coordination.

### **Tom Uva-NB Commission**

- Need to leverage our opportunities in Rhode Island and also for federal funds.
- Build a better data system that can archive and distribute data.

**Gov. Carcieri's concluding remarks**

- Issue of NB management is back front and center. We have a plan. We can adjust it but we have enough to move forward. Economic development relies on environmental management and stewardship of the resources we have. People are attracted to attractive places.
- People are now starting to move back to cities. Now that cities are attractive, they are migrating back there. Infrastructure is already there. We are working on Mass transit improvements such as the new air/rail intermodal connection at TF Green Airport and a regional commuter rail connection to be extended down to Wickford Junction.
- We can grow because of the higher education institutions in the state that support innovation, i.e. institutions within 60 miles of Rhode Island. We have the key for success, we just need to implement plan. Need to get geared up for the next legislative session.
- We need to prioritize our needs. How do we do that?
- We need the champions in the GA. Not enough currently for NB. Need therefore to pull together to push the agenda for bay management in the General Assembly. Let's get the program to sell but be careful not to get drawn into the wrong debates strategically.
- He will put requests into his budget proposal for FY 2008. They need to stay in the final budget passed by the General Assembly.

At 11:45 Colt adjourned the CT Meeting and Summit.