RHODE ISLAND BAYS, RIVERS, & WATERSHEDS COORDINATION TEAM

Meeting of September 22, 2010

Conference Room A
2-4 pm
RI Department of Environmental Management
235 Promenade Street
Providence, RI 02908

FINAL Minutes

Coordination Team Members in Attendance: Guy Lefebvre, Kathy Crawley, Sue Kiernan, Mike Walker, Jared Rhodes, John Motta

BRWCT Members not in Attendance: Jeff Willis

BRWCT Staff: Ames Colt, Melissa Deciantis

Guests: Richard Ribb, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program

CT Administration

Meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m.

Meeting minutes for June 22nd and July 1st were approved with modifications to the July 1, 2010, meeting minutes to specify exactly what USGS contracts would be funded with the BRWCT OSPAR monitoring fund allocation agreed to at that meeting.

Chair Activities Report:

Ocean SAMP
Colt submitted comments on July 2010 version of the RI Ocean Special Area Management Plan (OSAMP). Colt coordinated DEM review and comment on the OSAMP. Colt worked with DEM's Office of Legal Services regarding the purpose and make-up of the proposed Fisheries Advisory Board.

Port Development Opportunities Project
The RfP was issued in June 2010. A review team evaluated four bids and completed their ranking in August. RI Division of Purchases is working with the preferred bidder to finalize required documentation and issue the Purchase Order. Completion of the study is targeted for early 2011.

Northeast Great Waters Initiative
Colt will prepare and submit requested information from Rhode Island for the Initiative by this October.

RI Climate Change Commission
Colt met with Kelly Mahoney, Pam Rubinoff, and Dr. Timmons Robert to discuss launching the commission in early 2011. Timmons has contacted several foundations to solicit funding for staff support.

RI Planning Council Technical Committee
Colt has been attending these meetings as a committee member. The first chapter of RI Water 2030 was presented to the Technical Committee at September 2010 of the Technical Committee. Discussions continue how this draft element relates to other State Guide Plan elements and the BRWCT Systems-Level Plan.

Coordination of Aquatic Habitat Restoration Policies Initiatives
Colt discussed with Larry Mouradjian and Cathy Sparks of DEM SLEP recommendation to establish a state wide Aquatic Habitat Restoration Coordinator at DEM. Discussions should be shared with CRMC and with Tom Ardito and Caitlin Chafee on their interest in restarting the RI Habitat Restoration.

Environmental Indicator Workshops
This is being led by Dr. Q. Kellogg and Meg Kerr with oversight and guidance from the RI Environmental Monitoring Collaborative. First workshop on impervious cover in September 2010 went well. Important issues were raised about how an indicator for impervious should be designed and utilized.

Integrated Plan Comments
Colt stated that he has gravitated to working on the economic components of the draft Integrated Plan being developed in partnership with Statewide Planning and the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program.

Crawley asked again what the BRWCT considers to be the purpose and scope of the plan and when will it have the opportunity to submit detailed comments. Colt answered that this fall will entail the technical stakeholder review process with three workshops scheduled. This is the time for the agencies to step up and have their input and dialogue as technical stakeholders. After these technical stakeholder workshops, the writing team will conduct broader public workshops, which will present a different dynamic and communications approach. The BRWCT must be convinced that that this plan meets its needs for a systems-level plan.

Crawley stated that the WRB has a broad mission for freshwater resource management. She felt that the current draft does not adequately capture the linkages between land use and development policies and freshwater supply protection and development.

Ribb stated that when they started the planning process, they agreed to use the separate issues that were in the SLP. That’s why there are separate chapters. The writing group has discussed how to produce a plan that more strongly emphasizes ecosystem based management. Crawley said that she worries about how water supply and economic development are being addressed and that the draft plan sounds too much like an advocacy piece.

Ribb said that the state agencies engage in their own planning efforts and that while the intention with this Integrated Plan is to draw on the work the agencies, a broader group of stakeholders is looking at the IP, so its goals may not completely reflect State Guide Plan goals; but he doesn't think that this would devalue anything.

Crawley felt the danger was that the sum total of the parts of the draft doesn't provide a complete picture and that there is a need for greater synthesis in the plan. Clearly articulated agency goals, such as those articulated by DEM's Office of Water Resources, are missing. She is not comfortable that the goals in the current draft of the plan cover all of what Rhode Island is trying to accomplish.

Kiernan added that DEM Office Water Resources is aware of the lack of articulation of state water quality management goals but that they did not think it appropriate to discuss in detail the water supply issues in the sections devoted to water quality management. She emphasized that that here have to be cross references between priorities laid out for water supply management and water quality management, and references to related plans such as the draft State Guide Plan element on water supply and other State Guide Plan elements focusing on economic development. It is important to ensure those linkages are clarified in order those to fulfill the BRWCT's SLP planning mandate. She re-emphasized DEM's desire for the integrated planning process to focus on interstate management issues and what possible conflicts there may be between relevant Massachusetts and Rhode Island policies.

Crawley suggested that the draft needs to acknowledge better that humans use and depend on freshwater resources. If they don't acknowledge this, they're going to have multiple plans that conflict with each other. There are some places in the current plan draft where it seems as if recreation is to take precedence over economic development and water supply.

Colt stay that it is unacceptable to state or imply that recreation is more important than, eg., port activities as a human use. It is not the role or purpose of this planning effort to state that Rhode Island prioritizes tourism over other ocean economic activities. The planning goal is to provide guidance on how Rhode Island can promote, in a sustainable manner, different areas of economic activity or human uses of water resources and provide insights on where and how those uses conflict.

Lefebvre stated that since most of the watershed for the Narragansett Bay is in Massachusetts, one of the most interesting aspects of the draft plan was where it compared RI and Massachusetts policies. These comparisons lead him to wonder if they are a more important purpose of this planning exercise than developing a new watershed element for the State Guide Plan. They need to "humanize the watersheds" in order to counter the tedious laundry list of short goals. In the final product, you want people to have some motivation to care about the priorities put forward. Lefebvre again cited the existence of the Water Resources Board's water availability studies as a source of good technical descriptions of area watersheds. He also cited the value of the RI Rivers Plan as a source of info and guidance on watershed management in Rhode Island.

With regard to the plan draft's statement that it will "define measurable results and establish a system for tracking their accomplishments", Walker asked how will this plan hold parties accountable for achieving our goals? He reiterated his uncertainty regarding the standing of this plan: Will it be considered to have regulatory force? Walker re-emphasized that EDC must see more of the plan's substance inorder to be able to comment on drafts in a detailed, substantive manner. He was concerned that the whole orientation of the plan was all about the "no" and not

enough about the "how." He expressed concern that this current planning process is simply a repeat of the SLP planning process with insufficient value-add.

Rhodes added that this plan is intended to serve as the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan for the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, as well as the Systems Level Plan for the BRWCT. It doesn't give authority to anyone outside those entities. It provides these entities with a means to measure their progress and achievements.

Walker stated his concern that, if that is the purpose, how are multiple, similar plans going to be they tied together?

Crawley suggested the writing group produce a vision statement that reflects the draft's stated goals and then organize the document more explicitly around those goals.

Science Advisory Committee
Colt reported that he is working with Barry Costa-Pierce and Chris Deacutis on expanding this committee's roster and planning a late October retreat for the committee. They currently plan to add four more people: Scott Nixon, Tim Hennessey, Sheila Walsh and Marta Gomez-Chiarri. They would also like to involve scientists from Massachusetts.

They are planning a retreat to held at Alton Jones October 27-28th that will be invite-only (the roster of the SAC). The purpose of the retreat will be to re-establish the committee's agenda, focusing on three suggested themes: aquatic ecosystem-based management, climate change, and numerical nutrient criteria development. Colt will recommend that the SAC rename itself the Aquatic Sciences Collaborative.

Proposed Implementation Grants Program
Colt circulated to the BRWCT some proposals about how to run a simple, straight-forward grants program to advance SLP recommendations. He also provided a summary of available funding: A cap on the BRWCT's revenue account has been established in accordance with Depart. of Administration guidance. Revenues have lately exceeded projections with receipts since July 1 of $138,000, a rate of half a million dollars per year. The balance forward into FY 2011 is higher than projected by $40,000. FY 2011 Expenses are set in terms of personnel. The original total expenses budgeted at $468,000. The capped total is $412,000. The BRWCT had agreed previously that for SLP and implementation projects they budget $250,000. It has already committed $25,000 to port study, $52,000 for additional stream gauge support, $2,000 for the science retreat. For a grant program, there is therefore with the cap in place about $114,000 available.

Walker asked if the $25,000 for the port study was committed out of last year's money. Colt answered that since it's being spent this year, the expense will be allocated to the FY 2011 budget. Walker asked if the cap applies to expenses incurred from July 1, 2010, to June 30, 2011. Colt said that that is his understanding. Walker asked if it was an expense cap or a revenue cap. Colt replied that it is a budget (expense) cap.

Kiernan added that Depart. of Administration enforced total budget cap must be outlined in an account and the approved amount for this fiscal year is $412,000. This raises the question: what happens to the carry-forward? She also recommended that Depart. of Administration be contacted to ensure that they understand that the BRWCT revenue account cannot be utilized for anything other than BRWCT approved projects and expenses.

Colt said he has a meeting scheduled with Terry Maguire. Does the Team want to request an increase in this cap? If they want to, it has to be justified. Or do they want to just work with $114,000?

Rhodes asked how the revenues were generated and whether it supposed to be used for a specific purpose. Kiernan answered that it is a revenue account legislatively established for the Coordination Team funded by the legislatively mandated septage disposal fee.

Colt stated that the BRWCT has a great opportunity to direct funding to projects which are of high priority that cannot be funded otherwise. The SLP provides a very broad, diverse range of recommended actions. They have to go by it to justify any project spending.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:00.