

**RI Bays, Rivers & Watersheds Coordination Team
Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)**

Minutes of meeting of April 11, 2005

Attendees: Members -- David Bengtson, Jeremy Collie, Christopher Deacutis, Laura Ernst, Art Gold, Frank Golet, Julie Lundgren, Candace Oviatt, Donald Pryor, and Craig Swanson. (Mark Gibson and Sail Sails could not attend but conveyed apologies.) In addition, Pete August, Richard Ribb, and Chip Young were in attendance.

I. Work of the Committee

A packet of information on the RI Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team, including copy of the legislation and outline of the duties of the SAC as prescribed in the legislation, was distributed and discussed.

It was agreed that a clear and concise set of rules of business is needed. In addition to usual procedural matters, provisions to avoid real and perceived conflicts of interest are required. Situations that should be addressed include, for example, instances when the committee, including members who are agency employees, may comment on agency plans or when the committee, including members who are applying for funds, may review program plans. Jeremy Collie agreed to pull together information on handling of conflict of interest as dealt with by several science panels he has been active on, including the National Research Council (NRC) and the National Science Foundation (NSF). Art Gold volunteered to check on US EPA Science Advisory Board rules for such issues. Richard Ribb, who directs the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, volunteered to check with other National Estuary Program's rules on conflict of interest, voting, etc. in their respective SACs. Richard Ribb, Art Gold, and Jeremy Collie will send their respective information to Laura Ernst, who will compile it and send to Julie Lundgren and Craig Swanson for redlining and then the materials most pertinent to the SAC would be sent to all members for review and comment.

Pete August agreed to set up a listserv that allows posting of dialog between SAC members, and would allow public access to those dialogues.

Richard Ribb indicated he would look for a mechanism to provide administrative help for coordinating meetings, taking and typing minutes etc. Laura Ernst suggested inquiring with Marine Affairs or other graduate programs locally to see if a government/marine policy type student might not be willing to do so for the experience of being part of this advisory process. All agreed this would be a useful pursuit.

Election of committee officers (Chair and Vice-Chair), as required by the legislation, followed. A request for volunteers for the chair ended with a petition by the SAC members to ask Don Pryor if he would be willing to be nominated. He agreed, and Chris Deacutis then nominated Don Pryor as Chair, seconded by Frank Golet. A vote was taken and he was unanimously elected Chair. A request for Vice Chair nominees

followed. Art Gold asked Chris Deacutis if he would be willing to serve and he agreed. Art Gold nominated him and Julie Lundgren seconded the motion. A vote was taken and he was elected Vice-Chair.

II. Environmental Monitoring Strategy Review

A charge from the Coordination Team to review the Environmental Monitoring Strategy produced by the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative was distributed and discussed. It was agreed that the committee would seek to convey any early findings that might have impact on budget or program decisions expected before the July 1 target date for completion of the review.

Pete August provided an overview of the Monitoring Collaborative's process in developing the Monitoring Strategy, including both RIDEM's water monitoring plan and recommended supplemental monitoring specifically discussed in the state legislation. Dr. August also provided a brief summary of responses by the Monitoring Collaborative members on prioritization of proposed supplemental activities and comments on state water monitoring plans. Responses had just been posted on the Monitoring Collaborative website.

It was agreed that Sue Kiernan, principal author of RIDEM's water monitoring strategy, should be invited to the next committee meeting.

Art Gold distributed comments he had assembled concerning monitoring issues. He emphasized that we need to be asking WHY we are monitoring, and whether things we monitor actually relate to actual conditions and management responses. Discussion of monitoring related to wetlands, storm water, and other specific issues followed.

Building on the experience of work with the Governor's Commission, it was suggested and agreed that committee members initially collaborate in reviewing monitoring plans in the categories of water quality (Deacutis, Gold, Oviatt, Pryor, Swanson), habitat (Ernst, Golet, Lundgren, Oviatt), and fisheries and aquaculture (Bengtson, Collie, Gibson, Oviatt, Saila). However, the committee should seek to ensure that its review reflect integrated consideration of the bay, rivers, and watershed as an ecosystem. Principles adopted by the Monitoring Collaborative should be reviewed and possibly used as criteria for review of monitoring recommendations.

All members were encouraged to look at the issues in the plan immediately and to communicate by email and/or the listserv in order to quickly begin deeper discussions within the SAC.

III. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the SAC was scheduled for Friday May 13 at 9AM at the URI Bay Campus Coastal Institute, and the meeting was adjourned. The major agenda item will be the monitoring strategy review.