



DEM Environmental Roundtable Newsletter

February 26, 2004

Interstate Mercury Information Clearinghouse

Submitted by: B. Migliore

In 2001 the Northeast Waste Management Officials' Association (NEWMOA) launched the Interstate Mercury Education and Reduction Clearinghouse (IMERC) to provide:

- ongoing technical and programmatic assistance to states that have enacted provisions of the Mercury Education and Reduction Model Legislation
- a single point of contact for industry and the public for information on mercury-added products and member states' mercury education and reduction programs

The IMERC database is the repository for the product notification information required by the state Mercury laws. The public can access to this information at:

<http://www.newmoa.org/Newmoa/htdocs/prevention/mercury/imerc.cfm>

This database presents information submitted to IMERC on the amount and purpose of mercury in consumer products. The database is intended to inform consumers, recyclers, policy makers and others about:

- Products that contain intentionally-added mercury
- The amount of mercury in a specific product
- The amount of mercury in a specific product line sold in the US in a given year

- Manufacturers of mercury added products.

This online resource provides access to data that manufacturers and distributors have submitted in compliance with the IMERC member states' mercury product notification requirements. The database contains data on the mercury content of hundreds of products, including measuring devices, thermostats, batteries, lamps, and numerous products that contain mercury-added switches, relays, lamps, and button cell batteries. The reporting companies and organizations are given a chance to review what they have submitted to IMERC prior to posting the information online.

Nonpoint Source Pollution Grants

DEM has announced the award of approximately \$1.5 million in nonpoint source pollution abatement grants. It is expected that these 29 projects will improve water quality throughout Rhode Island. Nonpoint source pollution is a significant cause of water quality impairment in Rhode Island. Diffuse in nature, it comes from a number of sources such as failed septic systems, stormwater runoff from lawns, farms, paved surfaces, old landfills, and salt storage facilities, erosion from construction sites, and waterfowl.

Contracts for several of the projects are signed and the first of the projects - construction of a salt storage facility in Coventry - should be completed next month.

The grants will be used by 17 Rhode Island communities, three environmental non-profit agencies, a conservation district, the University of Rhode Island, and DEM for water quality restoration and onsite wastewater management projects. Funds, awarded through the state's nonpoint source pollution management program, include \$1,359,293 provided by the US Environmental Protection Agency from the federal Clean Water Act, and \$105,852 from the state's Clean Water Environmental Trust Fund.

Twenty-three water quality restoration grants, ranging from \$2,000 to \$300,000, and requiring a 40 percent match, will be used to support improvements to water resources that are polluted by non-point sources. The projects will address stormwater discharges, sewage disposal, wetlands impacts, and aquatic habitat degradation problems. The grants will support innovative management of stormwater and other pollutants. The funds will also support community efforts to implement water quality restoration plans, called TMDLs, or Total Maximum Daily (pollutant) Loads, and to comply with RI Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (RIPDES) Phase II Stormwater requirements. One large project - construction of a stormwater management system adjacent to Brushneck Cove in Warwick - will reduce nutrients and bacteria to Greenwich Bay.

Grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$25,000, and requiring a 20 to 40 percent match, will be used for development and implementation of community onsite wastewater management plans in six communities, with the goal of improving overall wastewater management and developing eligibility for community loan programs to repair and upgrade individual septic systems. For additional information on these grants go to the DEM website (<http://www.state.ri.us/DEM/index.htm>) and click on News and go to January 2004.

This year's grants program was highly competitive. Requests for grants totaling \$3.7 million were submitted, demonstrating the need for these funds and the importance of the grants program.

State Mercury Workgroup

Submitted by: B. Migliore

The workgroup is monitoring state and national efforts to roll back existing mercury regulations and assure that provisions of the state laws are being implemented.

Implementation of the procurement provision of the 2001 Mercury Education and Reduction Act (RIGL 23-24.9) is moving forward. This act requires the state to purchase low or non-mercury items for state use. Efforts are being made with the non-profit organization, INFORM, and the RI Office of Purchasing, to incorporate specs and contract language into the state bidding procedures. To date the state has approved draft language for the Commercial and Industrial Supply Contract. The group would like to see this approach expanded to the following contacts as they come up for bid: appliances, HVAC and plumbing service, vehicles and lighting.

This workgroup also discussed efforts to encourage the EPA to hold public hearings on the mercury rule changes. The development of strong mercury regulations for utilities is especially important to our region. The single, largest source of mercury pollution in the region is coal-fired power plants.

Rhode Island Land and Water Conservation Summit

From the Office of Statewide Planning Newsletter

The Rhode Island Land and Water Conservation Summit will be held on Saturday, March 20, 2004, North Kingstown High School. 8:30AM to 3:30 PM. The

program is geared towards local conservationists -- watershed councils, land trusts and municipal conservation commissions. Twenty-one workshops are offered in three topical areas: "Building Strong Organizations", "Land and Water Conservation Tools", and "Land Protection". For questions or more information call the Rivers Council at 714-2313, Land Trust Council at 331-7110 ext. 39 or RIACC at 461-4075

Targeted Brownfields Assessment Grants

The Targeted Brownfields Assessment program is funded by the Environmental Protection Agency and administered by DEM. Brownfields sites are abandoned or other underutilized sites where expansion, redevelopment or reuse may be complicated by the presence of contaminants. This program provides independent environmental site assessments of these sites. Determining the scope of the site contamination often eliminates the uncertainty of the property's redevelopment and reuse potential. Federal Brownfields legislation passed in 2002 provides funding for the program.

DEM received a Brownfields grant from EPA in October for \$861,029, with \$200,000 earmarked for additional targeted Brownfields assessments. DEM is encouraging municipalities, non-profit organizations (particularly those partnered with municipalities) and Indian tribes interested in the redevelopment of Brownfields to apply to DEM to participate in this program. The funding will be used by DEM to conduct an assessment of the property. Costs of the assessments average about \$50,000 and are fully paid for by DEM through EPA funding. The program is strictly for investigations only and does not fund any remediation, if required.

Applications are being accepted by DEM until February 16. Please contact [Kelly Owens](#) if you have any questions about the program.

DEM Regulatory Agenda Update

DEM is required to provide the public twice a year with its regulatory agenda. DEM has released its agenda of regulations that will be proposed in the next six months. In addition, the listing includes an update of regulations that were finalized since August of 2003. Some of the regulatory developments in the next six months include:

- Revisions to the Air Toxics Regulation
- Streamlining the permitting process for combined Heat & Power and Distributive Generation Sources
- Updating of the VOC definition in the Air regulations
- Control of VOC emissions from Commercial & Consumer Products / Architectural & Industrial Maintenance Coatings
- Groundwater Quality – Update of statewide classification maps
- Freshwater Wetlands Regulation revisions
- UST Inspection frequency requirements
- Used Oil Recycling
- Site Remediation Regulations – Arsenic standard
- Mercury Added Products.

Visit the DEM website for additional information about the regulatory agenda. (<http://www.state.ri.us/DEM/index.htm>) the click on Publication / Regulations and scroll down to Proposed Regulations / Amendments.

Land Preservation and Recreation

DEM and its partners in land preservation protected close to 4,000 acres in fiscal year 2003. DEM and the Agricultural Land Preservation Commission, DEM protected 1,844 acres in 25 separate projects, including over 200 acres of active farmland through the purchase of development rights.

Municipal and private land trusts participated in the preservation of 1,304 acres. The Nature Conservancy protected another 576 acres, including significant acquisitions in the Queen's River watershed in South County and on Block Island.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service added 214 acres to its refuges in Ninigret and Chafee Refuge in Pettaquamscutt and on Block Island.

The Rhode Island Department of Transportation is transferring 32 acres surrounding the Mud Cove inlet of Ninigret Pond for passive recreation. Plans for the property include walking trails, scenic overlooks, and canoe/kayak launching areas. The land will be managed by the Town of Charlestown.

For more information on land preservation see the Land conservation in Rhode Island – Fiscal Year 2003 report on the DEM website www.state.ri.us/dem.

Mold

Adapted from information submitted by J. Celenza

Last fall a few schools in Rhode Island experienced mold problems and were closed for varying periods of up to a week to protect children and staff from mold spores that were aerosolized during cleaning.

People who are allergic to molds can have hay fever-like symptoms, such as sneezing, runny nose, red eyes, and skin rash. Some molds can trigger classic asthma attacks in those who are allergic to molds. People with weakened immune systems may be more vulnerable to opportunistic infections.

Controlling the sources mold uses to live and multiply can reduce overall indoor mold exposure. Here are some tips:

- Fix and eliminate leaks, and repair damaged building materials.
- Remove mold-contaminated items from buildings promptly.
- Keep humidity below 50%: use air conditioners/dehumidifiers.
- Have adequate ventilation where mold sources likely: bathrooms, kitchens, basements.
- Clean bathrooms with mold killing agents (1 cup bleach to 1 gallon water). (Never add ammonia to bleach. Mixing ammonia and bleach can produce dangerous chlorine vapors.
- Don't carpet basements & bathrooms or areas where you are likely to get water leakage.
- Remove and dispose of any soaked carpets, upholstery, or porous ceiling tiles.
- Use paints that have mold inhibitors.

For more information about mold visit: www.osha.gov or www.CDC.org.

Greenhouse Gas Update

Submitted by: T. Bisson

One aspect of the Greenhouse Gas project is a government Lead-By-Example initiative. Stakeholders identified numerous ways that State government could not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but also save the State money. Three recommendations have or will be forwarded to Governor Carcieri for consideration as part of the State Fiscal

Fitness project and efforts to reduce the projected budget deficit.

The first is an Executive Order for energy efficient renovations and new construction in state facilities and public schools. State taxpayers could save \$39 million in operating costs over the next 15 years if the measure is initiated.

The second is a recommendation requiring all future State purchases of office equipment, appliances, lighting and vehicles to meet the highest energy-efficiency standards available while meeting performance requirements. In addition, the state should evaluate broader environmental & economically preferable purchasing. Massachusetts uses this approach and has produced a net fiscal gain.

The third is an Executive Order to continue to improve the energy efficiency of state fleet vehicles. The Order addresses vehicle purchases as well as after market parts and maintenance. The purchase of fuel-efficient tires alone can reduce fuel consumption by as much as 3%.

Materials Exchange Programs Aim to Reduce Waste

Submitted by T. Bisson

The Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation announced that two materials exchange programs are up and running. The programs are part of an effort to reduce the amount of reusable goods being thrown away.

The first is a residential exchange program called Free Market Rhode Island, which connects free, reusable items with people who want them. The Free Market website (www.freemarketri.org) allows people to see what items people are looking for or what items people have to give away, and how they can reach each other to make the exchange.

The second is a business-oriented program called the [Southern New England Materials Exchange \(SNEME\)](#), which links businesses that have a surplus of waste materials with businesses (and other organizations) that may have a use for them. By providing businesses with the opportunity to easily give away what they would normally throw away, SNEME not only helps businesses to save disposal costs, but also helps them to reduce their environmental impact.

For more information, contact [John Trevor](#) at 942-1430, extension 112 or visit the RIRRC website at www.rirrc.org.

Outreach

New Brochures en Espanol

Submitted by M. Musselman

DEM recently posted four spanish brochures on its website and hopes to have them printed in time for the Home Show. As a result of the Department's Environmental Equity initiative, DEM began a partnership with the Metropolitan School in Providence last fall. Six high school students interned at DEM in various divisions. One student whose family emigrated from South America, did the initial translation into Spanish for the four topics. Will Lemus in Air Resources, who regularly helps with communications with Spanish-speaking constituents, did the final editing.

The brochures are: Customer Assistance Guide to the Department of Environmental Management; Wetlands Permitting Program; and informational brochures on protecting against mosquitoes and products containing mercury with alternatives.

Home Show

Submitted by S. Ely

Building on past outreach efforts, the Wetlands Program will be participating in the R.I. Home Show again this year, which runs from Wednesday March 10th at 2PM through Sunday March 14th at 6PM. The 5-day show draws over 30,000 people from all around the state. Other programs within the Office of Water Resources, including the ISDS program will also be participating for a portion of the time. Materials and information from other DEM offices will also be available.

Wetlands staff will be able to answer questions on the permitting process, as well as provide guidance as well as guidance on how or where to get answers or other information on other topics relevant to all DEM departments.

Last year, more than 2000 pieces of literature on wetlands and the wetlands program were distributed to those to had questions. Overall, the Home Show booth provided an excellent opportunity for DEM Wetlands to interact with the public and showcase what wetlands protection is all about. It provided a public forum to DEM to reach a large cross-section of the population and answer questions that might not have otherwise been asked. We hope for the same success this year.

The Home Show is at the Convention Center and is open 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. Wed, Thurs. and Friday, March 10-12, and 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturday, March 13, and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday, March 14.

For more information on the Wetlands Program at the Home Show, please contact Susan Ely at 401-222-4700 Ext. 7205. Hope to see you there!

New Narragansett Bay Watershed Coastal Training Program Website

Submitted by: Kim Botelho

DEM's Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve launched The Narragansett Bay Watershed Coastal Training Program (NBWCTP) website. This interactive website is designed to provide coastal decision-makers (CDMs) with science-based information and skills that are necessary to make informed decisions about how to use and manage Narragansett Bay and its watershed. The NBWCTP serves as a forum to enhance coordination and communication among trainers and educators who will provide CDMs with technical support on issues relating to the Bay and its watershed.

CDMs are people who make decisions that impact the health of Narragansett Bay and its watershed. These CDMs may include elected officials, volunteer boards, land use planners, fishermen, regulatory personnel, non-profit agencies, etc. They may also deal with non-coastal, upland issues within the watershed that will inevitably impact the Bay.

During 2002 and 2003 the NBWCTP implemented a market analysis and needs assessment which showed that CDMs would like information and training for the following issues: wetlands ecology, invasive species, endangered species, suburban sprawl & urban decay, tourism & recreation development, water quality and quantity, planning town-wide greenways, and other watershed issues that may become vital to the successful management of the Bay and its resources.

The NBWCTP will also develop educational programs, workshops, and products relevant to priority issues identified by CDMs.

For more information about the Narragansett Bay Watershed Coastal Training Program please visit our website @ www.nbwctp.org, or email Brian J. McCormick, Coastal

Training Specialist, Narragansett Bay
National Estuarine Research Reserve @
Bjm102001@aol.com.

2003 Permitting Customer Satisfaction Survey

Submitted by T. Getz

Wetlands Task Force

Submitted by S. Ely

The Wetlands Task Force reconvened at the end of January after a two-year break. The group was originally formed in 2000 to review the Wetlands Program for ways to improve and streamline the permitting process. At the January meeting DEM presented program streamlining improvements and wetland outreach initiatives that have been successfully completed over the past two years. Two ongoing projects include wetland rule revisions and the creation of a wetlands best management practices (BMP) manual.

The Task Force was asked to review a draft Phase II revision of the Wetland Rules. The primary revisions are a simplified fee schedule and structural improvements for clarity and understanding of application requirements and procedures.

The Task Force was also asked to provide comment on a nearly complete draft of the Wetland BMP manual. The objective of the manual is to provide a better understanding of acceptable and wetland-friendly designs and practices that can be used when completing an application for DEM.

The Task Force is scheduled to meet 2-3 times in March to hear members comments about the draft rules and manual. To view the PowerPoint presentation from the January meeting please visit the DEM website at <http://www.state.ri.us/dem/programs/ombuds/pstream/wetlands/index.htm>.

This summer, DEM completed its second customer satisfaction survey of its major permitting programs. Approximately 1200 individuals, consultants, municipalities and individuals who applied for permits in FY 2003 were surveyed. Preliminary results show that DEM was providing a good level of customer service with respect to its conduct in pre-application meetings, permit application review and overall effectiveness of the permit program.

Customer satisfaction varied by program and DEM provided an average to excellent level of service in all programs. Although not all the program surveys represented a statistically valid sample, the survey results in 2003 show a general improvement trend. The most typical negative response indicated that the timeliness of many of the DEM permit process could be improved. Even though there were some timeliness issues with the permitting programs there was strong support for the function of these programs. Responses from five of the six programs rated the role of the permitting process in protecting the environment at the excellent to good service level.

Watch for publication of the final survey in the next few weeks on the [Ombudsman Program](#) page on the DEM web site. Or, for more information, please contact Tom Getz at 222-2771, extension 2417 or email: <mailto:tgetz@dem.state.ri.us>.