



RHODE ISLAND BAYS, RIVERS, & WATERSHEDS COORDINATION TEAM

Meeting of November 17, 2010

**Conference Room A
2-4 pm**

**RI Department of Environmental Management
235 Promenade Street
Providence, RI 02908**

DRAFT Minutes

Coordination Team Members in Attendance: Guy Lefebvre, Sue Kiernan, Mike Walker, Jared Rhodes, Jeff Willis, Tom Uva

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 the September 22nd meeting were approved with one modification.

Review and final approval/support of USGS contractual agreements for FY 2011 – Kiernan reminded the team that at the BRWCT meetings convened 2/26/10, 4/14/10, and 6/22/10, they discussed the fact that the DEM's operating budget funding for stream gauges had been removed from the FY 2010 in January 2010. The BRWCT agreed to replace that funding for FY 2010. To formally approve replacing the lost funds for stream gage funding in FY 2010, the BRWCT convened a special meeting in July 2010.

In late spring 2010, it became clear that DEM Office of Water Resources operating funds cut in FY 2010 would be not re-instated that in the FY2011 budget. Kiernan stated that the amount required in FY 2011 to keep the contracts going is \$68,999. Over the past eighteen months, DEM has combined separate USGS contracts into one and funding is now in place to fund the contracts through June 2011. Opportunities will continue to be explored to restore other sources of state funding for the USGS contracted baseline monitoring programs in FY 2012.

Colt stated that he put in the budget documentation per the process set up by DEM's Office of Management Services to request a FY 2011 cap increase so they can cover the additional USGS contractual costs out of BRWCT revenues and retaining the proposed budget for discretionary projects.

A motion was passed to approve expenditure of \$68,999 to cover seven stream gauges for FY 2011.

Port Development Opportunities Study

The contract with Martin Associates is finalized. Colt reported that there would be a meeting on November 18th at the State House for the joint legislative committee and port committee representatives and policy staff and a meeting between Martin Associates and the Providence Waterfront Alliance. Martin Associates anticipates providing some initial recommendations by February.

Environmental Monitoring Collaborative

The indicator workshops led by Q. Kellogg and Meg Kerr are underway. Colt reported that he had discussed the next meeting of the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative with Kellogg and it will be scheduled for early 2011. An annual report will be provided soon thereafter. As they move forward on the indicator development, the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative needs to plug new indicators in to a comprehensive watershed and marine monitoring system, which it is statutorily mandated to accomplish.

Northeast Regional Ocean Council

Colt reported that he is participating in the regional workgroup developing for NOAA a Coastal Marine Spatial Planning Proposal. NOAA issued a federal funding opportunity for CMSP in October 2010. This will be a two-year, regional proposal for approximately three and a half million dollars. Academic and research institutions have been solicited for their ideas. CZM state programs are responsible for pulling the proposal together. Roughly it's an initial attempt to apply strategies developed under the Ocean SAMP and the Mass Ocean Plan.

BRWCT FY 2011 budget

Colt stated that consideration of the FY 2011 Cap increase request for the BRWCT revenue account is pending.

Habitat Restoration Coordinator

Colt stated that a proposal by DEM for the BRWCT to provide staff support to a DEM official appointed to serve as a habitat restoration coordinator for DEM remains the only SLP implementation idea made to date by the BRWCT agencies.

Colt distributed a brief statement by John O'Brien of The Nature Conservancy regarding the need for improved habitat restoration coordination by DEM. Kiernan remarked that the summary was perhaps a little too fisheries-oriented, but they could broaden it to cover restoration needs in general. DEM's Natural Resource Bureau agrees that it would be beneficial to have somebody focusing restoration needs on state lands. There are different individuals in DEM that have restoration coordination responsibilities, but no one is tasked to look at the big picture. The Natural Resources branch sees a need for better coordination overall. There is also a need to have a point of contact for partners and stakeholders.

Willis mentioned that CRMC just assigned Caitlin to deal with this; but that CRMC doesn't really have a dedicated restoration program.

Ribb asked about DEM's Cathy Sparks' interest in restoration needs prioritization. Colt answered that prioritization is one of the tasks that should be done on an inter-agency basis via the habitat restoration team.

Ribb noted that there was a NRCS effort to do a restoration plan for the entire state. Between the scientific expertise and the communities, they were able to identify and clearly lay out a path for establishing restoration priorities.

Colt asked whether the CT should commit staff support for restoration coordination for one or two years. Kiernan said that DEM feels there is a long-term need for coordination, not just for a few years. There's a sense that if you could get something jump-started and begin to see the benefits of it, then DEM would work toward institutionalizing it. She doesn't think they're looking to having staff support provided long-term by the Team; the idea is for the CT to help DEM develop a restoration coordination position on a temporary basis.

Uva added that if they want to hire someone for the Team to work multi-agency on projects such as these, he would support it. But he would not support a proposal to hire a BRWCT staff person to primarily provide support to a DEM official responsible for agency-wide habitat restoration coordination. NBC itself has identified a number of projects that need funding such as a water quality monitoring database.

Rhodes asked Colt what kind of action he is looking for today.

Colt answered that he doesn't expect any action today. He hopes that there will be time between now and the next BRWCT meeting to specify position descriptions further for both a DEM habitat restoration coordinator and a BRWCT staff person who work on restoration coordination and other BRWCT priorities.

NBEP/Statewide Planning/BRWCT Integrated Planning Initiative

Section summaries of the Integrated Plan (IP) have been drafted by Ribb and other NBEP staff response to the technical stakeholder workshops organized last fall and issued for comment. The IP workgroup met on November 4th to discuss them. Colt said that there should be another draft by early December with additional public workshops scheduled for January. From December 2010 –January 2011 the draft plan is to be reviewed by the Integrated Plan advisory committee. Finally, the intent is to finalize the plan over the next 2 ½ months. It is hoped that this will be in time to support development of the next NBEP annual work plan.

With regard to whether the IP will fulfill the planning mandates of the CT and Statewide Planning, Colt stated that he would not comment on Statewide Planning's views, but with regard to the SLP, he feels that are substantial differences between the draft IP and the current SLP. For example, the IP's comparable section to the SLP's fisheries and aquaculture section is called "Restore and Sustain Fish & Wildlife". The IP's economic development section differs substantially from the equivalent section of the SLP. The strength of the IP's economic development section is that advocates for changes in traditional approaches to economic development. The weakness of this section of the IP is that it drops the focus of the SLP the

consensus that's been developed within the agencies and traditional stakeholders with regard to pursuing water-reliant economic development. Similarly, the IP's fisheries section in this draft doesn't connect with the current commercial fisheries management priorities as pursued by DEM's Division of Marine Fisheries.

Science Advisory Committee

Colt reported that the SAC convened a well-received retreat on October 27th at the Alton Jones Conference Center. The gubernatorial appointments to the SAC have been completed, the roster of which was distributed. They propose to meet as a full Science Advisory Committee twice a year, beginning in April of 2011. Colt will work with the SAC Chair, Dr. Barry Costa-Pierce, to advance the work of the SAC and its three work groups. One work group is will focus on the development numerical nutrient criteria for estuarine waters under Chris Deacutis. The Science for Climate Change work group will focus on providing scientific support for the sixteen tasks of the RI Climate Change Commission from an aquatic perspective. They are hoping Dr. Lew Rothstein will head this group. With regard to the aquatic EBM group, URI's Dave Bengtson is interested in some of the modeling work and Brown's Heather Leslie is interested in exploring the development of decision support systems that better account for ecological functions.

Northeast Great Waters Initiative

Colt is working with to help the Northeast Great Waters Initiative attain a program authorization in the next Congress. The Northeast Initiative started out focusing on the Gulf of Maine; then Rhode Island was asked to participate, starting with a formal nomination by Save the Bay for the Great Waters Steering Coalition to designate a southeastern New England Great Water, The Gulf of Maine states pulled together what a Gulf of Maine Conservation and Recovery Plan and five year needs assessment. Colt has utilized the Systems-Level Plan, to develop a similar strategy for a RI-based Great Water. Colt distributed a draft statement of five-year needs corresponding to the draft Strategy.

Uva remarked that this is the way the SLP should be presented to the legislature every year. Colt agreed because this work will also serve as a basis for the SLP implementation budget. The most important thing for the Team's purposes is to assess the needs statement to ensure its accuracy.

Ribb asked who these materials were sent to. Colt replied that Peter Alexander of the National Wildlife Federation has received them, as well as Save the Bay's John Torgan. Uva asked if it was sent to these people as a draft. Colt answered yes.

Uva commented that some of the things listed in the needs assessment are already funded. Colt asked Uva to be more specific. Uva said that NBC has funding totaling \$54 million to its upgrade water treatment facilities for nutrient removal. A portion of that funding is a gift, but most of it is low-interest or no interest loans.

Report to Governor-Elect Chafee

Colt asked the Team what they would like him to say to the new Governor. He also expressed some concern as to where his office is physically located and mentioned the possibility of it being relocated to the Governor's office.

Rhodes said that he is not really concerned about the physical location of the office, but that Colt should be reporting to the Governor's Policy Office. Rhodes also asked if Colt plans on approaching the new Governor's office or wait for them to approach him. Kiernan advised that once they establish the new Governor's Office staff, Colt will need to find out how he should "append" to it. Rhodes recommended that Colt reach out to them first by writing a letter of introduction to see if he could assist with the transition. Waiting might be perceived negatively.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m