



RHODE ISLAND BAYS, RIVERS, & WATERSHEDS COORDINATION TEAM

Meeting of June 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: Jared Rhodes, Guy Lefebvre, Kathy Crawley, Tom Uva, Sue Kiernan, Mike Walker, Jeff Willis

Coordination Team Staff: Ames Colt, Melissa Deciantis

Guests: Sean McCormick, RI DoH, Amie Parris, RI DoH, Pamela Lucy, NBC, John Motta, NBC, Chip Young, URI CI, David Gregg, RI NHS, Jane Austin, Save the Bay

Administration

Meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

Meeting Minutes for April 14th approved.

Rapid Invasive Species Grant

Colt reported that this has gone through as a sole source of provision funds to the Northeast Aquatic Nuisance Species Panel. This project is all set; Kevin Cute has been working very hard on it. The Estuary programs are also providing some match. Chris Deacutis has been providing some field support. The date is July 26th and they will be looking at five sites in Narragansett Bay along with a suite of regional sites.

Port Development Study

The proposal for the Port Development Study has been posted on the Division of Purchasing website; it has been approved and they are ready to go forward with it. Colt mentioned that there seems to be some confusion about the deadline for proposals – it is July 13th.

Colt and Kelly Mahoney will be on the review team. If there are others that team members would like on the team they should let Colt know. Kelly Mahoney has received a number of inquiries from consultants, so there is definitely interest in the project. No funds out of F10 budget will go to this study; it will all come out of F11. If they can get going on proposal review in mid-July, Colt hopes they will have a completed study in November. The Economic Monitoring Collaborative will be used as a mechanism for setting up an informal advisory group to support the study.

Revenue Account Update

The F10 & F11 budgets were distributed. Terry Maguire has confirmed that the basic budget request for the revenue account in F11 has been accepted. The numbers in the budget reflect expenditures through F10 and the commitments that they have already made with regard to the OSPAR account and the Port Development Study. There is a projected carryover of \$163,000 into FY 2011. \$224,000 of OSPAR allocation has been spent in FY 2010. Projected carryover for FY 2012 is \$115,000, assuming that \$250,000 would be spent on SLP implementation projects in FY 2011. These budget numbers are separate from budgeting for the BRWCT's monitoring funds from OSPAR.

Colt reported that the projection for BRWCT revenue account receipts was \$400,000 for FY 2010 with about \$383,000 has been received as of June 18th. He will try to get a year-end number as soon as possible.

Crawley asked how it is decided which projects will be funded. Colt noted that at the April meeting the BRWCT had discussed establishing an RfP process. Crawley added that it would be good to have some sort of proposal process and that several templates could be borrowed from Statewide Planning. Uva advised that they focus future funding on monitoring gaps and figure out how to fill them, as well as looking at how much money is available for long-term monitoring and how they can leverage it.

Colt stated that a good estimate of funds available in FY 2011 for SLP implementation is necessary before trying to organize an ad hoc group to develop an RfP.

Colt was asked about which organizations could apply for these funds. He replied if there are groups that are not on the Coordination Team that want to get involved, the requirement is that it has to be state agency with a lead role. He asked if BRWCT would wish to limit funds to just BRWCT agencies or include other state agencies such as Departments of Transportation or Health? Walker advised that they save that conversation for when they get together, and they should not do that until they know what the balance forward is. The conversation is premature until there is a final account.

Science Advisory Committee

Colt reported that he met with Barry Costa-Pierce and Chris Deacutis to discuss the Science Advisory Committee. They made progress with defining an agenda and coming up with a roster, which he distributed to the team. The roster is an invitation list and if Team members want others to be invited they should say so.

They will also be focusing on nutrients criteria development in support of the Office of Water Resources per the Estuary Program Work Plan and using a subcommittee of this larger committee to do that.

It may also be worthwhile to EDC's Science & Technology Advisory Committee (STAC) about reviewing state-matched support and capacity enhancement needs for the aquatic sciences generally. These three things will receive immediate attention as well as forming the committee, getting people nominated and convening a full meeting this Fall.

Crawley asked if anyone from Massachusetts would be able to sit on the committee.

Colt answered that there are no limits as to who can sit on these standing committees.

They tried to come up with a comprehensive list of scientists who are engaged in key issues for the Bay, watersheds, and waters. They can start looking at Massachusetts candidates. The invitees experts in the social sciences and policy analysis and there is also a small group of industry representatives as well as scientists from NGO's.

Colt announced that on August 8-10, 2010, there will be a Sea Grant Science Symposium on lobster shell disease. Bob Ballou and Mark Gibson hope to append a third day to that symposium in order to examine scientific data on stock assessments in southern New England waters. There are some very low numbers coming out in terms of future stock recruitment. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Lobster Subcommittee suggests the need for some sort of closure of Southern New England lobster fisheries. Bob Ballou is trying to pull together an assessment of that area of lobster science so that the most complete picture possible is made available to managers and the lobster industry.

Environmental Monitoring Collaborative

Kiernan reported that the Collaborative's annual report is nearly completed. The key point of the annual report from the Collaborative is that the state's budget losses are going to negatively impact long-term aquatic monitoring programs. There was not a dramatic funding loss for this summer's field season, but in FY 2011 a lot of programs may lose requisite state and federal funding. The Monitoring Collaborative will initiate a process for reassessing monitoring needs and specifying continuing monitoring gaps.

Colt asked about the status of the Bay Window program. Kiernan answered that she thinks there will be some carry-over funds in specific activities, but there isn't sufficient funding to carry the program through the 2011 field season. For the upper Bay fixed-site monitoring system, she is working on an alternative funding source.

Colt said that he was concerned about what may transpire if an alternative source for the fixed site does not pan out. He asked if the Coordination Team will be in the same position it was with regard to the stream gauges. Will they be the funding entity of last resort for the fixed site network if no other funding emerges? Kiernan said she is confident that she will be able to address the fixed site system's funding support

Colt added that he and Chris Deacutis have discussed how the NERACOOS strategic plan should include something about coastal monitoring systems, not just offshore. They want the NERACOOS board to list Narragansett Bay's fixed-site network as part of NERACOOS.

Colt asked about developing a special budget request for funds for baseline monitoring in FY 2012. RIDEM may need to make a two-fold request for stream gage and fixed site monitoring funding in partnership from Water Resources and other agencies and NGO's who use this data.

Kiernan suggested that she and Colt should speak to Terry Maguire about making such a request and that she would help write up that kind of request.

Climate Change Commission

Colt reported that the Climate Risk Reduction Act of 2010 is now state law and thus a standing committee of the state will be established in the coming months. The purpose of the Commission is to study the projected impacts of climate change in Rhode Island; identify and report methods of adapting to these impacts to reduce hard and increased economic and ecosystem sustainability and identify potential mechanisms to mainstream climate adaptation into existing state and municipal programs including , but not limited to policies, plans, infrastructure development and maintenance. Six legislators are to serve as co-chairs. The required appointments to the Commission number twenty-two.

Dr. Timmons Roberts Director of the Brown Center for Environmental Studies is largely responsible for pushing this legislation through and is asking Colt to get involved. Colt asked the Coordination Team to start thinking about agency appointees and let Timmons and himself know who they may be. They would like to convene the commission in the fall. They're also going to seek funding support for staff. The first report from the commission is due March 2011.

Northeast Great Waters Initiative

Colt reported that he met with CRMC's Caitlin Chafee to discuss how to participate in this major regional congressional program authorization request. They have been working with the Northeast Regional Ocean Council and the National Great Waters Initiative on a major multi-year funding initiative for New England. The funding initiative will focus on coastal water quality and aquatic habitat restoration and related topics. Congress is warming up to the idea of creating a multi-year funding program for New England totaling millions of dollars over a period of ten years.

Hill staff have requested detailed information on priorities, projects, and their costs. Rhode Island has been asked by those working on the Northeast Great Waters Initiative in the region and in Washington to come up with a "conservation and restoration plan" that would become part of a larger regional request. Colt and Chafee are going to send out a broad notice of this effort and will be responsible for developing the document.

Integrated Planning Initiative

Colt reported that there was some good discussion about purpose at the last Integrated Planning Advisory Committee meeting on June 16. Particular attention was paid to the question of what is the purpose and how is the plan going to be used? What is the scale for which we are planning?

They are working on a broad engaged stakeholder basis in order to have the priorities of a variety of interests reflected in the plan. But Colt noted that some agency reps suggested at the Advisory Committee meeting that the focus of the plan should focus on what is not being done, in the context of broad statements of priorities, and how should those gaps be addressed. Colt's concern is that a great deal of planning continues to occur at a variety of geographic scales. How will this planning effort pull together and build upon smaller scale planning initiatives? He urged Team members to share any additional thoughts or guidance they might have with the integrated planning work group. Specifically, look at the draft strategy tables and provide feedback.

Narragansett Bay Estuary Program

In April, Colt released a draft proposal to the BRWCT for aligning it with the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program's Management Committee. He met in with the Estuary Program Fiscal Subcommittee later that month. David Gregg and Jane Austin provided extensive comments opposing the proposal. Colt also met with Richard Ribb who also opposes the proposal. Colt modified the proposal in June and distributed it on June 17 to the BRWCT, along with a memo that updated them on these discussions.

Colt stated that he believes that the reservations about such an alignment proposal center around contrasting views of the identity and mission of the Estuary Program and less around the issues of which of the two entities is currently most able to solicit diverse stakeholder views. In other words, whether it's a management committee or Coordination Team, or standing committees – any of them can be utilized to develop effective dialogue with a broad suite of interests.

The Coordination Team is currently comprised of just state agencies. The standing committees exist because there is a need for diverse input and dialogue, and they are supposed to comment on and influence decisions made by the Coordination Team.

This proposal is as much about making the Coordination Team better as it is about reorganizing governmental resources within the state to establish an interagency organization that is unified and efficient and better able to advance implementation of the forthcoming plan.

Colt thus feels that alignment of the programs is relevant to the integrated planning process and that now is the time to beginning addressing the issue. The June version of the alignment proposal adds an executive committee for the NB Estuary Program. This is a two-fold proposal. First, refine the relationship of the Estuary Program and the Coordination Team and unify their oversight; and second expand the NBEP Policy Committee to include key federal agencies such as the Army Corps of Engineers. However, the primary focus of the proposal is better functional alignment of the Coordination Team and the Estuary Program.

Rhodes asked if Colt could say something about staff and who they report to.

Colt replied that a discussion is underway between DEM and EPA for the Estuary Program staff to be relocated to DEM as it was prior to be moved to the URI Coastal Institute several years ago. He is not part of those discussions. He thinks there are some advantages to them being university-based, but DEM was not satisfied with that arrangement.

Uva asked what feedback Colt has received from EPA on these drafts and proposals.

Colt answered that the substance of the feedback was at the April meeting of the fiscal committee. They are not supportive of the proposal. EPA has funded the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program since the late 1980's. Then in 2004, the General Assembly created the BRWCT with a stated mission that overlaps in many ways with the mission of the NBEP. Initially, the NB Estuary Program embraced establishment of the Coordination Team and proposed that it serve as the oversight body for the program, as evidenced by the exchange in late 2004 of letters between the NBEP advisory Group and the first BRWCT Chair Governor Garrahy. Recently, their basic objection is that Coordination Team will not meet the requirements for an Estuary Program Management Committee specified under section 320 of the Clean Water Act, particularly with regard to public and Massachusetts stakeholder not being formally seated on the BRWCT.

Uva said that he would be concerned about a reduction of funding from EPA if Rhode Island actually implemented such a proposal and asked Colt if he has considered the possibility of that. Colt answered that he considers this a small risk. He does not think it would be in EPA's interest to terminate funding for the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program.

Rhodes mentioned that in order for the proposal to move forward the support of EPA and the RI General Assembly is needed. Colt agreed that the BRWCT legislation would have to be changed. And that in any case the General Assembly should take a look at the Coordination Team effort as a whole and consider what changes are needed.

Jane Austin made a number of remarks regarding the BRWCT/NBEP alignment proposal:

- The proposed expansion of the BRWCT to include EPA, Massachusetts, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service would still not meet the requirement of the Clean Water Act's Section 320 for diverse public interests to be fully represented on a NEP management conference.
- The NBEP has pro-actively partnered with the BRWCT since its inception.
- The BRWCT's standing committees have not provided diverse and broad stakeholder input to BRWCT decision-making
- No formal proposal has been made to the NBEP Management Committee regarding a more formal alignment of the two organizations so the NBEP Management Committee is not in a position to provide a formal response.

New Business

Kiernan said that in the FY 2011 budget, there is a recommitment of the OSPAR environmental monitoring money for the USGS contracts that have been in place since 2007. The money from OSPAR is what has supported the large river monitoring, which is \$156,800. She needed approval for these contracts. The Coordination Team could not give approval because it was not on the agenda.

Walker suggested that all of the members should be called and if a consensus could be reached, then they should schedule a meeting with that as the only item on the agenda.

Colt said that the meeting would be scheduled within the next three weeks.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30.