

Environmental Roundtable Meeting August 1, 2000

Present: Jeff Kos, George de Tarnowsky, Harold Ward, Curt Spalding, John Torgan, Bob Mendoza, Guy Lefebvre, Kevin Nelson, Adam Gebauer, Kris Stewart, Chris Modisette, Paul Beaudette, Aimee Tavares, Alicia Karpick

DEM Staff: Mal Grant, Bob Ballou, Alicia Good, Tom Getz, Ken Ayers, Janet Keller, Scott Millar, Dean Albro, Kathy Sparks, Mike Mulhare, Liz Lopes-Dugay, Angelo Liberti, Melinda Richardson

Old Business

West Nile Virus (WNV), EEE, and Aerial Spraying

Mal Grant reviewed the three tiered approach to the state WNV program. Tier 1 focuses on public education and the need for personal protection. In addition, larvicide was distributed for use in storm drains. Tier 2 will focus on limited spraying of adulticide in areas where WNV is detected in birds or mosquitos. DEM will train municipalities and provide them with sprayers and will initially monitor this effort. Tier 2 will avoid spraying over open water bodies or farm fields, focusing only on populated areas. Communities will make the decision to spray. Tier 3 will go into effect if there is evidence of amplification of disease spread in the environment that is no longer localized and spraying efforts begin to overlap. The Governor will make the decision based on the recommendation of the Directors of Health and Environmental Management.

Mal Grant said mosquito trapping began in late May with approximately 28 trap sites throughout the state and thus far, there have been no positive results for WNV and EEE. Liz Lopes-Duguay distributed the response protocol for mosquito borne disease and an information packet on the adulticide. Analysis of dead birds is conducted continually and to date, there has been no positive isolation of disease. The number of crows meeting the profile has increased dramatically and results are quickly reported. If it is determined that birds don't meet the profile, they are not tested.

For EEE the most important component is education. The Department has produced flyers, and other handouts, as well as aggressive media outreach.

Legislation

Bob Ballou provided a list of bills that were enacted. The environmental issues fared very well, except for the habitat restoration bill. There were 43 bills tracked, 6 concerned land trusts, 21 were bond bills and 22 resolutions that were passed. Rhode Island adopted the Striped Bass as its state fish. At this point in the meeting ECRI indicated their interest in working with DEM on potential budget enhancements. Before they could press budget issues, they asked if they could be briefed on the DEM budget process. DEM will be able to review the budget process in general, but will not be able to discuss specifics until the governor's budget is a public document.

Stormwater and Non-point Discharge Pprograms and Implications for CSO's

These issues were discussed in the newsletter and in the handout. Concerns were raised about Narragansett Bay Commission's approach to storm water run off. NBC has convened a stakeholder committee, but it is not as broad as we expected. They developed five or six alternatives for storm water control and will pilot a downspout diversion project in one area of the city. Bob Mendoza was concerned that there hasn't been a high level of public discussion. Bob and Alicia will follow up with a meeting with NBC.

Guy Lefebvre said that \$15 million in ISTEA funds were earmarked for storm water issues and education. DOT has used about \$5 million of this funding and there is still \$10 million available for storm water education. The money has been available since 1991. DOT was moving ahead with watershed signage,

but without input from the community or the watershed coordinators. DOT has prioritized about 20 storm drains and this effort will cost approximately \$4 million. The Director would like to have a summit with DOT on these issues and requested staff to organize a meeting. The Watershed Coordinating Council needs to be involved with this issue.

Enforcement

Dean Albro briefed the group on DEM's enforcement efforts. This information is also covered in the newsletter. We are also publishing [enforcement actions on the web](#). The basic message with respect to enforcement is that DEM is back on track. We have also started to change our approach to get problems resolved earlier in the enforcement process by encouraging alleged violations to be corrected immediately and not to rely only on the legal process to resolve issues. As it is now most NOV's are appealed, which ties up DEM resources and increases the time to resolve problems.

Questions were asked about our enforcement of ISDS cases, especially in sensitive watershed areas. The Director noted that our goal is to get more people into the field to resolve problems. Dean Albro mentioned that he has planned for an increase of one hundred fifty inspections over last year's levels.

New Business

TMDL section 303(d)

The new [TMDL schedule is posted on the website](#). The schedule has been revised. The Blackstone River TMDL project was moved back because DEM needs to collect additional data before the TMDL can be determined. The Director raised a concern about DEM conducting these investigations ourselves and was looking to see if Save the Bay, for example, would be able to assist DEM in this task. Partnerships could help to move the process forward faster. A workshop has been scheduled for August 16, 2000 and DEM is looking for feed back on the list.

On the federal level, Congress has imposed a rider on EPA's budget concerning the development of TMDL's. This rider will not prevent the states from moving forward in their efforts.

Watershed planning update

Scott Millar gave an overview of the watershed program. The Woonasquatucket Watershed had some setbacks due to the lack of a coordinator position. Fairly comprehensive watershed initiatives are due to wrap up this fall. With respect to the budget, there are 3 FTE's just in policy and planning section. There are well over \$2 million worth of projects in South County alone and \$1 million in the Woonasquatucket area..

The Director is viewing the watershed approach, not as a new program, but as a coordinating function within the agency. The watershed approach will not have a large staff, but will draw on existing resources within the agency. At this point in time we are not looking to expand the program to other areas, but we will be looking to develop TMDL's in other watersheds. DEM would need legislation to authorize additional watershed processes and would need additional resources to fund this effort. The Director mentioned that he is not sure that additional funding will be made available to DEM to fund this expansion. Guy Lefebvre mentioned the Rivers Council as a potential source of funding for watershed work. The Rivers Council is established by statute and is more than a discussion group; it provides a good mechanism for funding watershed organizations with state funds. DEM should support the council. This council, however, would have to be first funded by the legislature.

Paul Baudette requested that DEM identify people who could be watershed coordinators. The Director said it might be possible to identify liaisons to these groups, but it is not possible to name additional coordinators at this time to drive these additional processes

Bond Issue

The Steering Committee for the bond issue is being co-chaired by Bob Gilbane and Trudy Cox. The open space campaign is fairly structured and has a good base of people working on the initiative. The decision was made early on not to initially spend lots of money on TV and radio ads. The Steering Committee will decide this issue at a time closer to the election.

Forest Sustainability & Forest Fragmentation

Chris Modisette distributed handouts on these topics to let people read and have a discussion further on the topics when Tom Dupree can be present. Due to time constraints, this discussion will be postponed until the next meeting.

The next meeting was scheduled for October 4, 2000 at 3:30 p.m.