



DEM Environmental Roundtable Newsletter April 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 municipalities 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

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 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, at 235 Promenade Street, Providence, from 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/pstream/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 was held on Thursday, March 22, 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, from 10:00 am to Noon in Room 300 of the DEM offices on 235 Promenade St., Providence.

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 time needed to make regulatory decisions. These timeline reductions will result from changes in the regulations and 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 to assist 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/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 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, was cancelled. We have rescheduled the workshop 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, 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.

Ozone Transport Commission Update

The Ozone Transport Commission continues to work on reducing ozone precursor emissions in our region. In order to further this effort it is considering a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and two resolutions.

The MOU requests states to support a number of VOC and NO_x emission control measures throughout the region. These strategies include controlling:

- Consumer Products, Portable Fuel Containers and Architectural and Industrial Solvent Coatings -- These are the three programs for which a regional market is desirable and it is anticipated DEM could propose regulations to support the regional market in the 2003 – 2004 timeframe.
- Solvent Cleaning Operations and Mobile Equipment Refinishing and Repair – These are existing regulations controlling these sources that may be updated as result of the MOU.
- Additional NO_x controls –These include additional requirements for combustion sources at existing facilities.

Additional information on these issues can be found on the OTC website located at:
http://www.sso.org/otc/Meetings/Presentations/meeting_presentations.htm

The first resolution on distributed generation recommends, among other things, that states set relatively high applicability thresholds for “clean” electric generating equipment (micro-turbines and fuel cells) and low thresholds for diesel generators, down to 50 horsepower. (Currently, our applicability threshold for diesels is about 800 HP.) The Resolution also contains a commitment for OTC to work with federal and state organizations, including the EPA, to encourage additional clean power generation.

The second resolution supports efforts of northeast states, interested Indian Tribes and federal land managers to collaborate in a

regional planning forum to plan regional haze activities and facilitate state and tribal implementation plans.

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, research and analyze suggested reduction strategies, and 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 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/sratpp/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.

Hospital/Medical/Infectious Waste Incinerators

Last August, DEM adopted new requirements for hospital/medical/infectious waste incinerators (HMWI). The regulation sets emission limitations for mercury, lead, cadmium, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, hydrogen chloride, carbon monoxide, dioxins/furans, and particulate matter.

This regulation requires facilities to institute a Waste Management Plan that includes pollution prevention techniques, and other reasonably available waste management practices to minimize air pollutant releases. The plan must include measures for a facility to be mercury-free by 2003 and reduce polyvinyl chloride materials in the waste-stream by 50% by 2003. (Polyvinyl chloride, when combusted, produces chlorinated dioxins and furans, which are potent carcinogens.)

Four facilities are impacted by this regulation. There are also approximately 20 pathological waste incinerators in Rhode Island which are exempt from the emissions limitations, but which must adhere to certain record-keeping and notification requirements.

Of the four facilities, only Roger Williams Hospital has submitted the required emissions control and waste management plans that allows it to remain in operation. DEM is tracking alternative disposal plans for facilities that are shutting down their incinerators to ensure that those activities do not result in significant emissions.

Implementation of this rule will have a significant positive impact on the state's environment and air quality. These incinerators have been one of the largest sources of mercury and dioxin air emissions in the state. The reduction in mercury emissions associated with implementation of this rule will reduce ambient air concentrations of that pollutant, and, in turn,

reduce the amount of mercury deposited in water bodies and taken up by fish. Emissions of dioxins/furans, potent suspected human carcinogens, will also be substantially reduced, as will emissions of nitrogen oxides, which are precursors to the formation of ozone.

Additional information about this regulation can be found at DEM's web site located at <http://www.state.ri.us/dem/pubs/regs/REGS/AIR/AIR39-00.PDF> For more information about this issue, contact Gina Friedman at 222-2808, extension 7016.

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>

Watersheds

Creating Sustainable Natural Resource Based Businesses

It is difficult to justify managing forestland in Rhode Island for traditional forest products (like timber and firewood) on an economic basis alone due to the small size of most parcels and the long wait between harvests. DEM, in conjunction with the Rural Land Coalition, is educating forest landowners about managing for a variety of forest resources. Alternative forest products, like edible and medicinal plants, specialty wood products, floral greens and recreation may replace or augment harvest of traditional forest products. These products provide alternative ways for landowners to generate revenue to pay their property expenses. These alternatives may develop into small businesses suitable for rural areas and compatible with rural lifestyles. These opportunities could be similar to the Christmas tree industry that grew from a few farms and now provides a significant portion of the trees used in Rhode Island each year.

This project is funded through a grant from the USDA, Forest Service Sustainable Development Through Forestry Program. DEM has developed publications, a web site, and will hold workshops to educate forest landowners about a variety of forest resources in a sustainable manner.

Brochures produced include:

- Ginseng
- Cultivated Mushrooms
- Wild Gathered Mushrooms
- Maple Syrup
- Recreation
- Witch-hazel
- Floral Greens
- Specialty wood products

The website (<http://www.state.ri.us/dem/programs/bpoladm/stratpp/forprod/forstprd.htm>) provides general

information for selected categories, downloadable files on a variety of related topics, as well as links to additional information.

Watersheds Updates

The Rhode Island Watershed Partnership in cooperation with RI DEM has concentrated on 2 watershed pilot areas. The South County watersheds region and the Woonasquatucket watershed have coordinators, as part of DEM's pilot program.

In South County, four separate watersheds make up the region. Local watershed organizations, non-governmental organizations, such as Audubon Society of Rhode Island and the Nature Conservancy as well as local, state and federal government agencies have formed the watershed team for the region.

The Woonasquatucket watershed team has also been formed to address the key issues facing that community. Major projects currently underway include the Woonasquatucket Freshwater Wetland Restoration Strategy (RI DEM/EPA/URI), the Woonasquatucket Riparian Forest Redevelopment Project (RI DEM/USDA-FS), and the Woonasquatucket Greenspace Implementation Strategy (RI DEM/USDA-FS).

Both teams are developing a regional watershed action plan that will outline key goals, strategies and actions for their respective watersheds. The plans will be brought to the Coordinating Council in May to be incorporated into the work plans of the member organizations and agencies. A plan draft and online survey can be found at <http://envstudies.brown.edu/woon>. Comments can also be forwarded to Fred Presley, 222-3434 ext. 4417 or fpresley@dem.state.ri.us. Comments concerning the South County Watershed plan can also be forwarded to Jeff Nield, 222-3434 ext. 4405 or jnield@dem.state.ri.us.

Parks and Recreation Update

Spring has sprung and summer is just around the corner. That means DEM is really busy getting the beautiful parks and beaches ready for the public. The following is a list of important opening dates of the parks and beaches:

Facility Opening Dates

April 1	Goddard Golf Course (weather permitting)
April 15	Campgrounds open - Burlingame, Fisherman's Memorial Park, East Beach & Charlestown Breachway
April 21	Colt State Park
May 4	Farmers Markets Begin at Colt 2-6PM and Goddard 9am –1pm

Beach Openings

May 5	Scarborough North and Roger Wheeler Park Beaches: Goddard Memorial and Lincoln Woods State Parks
May 26	East Matunuck, Salty Brine, Scarborough South and Misquamicut

Disability Photo ID Processing

Once again the Department of Environmental Management, Division of Parks and Recreation will issue Photo IDs at four locations statewide for patrons with disabilities to gain free admittance to State Beaches this summer season. The schedule for the photo IDs is as follows:

April 21	Colt State Park headquarters, Bristol from 9:00 am –12 Noon
May 5	Scarborough State Beach, North Pavilion from 9 am-12 noon

May 16	Goddard Park at the Carousal Performing Arts Building from 5 PM- dusk
May 27	Burlingame State Park Campground, Charlestown from 12 –4 PM.

The state recreational facilities will be open for some special events and activities. The events scheduled so far include:

March 25	John H. Chafee Memorial 10K Run – Colt State Park
May 5-6	URI New England Intercollegiate Sailing Spring Championships - Roger Wheeler State Beach
May 21	Rhode Island Commemorative Quarter presentation - Fort Adams State Park
June 6-8	URI 2001 Intercollegiate Sailing Association National Dinghy Championships - Roger Wheeler State Beach
July 28	Governor's Bay Day -Statewide
August 4-5	Newport Creamery Folk Festival-Fort Adams State Park
August 11-12	JVC Jazz Festival- Fort Adams State Park

For additional information about recreational opportunities in state facilities in Rhode Island, please check our Website at:

<http://www.riparks.com/>