



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

**May 2, 2007**

**2:00 – 4:00 p.m.**

**Narragansett Bay Commission Boardroom  
Providence, Rhode Island**

### **Approved Meeting Minutes**

Coordination Team Members in Attendance: Mike Walker (for Saul Kaplan), Juan Mariscal, Ray Marshall, Michael Sullivan, Jeff Willis (for Mike Tikoian)

Other Meeting Participants: Sue Kiernan, Ariana McBride, Richard Ribb, Tom Uva, Sandra Whitehouse, Chip Young

Coordination Team Staff: Colt, Stanziale

#### **CT Administration:**

Colt called the meeting to order at 2:30 pm, and reminded all that the next meeting is scheduled for June 6, 2006.

*Motion passed approving the minutes from its last meeting on March 15, 2007.*

Ariana McBride provided an update from the Economic Monitoring Collaborative on the status of its 2007 economic monitoring report. They have added a narrative to the report, and are currently working on FY08 timeline and request for proposals. Feedback on the report will continue to be welcomed

#### **Programmatic Update:**

##### ***Shellfish Aquaculture and Kettle Point Projects and CT Chair Involvement***

Colt reviewed the discussions between himself, CRMC, and DEM regarding the ongoing discussions between CRMC and RIDEM regarding the expansion of shellfish aquaculture operations in the salt ponds and in RI marine waters generally. Sullivan had, earlier in the spring, proposed to CRMC that Colt be brought in to facilitate the discussions. CRMC

turned down the proposal. Colt pointed out that he obviously cannot be involved unless both agencies involved agree fully on the purpose and terms of his involvement in any bilateral or multi-lateral discussions between CT member agencies. He also pointed out that he has been asked to work on coordination issues regarding the Kettle Point redevelopment project by RIDEM's T. Gray and that in this case the CT agencies came to an agreement on his involvement.

Sullivan reiterated his interest in CT and/or CT Chair involvement with the shellfish aquaculture discussions and stated that he had requested that Colt place this item on the agenda for this CT meeting. He stated that Colt was nominated to be Chair because he possessed the appropriate credentials, and is well-positioned to act as a facilitator of the current discussions between CRMC and RIDEM regarding shellfish aquaculture.

Willis remarked that it makes sense to have the CT engaged with the shellfish aquaculture issue in terms of the implications of the ongoing discussions for Systems Level Planning; therefore he personally had no objection to Colt participating as an observer in the shellfish aquaculture discussions.

#### ***FY 2008 Monitoring Initiative***

ABC reported the March 22<sup>nd</sup> hearing before the House Finance Committee on the integrated monitoring initiative went well. He followed up the Hearing with a mailing in early May of monitoring initiative materials to key General Assembly members of the House and Senate. He has worked with Save the Bay and the Environmental Council of Rhode Island (ECRI) to encourage them to push for the monitoring initiative. They have responded positively. He expressed some concern regarding his advocacy for Budget Article 50: some have advised that he should push more actively; others have cautioned not to be overly aggressive.

Whitehouse advised that it should be kept in mind that this is a difficult budget year, Representative Naughton is interested in seeing all members of the team advocating for this presentation as a united front.

WMS moved the Chair prepare a short memo addressed to each member of finance confirming the CT's full support for budget article 50.

Whitehouse mentioned that there has also been a letter drafted on Representative Naughton's behalf, but it is a great idea to have a letter signed by all members.

*Motion was approved for Colt to draw up a memo supporting passage of BA 50 to be signed by each CT member.*

#### ***USGS Contract Renewal***

ABC asked Sue Kiernan, to review the USGS contracts RIDEM has issued and needs to re-issue for the stream gage monitoring network. The USGS costs are increasing slightly. Kiernan would like RIDEM to rollover the contracts to the next FY now in order to keep the gages operating without interruption due to contract administration.

WMS responded that renewing the contracts prior to June 30 without assurance of adequate is a decision for the CT to make. Should the contracts be signed, or should they wait for the final passage of the FY2008I budget?

Kiernan reported that there were four environmental monitoring programs initiated in 07 with CT funds: stream gages, large river monitoring, fixed monitoring stations in upper Narragansett Bay, and rotating river basin assessments. The stream gages and the large river monitoring involve USGS contracts with no other sources of funds; both programs involve long-term data collection. The other two Bay fixed- site and rotating river basin assessments are not facing disruption of data collection at the end of June 2007..

To ensure the USGS programs are continued past June 30 without disruption, Kiernan provided estimates from USGS that were: \$37, 200.00 to maintain the three new stream gages for twelve months. The estimate for sampling larger rivers was \$114,400. The total is \$14,600 higher than the budget allocation for FY2007. The allocation of funds between the two projects also needs to be changed.

Due to administrative contractual procedures, Kiernan recommended taking action now to ensure the new contracts are in place as of July 1.. Kiernan confirmed the contract contains language that recognizes the extension of work is contingent on the formal authorization of funds via passage of the state budget.

Walker inquired whether there has been a better proposal put before the CT for the FY 2008 OSPAR funds allotted to CT-endorsed monitoring..

WMS replied that no such recommendation exists. *(Colt: detailed descriptions of the environmental monitoring initiatives proposed for funding by the CT are contained in the FY 2008 Integrated Economic and Environmental Monitoring Initiative Proposal)*

Walker then asked if they still expect that OSPAR can provide the same amount of funds in FY08 as in FY07. Is the OSPAR account a viable, long-term viable source of funds?

WMS explained that when they go back to OSPAR language it speaks to reasonable investment in monitoring and research. Long-term support for monitoring with OSPAR funds will become increasingly difficult because currently the OSPAR fund balance is not increasing annually as intended

*Motion and passed to authorize DEM to move forward on extending the USGS contracts into FY 2008.*

***Letter from CT in Support of EPA:New England's draft permit for the Upper Blackstone Pollution Abatement District WWTF***

Colt distributed a letter drafted by Angelo Liberti, RIDEM's Chief of regarding EPA New England's draft permit for the Upper Blackstone Pollution Abatement District WWTF. RIDEM has requested that the CT send a letter to EPA NE in support of the draft permit. The letter provides a good technical summary and overview of the basis for the

nutrient limits being sought by EPA for this WWTF. The CT reiterated its support for the proposed permit limits, originally expressed when it met with EPA New England Administrator in August, 2006. Colt saw no need to edit the letter drafted by Liberti. Colt asked that any comments CT members may have be submitted to him by May 19<sup>th</sup>, cc:ing Sullivan. The letter will be signed by ABC on the behalf of the CT and mailed soon after May 19.

*Motion was passed for the CT to endorse the letter and have ABC sign ts behalf..*

### ***Systems Level Planning***

ABC reported that the AdHoc Planning workgroup has been assembled. He distributed a two page overview listing the names of the members and summarizing the purpose and scope of CT-led systems-level planning.. The workgroup's goal is to set up a process and task list, meet on monthly basis. He asked that Richard Ribb be added to the ad hoc workgroup, because the Narr. Bay Estuary Program should play a leading role in the process.

*Motion was passed to add Richard Ribb to the ad hoc planning workgroup as the Narr. Bay Estuary Program representative.*

### **Update on the Narr. Bay Estuary Program's Status and Trends Assessment process:**

Ribb distributed an updated summary of the 2007-08 Narr. Bay status and trends assessment being led by NBEP. He explained that they had originally aimed to have a final draft of the Status & Trends report completed by October, 2007; they were advised by the NBEP management committee that this schedule was too ambitious, so the release date was changed to early next year. He has been in communication with the Natural Resources Conservation Service regarding their rapid watershed assessment work. NBEP has also submitted a NOAA grant proposal which if successful will provide support to the assessment effort. Ribb agreed it makes sense to involve the SAC, PAC and the Monitoring Collaboratives at the appropriate time in the process. Sullivan asked why the assessment report could not be completed by the end of 2007.

Ribb replied that it was a matter of the work required to complete the kind of comprehensive assessment envisioned and the staff and other resources required for the assessment. Bob Stankelis had mentioned based upon his experience that he also felt that the original timeline wasn't realistic. . Colt stated that NBEP Management Committee is charged with overseeing assessment process. It will be important to draw together as closely as possible the CT systems-level planning effort and this assessment..

Whitehouse asked if a roster of the Management Committee could be provided. She expressed some concern regarding the second bullet of Ribb's S&T assessment work plan which states: "Provide baseline information to serve as a foundation for collaborative decision-making in Rhode Island and Massachusetts regarding the future of the Narr. Bay Watershed Ecosystem."

She agrees with its intent, but is concerned that the assessment as outlined is geared primarily for Federal/State Agencies and the scientific community. They must be sure that this is an assessment that is useful for policy-making and planning, not just another report that will sit on the shelf.

Ribb replied that they are still trying to gain a sense of what people are looking for.

Colt suggests that this would be a good time to involve the PAC in order to bring the assessment's outputs to a broader community.

It's clear where the EMC is going to integrate. He wants them to continue in that vein. They are waiting to see what will happen in legislative session with respect to further developing monitoring strategies. The SAC can participate in the status and trends assessment, and then they can return to their original charge. They do not have a lot of capacity to do outreach, but the PAC does.

Colt also discussed the nascent Southern New England/New York Ocean Partnership Council. The Council began meeting this spring. Consisting of staff from Mass CZM, Connecticut's Long Island Sound Program, and the RI CRMC and the URI Coastal Resources Center. The work of this regional ocean management group will hopefully dovetail with the planning efforts of the CT; it has the potential to become a valued regional partner for the CT.

#### ***RIWinds Phase I Study***

Colt referred the CT to the recently released RIWINDS Phase I: Wind Energy Siting Study and asked whether the CT should try to develop some sort of response to it as a Team. Whitehouse recommended that a legal opinion should be sought for DEM and CRMC because she would not want to see either agency placed in a position of indicating favor for a general plan when they would have to review specific permit applications in the future..

WMS agreed with Whitehouse. Also said that Andy Dyzkewicz is assembling another stakeholder group.

Colt said that he was not suggesting they endorse the Siting Study, but that they might want to review it and consider a collective response.

*Motion passed to adjourn the meeting.*