



RHODE ISLAND BAYS, RIVERS, & WATERSHEDS COORDINATION TEAM

**Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
235 Promenade Street
Providence, RI 02908
2-4 pm**

**February 26, 2010 Meeting
Draft Minutes**

Members in Attendance: M. Walker, RI EDC, S. Kiernan, RI DEM, G. Lefebvre, RI RC, J. Motta, NBC, N. Hess, Statewide Planning

BRWCT agencies not in Attendance: RI Water Resources Board, RI Coastal Resources Management Council

Team Staff: Ames Colt

CT Administration:

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

Meeting minutes for November 18, 2009, BRWCT meeting were approved.

By-Laws:

BRWCT reviewed the revised version of the BRWCT by-laws produced by Colt in response to the Team's discussions at the November, 2009, meeting of the BRWCT.

A motion was passed to approve the BRWCT By-Laws as revised.

Revenues:

Colt reported that as of February 26, 2010 a total of \$280, 802 in septage fee revenues had been collected, averaging about \$40,000 a month, on track to reach about \$400, 00 by the end of FY 2010.

Legislation:

A bill has been submitted in the House (Rep. Newberry (R)) seeking to remove the general requirement in RIGL 46-31 that the state's comprehensive planning system consider priorities established in the SLP. Colt has contact Rep. Newberry to discuss.

Lefebvre said that he thought the RIBRWCT should consider supporting having the General Assembly place a general obligation bond issue on the November 2010 state ballot to facilitate the acquisition of the remainder of the Rocky Point land as well as boosting several smaller projects in other parts of the state. He mentioned the Heritage Harbor Museum bond issue did not pass in 2000, but that voters approved a bond issue in 2002 that included the museum along with projects in other parts of the state. He said \$15 million for Rocky Point combined with two \$2.5 million projects would make a good \$20 million proposal. In response to "tough times," he said that there is generally a sizable transportation bond on the ballot every two years that readily passes. He said he thought there was much positive sentiment in the state to fully acquire the Rocky Point property and the prospects for passage were good despite the state's tight fiscal situation.

Climate-Change Impacts Assessment

Climate risks in addition sea level rise were discussed at the April 2009 meeting by the BRWCT, with the BRWCT calling for the creation of a workgroup (via the Science Advisory Committee) to characterize such risks and provide guidance on how Rhode Island should address them. Colt reported on his continuing work with Brown University's Center for Environmental Studies on such an analysis. Under leadership of Dr. Timmons Roberts of Brown University's Center for Environmental Studies a Risk Mitigation & Adaptation Report has been issued by the Center, which Colt distributed to the Team. A bill entitled the Climate Risk Reduction Act of 2010 has been introduced in the House and Senate (Sponsors: Rep. Segal, Sen. Miller).

Dr. Roberts has asked Colt to testify in favor of the Bill at upcoming Senate and House Committee hearings. Colt supports aspects of the bill, particularly Section 4, which calls for creation of a Blue Ribbon Commission to report on the spectrum of risks Rhode Island will face with regard to climate change.

Related Initiatives: the RI Sea Grant Cooperative Initiative:

This is a three year study led by Pam Rubinoff, the purpose of which is to develop tools for communicating and encouraging individuals with behavior change with regard to adapting to sea level rising and increased storminess. CT members will likely be contacted by this group in coming months. The Initiative's leaders plan to convene a forum on climate change in a built environment, but right now they need to focus on the relevant Ocean SAMP chapter on climate change. Colt would like to the BRWCT to assist them with the forum at the appropriate time.

Work Plan:

Colt circulated a revised version of the Chair Work Plan for calendar year 2010. He emphasized the fact that the Team may choose to direct him to undertake tasks other than those described in the Work Plan. Some of the tasks delineated are beyond what he is required to do under RIGL 46-31. This is in part because of what he has been asked to do by the Governor for the Northeast Regional Ocean Council.

Walker asked if these other tasks he is engaged in were more important than core Chair responsibilities. Colt answered not necessarily. Walker said that they may be considered a priority based on opportunities for the state that they entail, and that the Chair's and BRWCT's work priorities must be flexible as opportunities present themselves

Walker said that based on what Colt said there is a lot of collaboration going on locally, statewide, and regionally. Rhode Island's presence in those collaborative efforts via the BRWCT Chair's efforts is of value for Rhode Island and Colt shouldn't apologize for not working on the core stuff; the Team should recognize that he is working on other things that have presented themselves that can benefit the purposes and mandates of the BRWCT.

Hess added that you have to realize that you only have certain resources and you will have to say no at some point and to prioritize. Opportunity knocks sometimes only once and you should go for the opportunity, but don't forget what you pushed aside to get to the opportunity.

Colt advised the team that they had about \$100,000 available in FY10 project funds. He asked for guidance on the process for soliciting project ideas, first from the agencies and then possibly from other stakeholders, identifying the priority projects, and then tasking him and Melissa with providing the funding to them.

Walker asked if they have resolved whether BRWCT had the ability to enter into contracts now with positive cash flow in the revenue account. Colt said yes. Walker asked if the BRWCT had funded the request that Director Sullivan had made to the BRWCT to fund \$75,000 of the USGS stream gage contracts over and above funding already provided by the BRWCT. Colt said yes.

Kiernan urged that the Team be very careful about inviting a proposal for tasks/projects that would need to be sustained annually.

W. Walker requested that the BRWCT ensure that FY 10 revenue account funds not spent would roll over into FY 11. Colt stated that they had a \$19,000 carry over from FY 09. Walker mentioned that he is still leery that on July 1, 2010, the unspent funds will not rollover.

Kiernan reviewed DEM's request to the BRWCT, made in January 2010, to shift \$75,000 of stream gage expenses previously paid by DEM to the BRWCT revenue account. She expressed concern that this would be repeated in FY 11. Kiernan said she is comfortable with the notion that that this would not be supported by the Team, and that the Team has a right to decide if this practice should continue.

Hess asked what the alternative is if the Team says no. Kiernan answered that they will shut down the stream gages. Hess asked if that is something that DEM would support. Kiernan said no, not given with what's going on with stream flow management. Hess suggested that there should be a plan B if the \$75,000 isn't going to come from the Team. Kiernan said she would try to find out how the OWR budget for FY 11 will be finalized with regard to this issue.

Standing Committees:

Science Advisory Committee:

Colt reported that he and Dr. Barry Costa-Pierce of RI Sea Grant have put together a long list of possible members and submitted it to Tim Costa of the Governor's office for review before beginning to invite folks to join the SAC. The goal is to expand the expertise on the committee to include policy analysts, economists, ecologists, and natural scientists. He met with Kiernan and Alicia Good to discuss DEM Office of Water Resources nutrients criteria development process and how the committee could help with it. Walker asked what the committee is going to be tasked with. Colt answered that they will be tasked with developing a white paper on the key science topics and research needs in support of development of nutrient criteria for estuarine waters by DEM.

Public Advisory Committee:

Colt spoke with Paul Beaudette, President of the Environmental Council of Rhode Island (ECRI) on the possibility of having ECRI handle some of the public advisory responsibilities of the PAC. The most tangible near-term role for the PAC would be to provide public input on the forthcoming integrated plan. Colt said he would be attending the monthly ECRI meeting in early March to discuss further.

Environmental Monitoring Collaborative:

Q. Kellogg, the new Chair of the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative is working with Meg Kerr of the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program to propose a set of ecological indicators for Narragansett Bay. She plans to convene the Collaborative in late April to review the annual report and share the work to date on indicator development.

Economic Monitoring Collaborative:

Colt spoke with Stokes and Walker about EDC engagement with the Economic Monitoring Collaborative. They are not in a position to provide administrative support until they are able to establish a proposed office of Assessment & Policy. A valuable near-term task for this Collaborative would be to support the continued work of the joint legislative commission on port development opportunities.

Marine Invasives Survey Proposal submitted the BRWCT:

Colt circulated copies of a proposal for the BRWCT to provide \$7,000 in support of regional invasives species assessment that would include up to 5 sites in Rhode Island. He reported that CRMC's Kevin Cote of CRMC is very supportive of proposal.

A motion was passed to approve funding of the Marine Invasives Assessment Survey for a maximum of \$7,000.

SLP Implementation Plan:

Colt reported that he has received additional input for the implementation plan from CRMC and other agencies, all of which has been incorporated into the current draft. Other agencies, like Planning, are still thinking about their FY 11 programming. He needs more information on FY 11 in general; but he is willing to come out with a version this spring that doesn't have a lot of detail in it. One of the "value-adds" of the implementation plan would be to enhance communications by the BRWCT to a variety of constituents on agency programming.

Walker requested that Colt include any new initiatives such as those emerging from his work with the Northeast Regional Ocean Council. Colt agreed.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45 PM