

MEETING SUMMARY
RI Economic Monitoring Collaborative
August 3, 2006
3-5pm
RI Economic Policy Council

Attendees: Austin Becker, Kip Bergstrom, Gary Ciminero, Ames Colt, Andrew Dzykewicz, Elizabeth Kordowski, Ken Kubic, Ariana McBride, Howard McVay, and Richard Nadolink.

1. Update on Coordination Team

Mr. Bergstrom opened the meeting by introducing Ames Colt, new Chair of the Coordination Team. Mr. Colt discussed his role as Chair and how he plans to interact with the Team's sub-committees including the Economic Monitoring Collaborative. He also highlighted the potential value that collaboration among Coordination Team agencies could create, noting this vision as it is described in the enabling legislation.

Mr. Bergstrom echoed Mr. Colt's comments, emphasizing the importance of the dual economic-environmental approach of the Coordination Team. He then provided a summary of the Coordination Team's efforts to secure funding for FY07. The Economic Monitoring Collaborative had originally requested \$80,000 for FY07 monitoring efforts, to be complemented with \$20,000 in-kind services. This request was part of the Coordination Team's \$1.3 million ask, of which \$250,000 was funded. At its July 2006 meeting, the Coordination Team allocated \$30,000 for the economic monitoring efforts, which will still be complemented by \$20,000 in-kind services.

2. Economic Monitoring Strategy – discussion regarding FY07 funding

In light of the reduced budget for monitoring, Mr. Bergstrom presented the group with an amended strategy for funding. The strategy still included the collection of baseline industry and resource use data, but did not include some of the more detailed analysis called for in the original plan, such as value chain mapping or tourism-related primary data collection. It also eliminated sector specific conditions monitoring.

Mr. Bergstrom also presented a draft RFP for the group's consideration, which would engage an outside consultant to conduct a portion of the monitoring work. He noted that the RFP, with the Collaborative's approval, would be announced once the appropriate channel for funds allocation was determined by DEM (the \$250,000 for monitoring is within DEM's budget). The expectation is that this issue will be resolved in the next few weeks, with an RFP likely to be released later in August. He discussed the compressed timeline for hiring a consultant, noting its necessity if the Coordination Team is going to have results to share with the legislature as they are considering funding for FY08. Given the schedule, Mr. Bergstrom anticipates scheduling a review meeting with the Collaborative as soon as we get the channel for funds allocation determined.

The group provided feedback on the amended strategy and RFP, including additions to the RFP language and suggestions on ways to distribute the announcement. Mr. Bergstrom indicated that the changes would be made to the RFP. He asked whether the group was in favor of the amended strategy and RFP, to which there was agreement.

Mr. Bergstrom indicated that he would be presenting the amended strategy at the August Coordination Team meeting (8/23, 2-4pm at Narragansett Bay Commission in Providence). He noted that the Team would be looking for specific examples of how the monitoring work will provide insight into management decisions. The group's suggestions included understanding the economic impact of events such as a fish kill or beach closure. Mr. Bergstrom added that we need to think of additional examples where the management decisions necessary would not be obvious without this data, citing the example of the value that better understanding the waterfront mix would provide. Mr. Colt reinforced this point by stating that we need to consider monitoring that will lead us to answers to the non-intuitive problems we face and that this monitoring will be an iterative effort.

Mr. Kubic added that in some cases we know what to expect once we see certain conditions. He noted how we could predict the recent clam kill given the pre-conditions such as a wet spring, a warm summer and failing septic systems. He also noted the importance of providing legislators and other key decision with opportunities to see these impacts. This is a potential learning moment on the importance of the Coordination Team and for good economic and environmental monitoring.

3. Other Business

Mr. Bergstrom discussed potential changes to the membership of the Economic Monitoring Collaborative in light of the need to replace a few members who are no longer active and so that the body can continue to have a representative and robust mix of members as it heads into its first year of monitoring. The group provided a number of suggestions, which either Mr. Bergstrom or members will look into potential interest.