

Meeting Notes
(Revised 3/27/00)
Wetlands Task Force
Outreach and Education Work Group

Meeting Date: March 9, 2000

Members present included Derry Riding, Michael DeLuca, Carolyn Weymouth (representing Ron Gagnon), Joseph Frisella, and Bryan Wolfenden. Dexter Miller of the Natural Resources Conservation Service asked to participate and he was welcomed to join us. Ms. Riding also suggested that Lorraine Joubert of URI, Coop Ext. be included in our meetings because of the major role that the CE has taken on outreach and education to municipalities.

Introductions were made and the group discussed the progress of the Wetlands Task Force including the latest meeting subjects. All expressed optimism that the energy and hard work of many people would be put to good use by incorporating many of the recommendations being made by all the workgroups. Mr. Wolfenden asked if the issues identified in the DEM handout accurately represented all the issues and priorities of the work group. Members added to the list and refined it.

Issues:

1. Outreach to other bodies (municipal) – This issue was important to the whole group, and really involves broadening the definition of who RIDEM’s customers are. Which includes the following:
 2. Federal Agencies
 3. Include development community
 4. Local Boards
5. Wetlands mapping availability – For years people have heard that accurate wetland maps would be based in every town hall and made available to the public. This has not happened, and while we are aware that plans are being made to revise the mapping, we still believe this needs to be a resource, which should be readily available. The group sees this as a priority.
6. Make a commitment to staff education – The RIDEM should ensure that staff are supported in their ability to provide top notch service. This means they should receive in-house and outside training in technical and customer service subjects.
7. Allow staff to provide training/education to public on Saturdays and be paid for it. Several members presented this as a concern. Sometimes RIDEM staff have participated in training the public on Saturdays and in the evenings, but have had to do it on their own time.
8. RIDEM to take the lead *on regulatory subjects* and present an example to towns etc.

Recommendations:

1. Development collaborative strategies for implementation – No need to reinvent the wheel! There are many good examples in nearby states, which present models of collaboration. This approach can be most cost-effective and inclusive.
2. Explore alternative methods for implementation as per examples from CT. and Mass. for funding and implementation of training and education.
3. Develop a strategic outreach and education plan which includes the environmental community and developers perspective, and implement it. Ensure that there are adequate resources (staff and financial) committed to sustain these efforts.
4. Process: *application* consistency is important – The importance of having staff be consistent in their determinations and requirements *during the permit application review stage* has been identified by many as an area of concern. People who have had quite a bit of first hand experience with this process have indicated that the knowledge of the DEM staff person in reviewing the proposal and site makes a big difference. *Again this supports the need for some type of formal technical training.* The big picture of the proposed project needs to be understood, as well as the minute details of the site plans.
5. Ensure that local input and participation at the pre-application RIDEM meeting and vice versa – from a planner's perspective and a developer's, this would be most helpful.
6. Staff Training Support will increase predictability and consistency this will save time for all, and ensure a quality review process.
7. Provide a listing on the internet and maps which present jurisdictional limits i.e. bufferzones etc.
8. Create a site or parcel database on GIS which depicts areas of known wetlands which have come before the DEM .
9. Governor and legislature need to be more responsive re: DEMs wetlands funding needs.
10. Check into the availability of funding from the Army Corp of Engineers for staff activities related to implementing the new ACE permit regulations.

The group agreed to focus on 2 or 3 items for the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30pm. The next meeting is planned for 3/30/00 at 8:30am at the USDA Conference Room, 60 Quaker Lane, Warwick. For directions please call 828-1300. An agenda will be emailed or snail-mailed. Please call Bryan Wolfenden at 401.521.5980 if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you.