



DEM Business Roundtable Newsletter

March 22, 2001

Update on Blackstone Valley Build-out

A coalition of local, state, and federal agencies will perform a comprehensive bi-state buildout analysis of the Blackstone Valley this spring. This study is vital to understanding the region's future as it illustrates the maximum development permissible under current zoning. The build-out analysis will estimate future residential, commercial, and industrial growth, and the impacts that such growth will have on natural systems, municipal service needs, historic village patterns and consumption of open space.

This information, combined with the data already collected in the Massachusetts communities, will help municipality's plan for growth more effectively.

The results of the study will be the focus of a "Community Preservation Summit" scheduled in late June 2001. For more information on this study, contact Sally Spadaro at sally@dem.state.ri.us

West Nile Virus: What Can a Business Do?

State officials have been meeting throughout the winter, working with a year's worth of data from a dozen states and the Centers for Disease Control to develop a protocol to combat mosquito borne diseases in the coming season.

The foundations of the protocol, now under final review, are education, prevention and detection. Personal protection is still the first line of defense against mosquitoes that can carry diseases. West Nile Virus, like Eastern

Equine Encephalitis, is in our environment to stay and people should, as a matter of habit, take precautions before and during mosquito season. That means, first, don't give mosquitoes a place to breed, and second, don't give them a chance to bite.

Your business can help reduce mosquito numbers. Thousands of mosquitoes can breed in just one cup of standing water. Walk your property and eliminate any standing water that you find. These sources can include clogged drainpipes, dented covers of refuse barrels, debris and old tires. Ornamental fountains should be aerated, and birdbaths and other decorative items that collect stagnant water should be hosed at least once every four days. Weeds and tall grass, which can provide a home for adult mosquitoes, should be cut back.

You can also help your employees. The RI Health Department has a wealth of information about West Nile Virus on its website, <http://www.health.state.ri.us/wnv/wnvhome.htm>, that you can download, copy and distribute to your employees. One simple card, available in English, Spanish and Portuguese, lists steps people can take to eliminate mosquito breeding areas around their homes and protect themselves from mosquito bites. You can also include protection information in your company newsletter. Additional information is available on DEM's website at <http://www.state.ri.us/dem/programs/bnatres/agricult/mosquito/index.htm> or by calling DEM's Office of Mosquito Abatement at 789-6280.

Permit Streamlining Updates

Waste Site Remediation Task Force

DEM has begun to evaluate its Waste Management Program to look for opportunities to streamline the existing environmental review process. The kick-off meeting was held on February 22, 2001. As with the Wetlands and ISDS Task Forces this new initiative will give stakeholders an opportunity to help create change and to understand the rationale for the existing system. If you or anyone you know is interested in attending this Task Force, please contact Tom Getz at 222-4700 X2417 or tgetz@dem.state.ri.us.

We have scheduled future meetings for the fourth Thursday of the month for the next five months. Meetings are held in Room 300, in 235 Promenade Street, Providence, 8:30-10:00 AM. Information about the Task Force can be viewed on the DEM web-site at <http://www.state.ri.us/dem/programs/ombuds/stream/waste/index.htm>

ISDS Task Force - Regulation update

As part of DEM's effort to streamline its regulations and improve environmental protection, the department recently proposed revisions to the Individual Sewage Disposal Systems Regulations.

The proposed amendments clarify the site evaluation test requirement for sites that have previously accepted ground water table data. They also establish a means for sizing an individual sewage disposal system using the soil physical properties identified in a site evaluation, in lieu of the percolation test method.

A workshop will be held on Thursday, March 22, 2001 from 11:00 am to 2:00 PM in Room 300 of the DEM offices on 235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI. The public hearing will be held on Thursday, April 12, 2001 at 10:00 am to noon in room 300 of the DEM offices on 235 Promenade St., Providence, RI.

The proposed regulations are available at the following website:
<http://www.state.ri.us/dem/programs/benviron/water/permits/isds/isdspnot.htm>
For further questions contact Deb Knauss at (401) 222-4700 extension 7612 or by E-mail at dknauss@dem.state.ri.us.

Wetlands Report Finalized

The Wetlands Task Force and its numerous working groups met last year to review the DEM Freshwater Wetlands Program. As a result of this Task Force, DEM is proposing several changes to our regulations, policies and administrative procedures of the Wetlands Program.

The regulations will undergo a four-phase rewrite.

- The regulations will be clarified and unnecessary provisions eliminated, and flexibility added where needed. The changes intend to improve application quality and speed staff review time.
- The fee schedule will be simplified to reduce calculation errors and related permitting delays.
- New tiers of applications will be established, with requirements appropriate to the scale, complexity and potential impact of projects, to improve the predictability of the permit process and our responsiveness to the varying needs of applicants.

As a result of the Task Force process DEM has committed to reduce the timelines to make regulatory decisions. These timeline reductions will result from changes in the regulations and a new effort to increase the quality of applications submitted to us for review. In addition, DEM will support pre-filing consultations and develop guidance and application materials that are as helpful to applicants.

DEM will initiate other policies that will improve our assistance to applicants. We will implement a coordinated review process for ISDS applications for single-family residences adjacent to wetlands and encourage appropriate pre-application and field meetings with the Wetlands Program staff. In addition DEM will develop a policy to facilitate water quality and wildlife habitat improvement projects.

Contact Tom Getz with any questions concerning the report. In addition, the Final Wetlands Task Force Report is posted on our website at:<http://www.state.ri.us/dem/programs/ombuds/pstream/wettask/index.htm>

PERMIT STREAMLINING – Another opportunity to have input into the system design

DEM is starting to implement a permit streamlining / tracking system this winter. This system, provided under contract by Kyran Research Associates, Inc., will speed up the permitting process and allow for better tracking of projects that require multiple permits. When fully implemented, the system will allow applicants to search for information about their pending permits. In addition, selected public information about application status, environmental data and mapping information will be available without restriction over the Internet.

As a result of the snow storm, the demonstration that was scheduled for March 6, 2001, was cancelled. We have rescheduled the workshop again and you are invited see the system as it currently operates and to have your input on the future design of our web-based information system. A demonstration of the system will take place on April 17, 2001, from 4:00 to 5:30PM in Room 300 of the Foundry Building. If you are interested in attending or have any questions, please call Pam Annarumo at 222-4700 x7204.

Greenhouse Gas Update

In the last few months, DEM has been making significant progress in our Greenhouse Gas (GHG) efforts. We have completed a request for proposal to select consultants to facilitate stakeholder meetings, to research and analyze suggested reduction strategies and to conduct modeling of GHG emissions reduction scenarios.

In order to fund this effort, DEM has secured funding from the State Energy Office and has prepared applications for a federal Department of Energy's Special Environmental Projects Grant. In the near future, DEM will be submitting another application to EPA for a grant to reduce Greenhouse Gases.

We have also completed background research papers on other states Greenhouse Gas action plans, and a list of their greenhouse gas reducing strategies. We have also developed a Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Inventory and compiled the Greenhouse gas reduction strategies existing in Rhode Island.

Visit our website located at <http://www.state.ri.us/dem/programs/bpoladm/stratpp/pdfs/ghstake.pdf> for copies of some of these reports or contact Joshua Uebelherr at juebelhe@dem.state.ri.us or by phone at 222-3434 x4440 or x7134

Automotive I/M Update

Nearly 550,000 cars and light trucks were inspected during the first year of this program. Approximately 85 percent of Rhode Island vehicles inspected during the year 2000 passed inspection and 15 percent failed. Of the failures, 7 percent failed for emissions problems, 10 percent were found to have safety violations and some vehicles failed for both reasons. . Failed vehicles reduced their emissions after repairs by 45% for NOx, 79% for CO and 65% for hydrocarbons.

Keating Technologies, DMV's I/M Program Manager notes that during the first year of the program the number of inspection stations grew by 17%. The program opened with 248 stations; today that number has grown to 291 official inspection stations. Additionally, there are now 1,172 certified inspection technicians who are qualified to inspect vehicles for both safety and emissions. The increase in both figures adds to motorist convenience in locating a station and obtaining an inspection. Motorists can find an official inspection station by calling the program hotline at 1-877-474-3787 or visiting the program web site at <http://www.riinspection.com>

Gas Station Update - Changes in Vapor Recovery Requirements

Amendments to Rhode Island Air Pollution Control Regulation No. 11, "Petroleum Liquids Marketing and Storage" became effective in

February. Most of these changes are related to the requirements in the regulation for the installation and operation of "Stage II" vapor control systems at gasoline dispensing facilities.

In particular, the amendments updated the initial and periodic testing requirements and the frequency of performing these tests. The amendments also include several other provisions, including a procedure for very small facilities to request exemption from Stage II requirements, a change in certification requirements for gasoline tank trucks, and a change in inspection requirements for petroleum product storage tanks with capacities of more than 40,000 gallons. The amended regulation is available on the RI DEM website at: <http://www.state.ri.us/dem/pubs/regs/REGS/AIR/AIR11-01.PDF>.

For more information about the Stage II program, contact Alan Burns at 222-2808, extension 7029.