



RHODE ISLAND BAYS, RIVERS, & WATERSHEDS COORDINATION TEAM

Meeting of December 11, 2013

**RI Department of Administration
Conference Room C
2-4 PM**

DRAFT Minutes

BRWCT Members in Attendance: Depart. Of Environmental Management: Sue Kiernan, Narragansett Bay Commission: Tom Uva; Statewide Planning: Jared Rhodes; RI Rivers Council: Veronica Berounsky; Coastal Resources Management Council: Caitlin Chafee

Coordination Team Members Absent: Economic Development Corp., Water Resources Board

BRWCT Staff: Ames Colt, Melissa Deciantis

Others: Judy Hadley, Jim Cole, Walt Galloway, Elise Torello, all of RI Rivers Council
Tom Borden, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program
Elizabeth Scott, DEM Office of Water

BRWCT Administration

Meeting was called to order at 2.00 pm.

Meeting minutes of the September meeting were approved unanimously

Draft Annual Report for FY 2013

The draft report currently includes basic FY 2013 project information, plus project funding information from FY 2010 to FY 2014. Additional work on the report should entail identification of other initiatives and projects underway that are also contributing to the six Systems-Level Plan implementation priorities addressed in the report; and some discussion of how all the projects identified across the six priorities “add up” to genuine progress toward fundamental management, restoration, and sustainable use goals. Colt requested information on related projects that should be listed in the Annual Report and plans to issue a final draft in time for BRWCT approval at the January 8, 2014, special BRWCT meeting. Kiernan requested that the only the FY 2014 funding be identified for the multi-year projects committed to in FY 2014 and listed in Appendix II.

Project Updates

Middletown Stormwater Utility District Feasibility Assessment

Elizabeth Scott of DEM Office of Water provided an update on the project. They are proceeding on schedule. There has been some success with the Public Outreach Committee. The Town Council is also very involved. The third stakeholder meeting is on December 16. There is a possibility of action from the Town Council in January.

Scott said that the people in the town were not aware that the waters were in such bad shape. The Town needs to put forward what the long-term stormwater management goals are. The next step is to revise policy issues.

West Warwick Stormwater Utility District Feasibility Assessment

The 'does-it-make-sense' study that the BRWCT funded the Town of West Warwick to undertake, utilizing the consulting firm Fuss and O'Neill has been completed with a final report due to the Town Manager at the end of December 2013. Town Manager Fred Presley intends to place discussion of the report on the agenda of the January 2014 meeting of the Town Council, and possibly a vote to proceed with an SUD on the agenda of the February 2014 Town Council meeting. Colt and Scott will monitor progress at these Town Council meetings.

Upper Narragansett Bay Regional Stormwater Utility Feasibility Study

Scott provided the BRWCT a summary of Phase I of this project (Phase I is funded by DEM; Phase II is funded by BRWCT). Seven municipalities (Providence, Pawtucket, Cranston, North Providence, East Providence, Central Falls, and Warwick) are participating in the Phase I study. The Narragansett Bay Commission (NBC) and the RI Department of Transportation are also participating in the project. A smaller project steering committee has been formed, along with a larger, diverse stakeholder group. The consulting firm AMEC is providing project support, the same firm that is leading the Middletown SUD Feasibility Assessment.

The Phase I study consists of a 'does-it-make-sense' (DIMS) assessment, with a survey of Stormwater infrastructure assets and needs in each municipality. A draft Feasibility Report will be reviewed at the third meeting of the stakeholder group in December. Presentations of the draft report to city councils and municipal officials will occur in January 2014 along with solicitations of interest on the part of the municipalities with proceeding to Phase II of the project. A final meeting of the Phase I stakeholder group, with finalization of the Phase I report will take place by the end of January. A decision to proceed to Phase II will require at least two participating municipalities. The BRWCT should thus expect to have Phase II begin in February or March.

Flooding and aging stormwater infrastructure has been identified as a top priority for greater investment and attention to stormwater management in the Providence Metropolitan Area. Uva noted that there are substantial variations in the degree and extent of stormwater management programs among the participating municipalities. In terms of specifying the scope and focus of a regional stormwater authority, stakeholders have expressed the view that CSO abatement issues should remain the responsibility of NBC, managing stormwater from construction sites should remain the responsibility of municipalities, and a regional stormwater authority should focus on all remaining stormwater management needs. Uva discussed how Providence has talked with NBC about the possibility of NBC taking responsibility for the renovation, operation, and maintenance of its lateral sewer network. Doing so would require substantial expansion of NBC's sewerage renovation and maintenance capacities and costs.

Water Resources Board Water Supplier Database Development

Colt reported that the Water Resources Board (WRB) continues to work with the RI Depart. Of Information Technology to ascertain if the existing database template can be utilized or if they need to start with a new design. Once this question is resolved, WRB intends to issue a Request for Interest in March 2014 and does not expect to issue a contract to complete the database's development until the summer of 2014. Therefore, Colt projects that the funds dedicated to this project in FY 2014 (\$80,000) will not be expended until FY 2015.

Statewide Planning: RI Freight Plan Development

Rhodes reported that while Statewide Planning has hired the staff-person needed to support the Freight Planning process, the potential bankruptcy of the US Highway Trust Fund means that Statewide Planning will not be in a position to contract for the related work until appropriate action is taken in Washington.. Thus BRWCT FY 2014 funds dedicated to this project will likely not be expended until FY 2015.

Colt reported that he has talked with the US Maritime Administration's (MARAD) Office of Policy of trying to link a state Freight Plan in RI with the regional ocean planning initiative being led by the Northeast Regional Ocean Planning Body (RPB) in partnership with the Northeast Regional Ocean Council. He also reported that MARAD is planning to establish a Port Planning Grants Program in FY 2014.

Relatedly, Colt reported that he will return to participating in NROC as the second delegate from RI and will be focusing on NROC's work in maritime commerce, coastal hazards, and ocean ecosystem health. He noted that DEM's Robert Ballou represents DEM Director Coit on the RPB.

CRMC Shoreline Change Special Area Management Plan (SAMP)

Colt reported that CRMC and URI requested that the BRWCT allow them to spend up to \$85,000 in FY 2014 (versus the original grant for FY 2014 of \$50,000 as part of the BRWCT's three-year \$150,000 grant commitment to the SAMP). The URI project team continues to seek federal support and local funding for the project, which has a total budget of about \$2,000,000. To date, they have received additional funding from local foundations to extend the work of the SAMP to Newport.

Kiernan asked if the grant is for three years with \$50,000 annually. Colt confirmed that this is the case.

Colt requested a motion to approve an increase of FY 2014 funding for the Shoreline Change SAMP to a maximum of \$85,000, with the understanding that the BRWCT would consider at a future meeting how to adjust accordingly years 2 (FY 2015) and 3 (FY 2016) of its grant to the SAMP. Rhodes so moved. Uva seconded. The motion was passed unanimously, with CRMC abstaining.

USGS Contracts

Kiernan reported that DEM and WRB continue to work with the US Geological Service (USGS) on finding savings in the USGS monitoring contracts. The USGS performed an analysis of its costs of groundwater monitoring portion of the RI contracts: the total cost in the DEM contract of groundwater observations for FY14 would be \$22,262. Kiernan has reviewed closely if and how DEM utilizes the groundwater data and found usage to be minimal. Therefore, DEM has agreed to remove this service from its USGS agreement. She noted however that groundwater observations, particularly in the south county area are important to WRB for drought management and WRB's commitment to this service in its own contract will continue.

Therefore, DEM will not purchase the groundwater monitoring services in FY 2014 and thus will reduce the total funding for its USGS Contract to \$262,000. Colt reported that given WRB's supplement request for monitoring support was not approved last spring by the General Assembly, per previous agreement by the BRWCT on how to respond to this contingency, he provided a written memo to WRB confirming that BRWCT funds, not to exceed \$20,000 in FY 2014 would be available to pay for WRB's contract with the USGS. This means that the total commitment in BRWCT FY 2014 funds for the USGS contracts with DEM and WRB will be reduced from \$304,000 to \$282,000. This means that the amount budgeted for these contracts in the Bays, Rivers, and Watersheds Fund will decrease from \$53,000 to \$32,000.

Kiernan also reported that USGS has informed DEM and WRB to expect increased pricing for its services in future years. These increases, without additional funding from the state, will lead to cutbacks in the monitoring services USGS provides to Rhode Island.

Kiernan noted that it is possible to generate real-time measurements of groundwater levels relying upon installed sensor and communications technologies. However, their cost would exceed that of current monitoring strategies. DEM and WRB will continue investigating the possibility of installing more advanced groundwater real-time monitoring technologies in RI.

BRWCT FY 2014 Budget

Colt noted that, giving the savings in the DEM contract with USGS, the BRWCT now had the option of reallocating about \$20,000 to another project in FY 2014, or to rollover the savings to the FY 2015 project budget. Rhodes recommended that the BRWCT rollover the savings to FY 2015, but he asked Colt if there were other projects that could benefit from additional funding. Colt replied that the only conceivable request that has arisen recently is from the RI Rivers Council, but he asked that they refrain from making a request to the BRWCT until planning for FY 2015 begins. Uva asked if there was a possibility that the savings would not rollover to FY 2015 due to a decision made by the General Assembly in the FY 2015 budget. Colt noted that that was always a possibility, but unlikely. Kiernan pointed out that for the two projects that are delayed, their funding has already been encumbered and would not be vulnerable to re-budgeting.

Per recommendation of Rhodes and in concurrence with the views of the other BRWCT member agencies, Colt stated that the savings from the USGS Contract would not be made available for another FY 2014 project and instead would be utilized in the FY 2015 budget.

BRWCT FY 2015 Budget

With regard to the FY 2015 budget, Colt noted that he estimated that the BRWCT would have about \$120,000 to commit to a new discretionary project in FY 2015, given estimated revenues in FY 2014, FY 2014 savings from the USGS Contracts, prior multi-year funding commitments, and the agreement to rollover annually a minimum of \$60,000 to the next FY (in this case FY 2016).

RI Rivers Council Update

Colt asked Berounsky to provide a brief overview of the RI Rivers Council and her plans as its new Council Chair. He noted that Berounsky had previously asked him about the availability of funding for the Rivers Council from the BRWCT and reiterated that he had asked Berounsky to hold off on making a request until the BRWCT began to put together its FY 2015 budget next spring.

Uva asked Berounsky where RI Rivers Council funding currently comes from. Berounsky replied that they receive all of their funding from the State and that in FY 2014, it totaled \$17,500. In previous years it had been as high as \$50,000 annually. She noted that all state funds pass through to the designated watershed councils of the state, with the Rivers Council retaining only \$500 for administrative expenses. She and all other Council members work as volunteers. Uva suggested that the GA's legislative grants

program could be a good opportunity for the Rivers Council. Colt stated that individual Watershed Councils do periodically receive legislative grants. Berounsky said they will continue to discuss funding opportunities with Colt and will submit a funding request for FY 2015.

Other Updates

Relocation of Chair Position to an independent office reporting to the Governor

Colt reported on the outcomes of his meetings with the Governor's Office and agency leaders on establishing the Office of the BRWCT Chair as an independent office reporting directly to the Governor. Responses to the idea have to date been very positive. Colt reported that Jonathan Stevens of the Governor's Office recommended considering relocating the position to the RI Commerce Corporation. Similar programs are located at EDC currently, such as the Science and Technology Advisory Council and EDC will be undergoing some important changes as it evolves into the RI Commerce Corporation in 2014. Colt stated that if his position cannot be better integrated into the Governor's Office, then the second-best option would be relocating to DOA with a day-to-day reporting relationship to the DOA Director.

Rhodes stated that in his opinion neither relocating to the new RI Commerce Corporation, nor or to the Department of Administration would put the BRWCT Chair in a better position to fulfill successfully the BRWCT's statutory mandates. The best location for the Officer of the Chair in his view is still the Governor's Office. Colt agreed that his position should be tied closely to the Governor's Office. Colt will report back to the BRWCT on progress made in the coming months on this effort.

RI Climate Change Commission

Colt reported Representative Handy will be making a concerted effort to develop climate change mitigation and adaptation legislation in the coming General Assembly session. Colt noted that there is a possibility that the BRWCT's legislative mandate will be expanded to include addressing climate change and adaptation.

There will be a meeting of the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative Tuesday December 17. Colt has recommended that they dedicate some of this meeting developing guidance for the BRWCT regarding the allocation of its monitoring funds in FY 2015.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.