



Business Roundtable

September 28, 2000 Update

Environmental Bonds

Two important environmental bonds, one for open space and the other for water pollution control issues will be voted on in the November elections.

Question 1 on the ballot will allow voters to decide on a \$34 million Open Space proposal aimed at protecting 35,000 acres of high value and priority open space. The bond will provide \$10.8 million for the state acquisition program, \$11.4 million for matching grants for local acquisition of parks and conservation land, and \$10.5 million for community recreational development. These funds will be leveraged with other funding sources that will result in a total of \$100 million for open space protection over the next five years.

Question 2, if approved, will provide funding to further progress on Clean Water. The \$60 million bond will subsidize zero percent loans to approved sewage treatment and drinking water facilities.

Anyone interested in information on open space issues should contact either of the co-chairs of the effort, Trudy Coxé at 847-1000 or Bob Gilbane at 456-5800. For questions on the water issues, contact David Preston at 453-3100 or Curt Spalding at 272-3540.

Stormwater Phase II

Polluted storm water runoff can enter municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) and ultimately be discharged into local rivers and streams without treatment. DEM is in the process of developing a Storm Water Phase II Rule that establishes a MS4 storm water management program. The goal of the Phase II program is to preserve, protect and improve water resources from polluted storm water runoff through the development of successful storm water management programs.

The Storm Water Phase II Rule extends the coverage of the NPDES Storm Water Program to include "small" MS4s that are not already covered under the NPDES Phase I Regulations. Of the thirty-nine municipalities in Rhode Island, twenty-nine municipalities are automatically designated; however, ten of these designated municipalities may be eligible for waivers. DEM must develop and apply criteria for the ten remaining municipalities by December 8, 2002. Also included under the Phase II Rule are Federal, State, and Quasi-State facilities including those owned by the Department of Transportation.

To date, the RIPDES Program has mailed outreach to greater than 300 interested parties (municipal officials, environmental organizations, watershed groups, and other various stakeholders), developed a DEM RIPDES Phase II Storm Water website, surveyed municipal officials, and established a Phase II Storm Water Workgroup. The objectives of the workgroup are to identify and address issues regarding development of the RIPDES Phase II Regulations. The workgroup has met on September 5, 2000 as well as September 12, 2000.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 3, 2000 from 10:00-12:00 in Room 300 at DEM and is open to the public. DEM will present to the workgroup portions of the draft Regulations for discussion. DEM anticipates that it will formally notify the public through a Press Release and present the complete draft Regulations in November 2000. The target effective date for the Regulations is December 8, 2000. For additional information regarding the RIPDES Phase II Program, visit DEM's website at the following URL: www.state.ri.us/dem/storm2/storm2.htm.

303(d) (Impaired Waters) Update

DEM is in the process of updating the list of impaired waters as defined by Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act. This list also includes a priority ranking and schedule for development of water quality restoration plans. DEM noticed the availability of the draft 2000 303(d) List on August 7, 2000 and accepted public comments through September 6, 2000. A workshop was held on August 16, 2000 to discuss the draft List. DEM is in the process of responding to public comments. It is expected that the list will be finalized by September 30, 2000.

RIPDES Permit Issuance Improvements

EPA's July 2000 national report on the NPDES major permit backlog recognizes Rhode Island as the most improved of the 56 states and territories. The report notes that DEM has reduced the backlog from 56% to 36% and improved Rhode Island's ranking from 48th to 35th. Since the date of that report, two additional permits have been issued improving the current backlog to 32%.

The DEM has submitted a four-year major permit backlog reduction plan to EPA that has a goal of a 20% backlog by 12/31/00 and 0% by 12/31/01. EPA has established a national goal of a 10% backlog for all major permits by 12/31/01.

The RIPDES Program is currently developing a similar backlog reduction plan for minor discharge permits. The RIPDES Program's minor Permit backlog reduction plan will require that the DEM issue greater than 100 minor permits from 1/1/00 to 12/31/04. If you have any questions about the RIPDES program please contact Eric Beck at 222-3961 X7202.

Dam Safety

The Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO) is holding its annual Dam Safety 2000 conference at the Westin Hotel and the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence from September 27 through September 30. The Department of Environmental Management is hosting this year's conference.

The conference coincides with a new state initiative to ensure the safety of all dams in Rhode Island. In May 2000, Governor Lincoln Almond created the Dam Safety and Maintenance Task Force to develop recommendations to ensure that the 510 dams across the state are effectively maintained. DEM Director Jan Reitsma and Rhode Island National Guard Adjutant

General Reginald Centracchio, are the co-chairs of this 18-member task force that is comprised of dam owners, representatives of Rhode Island dam associations, and municipal, state, and federal officials. The goal of the task force is to establish a comprehensive method of monitoring, maintenance, and repairs that will ensure safety and upkeep of dams. The task force is developing strategies to help communities and the state plan for the future of its dam infrastructure and ensure that all communities are prepared to handle actual or threatened dam failures.

Funding mechanisms has been the primary topic on agenda for the task force. Costs associated with repairing dams can be burdensome for an individual private dam owner. The task force is considering the following: Expanding eligibility requirements of the State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF); a modest state bond program; enabling legislation for the creation of special reservoir districts, and utilizing available federal funding sources.

The task force will continue its discussions through December, and will present its recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly at the end of the year. If anyone has questions about Dam Safety Task Force, contact Elizabeth Stone at 222-4700 x2422.

Auto Body Certification Program

An Auto Body Certification Program is being designed by DEM to provide a simpler and more useful way to regulate auto body repair shops. This initiative is a first-ever regulatory and assistance partnership involving state environmental and health departments, a state university and a vocational training institution that results in an environmentally measurable protection program.

The program will cover training requirements, hazardous waste management, air quality concerns, occupational health and safety, and pollution prevention techniques in a question and answer format that will allow any auto body shop to determine its compliance status. A certification form, along with a guidance manual, that includes all of this information will be mailed to all auto body shops in the state. The Department will then use this data from the returned forms to measure compliance rates and to determine where best to focus its assistance and compliance efforts.

Performance Track Grant Application

DEM is applying for an EPA \$20,000 grant that would allow the agency to investigate activities that support or hinder efforts to promote environmental excellence. The National Performance Track program would allow the state to recognize facilities whose environmental performance exceeds minimal compliance. It will establish a partnership of participants dedicated to achieving high levels of environmental protection with greater efficiency, and will provide a solid foundation upon which DEM will structure compliance efforts.

The grant proposal focuses on the small business sector, which is unlike most other state's efforts. DEM hopes to investigate the feasibility of larger scale rewards, such as insurance discounts, cheaper utility rates etc., in exchange for a measurable commitment to maintenance of specific environmental criteria. The Department plans to use the concepts of Environmental

Leadership, Business Advocacy and Environmental Mentoring to promote environmental performance.

DEM will be looking for input on the kinds of incentives that would be useful to the regulated community; the potential companies or categories of industry would benefit from the approach and the environmental metrics that could be used to determine success. If anyone is interested in discussing this proposal, please contact Beverly Migliore at 222-4700 x7503.

Air Toxics Study

The Department of Environmental Management has received a \$500,000 grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency to measure air toxics in the Providence metropolitan area. The state has been monitoring the traditional air pollutants for many years and this effort will increase the state's understanding of the distribution of air toxics in the urban environment where people work and live. Under the new program, DEM's Office of Air Resources, in conjunction with the Department of Health's Air Pollution Laboratory, will operate air toxics monitors at five sites in the Providence metropolitan area for a year. The monitors will measure toxic metals as well as toxic gaseous pollutants, including formaldehyde, benzene, and chlorinated solvents.

EPA determined in awarding the grant that the state had the ability to design and operate an effective monitoring effort. DEM already collects an extensive annual inventory of air pollutants that will be used to identify monitoring locations, and the Department of Health Air Pollution Laboratory has extensive experience and expertise in the analytical procedures required for this project.

Monitoring will begin at the end of this year. As results become available, they will be distributed to interested members of the community, and will be used to determine whether additional air pollution control measures are necessary. DEM is interested in community input to this project. Those interested should contact Barbara Morin in DEM's Office of Air Resources at 222-2808, extension 7012.

Greenhouse Gas Action Plan

DEM is working with a diverse group of stakeholders to develop a Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Action Plan. For the most part, DEM's plan will use existing programs to reduce greenhouse gasses. One new effort, however, will be to incorporate energy conservation measures as a means to reduce these emissions.

This plan will focus on cost-effective ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These benefits can stimulate the state's economy by creating greater profits for business and reducing costs for residences. Decreasing greenhouse gas emissions has the benefit of reducing air pollution, minimizing the associated health risks and protecting coastal development in the event of sea level rise.

The stakeholder groups will identify and prioritize strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for incorporation into a Greenhouse Gas Action Plan. The first stakeholder meeting was held on September 27 at DEM headquarters in Providence. For more information, please call or email Josh Uebelherr at 222-3434, extension 7134 or juebelhe@dem.state.ri.us.