



The Rhode Island Rivers Council
c/o RI Water Resources Board
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DRAFT FOR REVIEW- Minutes of RIRC Annual meeting
Wednesday, April 4, 2018, 3 pm
Rhode Island State House Library
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present:

Veronica Berounsky, Chair
Rachel Calabro, Vice Chair
Alicia Eichinger
Walter Galloway
Paul Gonsalves
Charles Horbert
Eugenia Marks
Ernie Panciera
Elise Torello

B. Guests in Attendance:

Michael Bradlee, Friends of the Moshassuck (FOTM)
Joshua Butera, Governor's Office
Richard Grant, Narrow River Preservation Association
Keith Gonsalves, Ten Mile River Watershed Council
Ann Manion, Salt Ponds Coalition
John Marsland, BRWC/FOB
Jenny Paquet, RIDEM Water Resources
Marcia Pena, Buckeye Brook Coalition
Douglas Stevens, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council
Michael Zarum, Buckeye Brook Coalition
Jon Zwarg, DEM (mapping division)

2:00 p.m. -5:30 p.m. Watershed Council Displays Available for Viewing Inside and Outside the Library

Call to Order: Chair Veronica Berounsky called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. and asked for introductions.

Guest Speaker, Representative Carol Hagan-McEntee, D- District 33 South Kingstown and Narragansett, member of the House Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources,

"RI Legislation of Interest to the RI Rivers Council": Representative Hagan-McEntee thanked us for inviting her to speak and for setting up the new RIRC display and the new Watershed Council map displays. She recounted how she and Veronica met with the Governor's staff last year to pursue ways to fund the RIRC now that the Community Service Grants have been abolished.

Following that, she and Rep. Craven put in for a \$2000 Legislative Grant for the RIRC, and she was pleased to see the results of that grant in the Display and the Maps. She commended the RIRC for its role in educating the public on environmental issues, pertaining to waterbodies in particular, and noted how these new display materials will supplement the information available to the public on the RIRC website.

As the District 33 Representative Rep. Hagan-McEntee noted that she has parts of South Kingstown, North Kingstown, and Narragansett in her district. She had served on the South Kingstown Town Council where they were concerned with runoff, failing septic systems, and other impacts on local waterbodies. As Rep she has helped South Kingstown get grants to prevent runoff and purchase a vehicle to clean out storm drains, etc. In addition, Bonnet Shores received a grant to dredge Wesquage Pond which had been contaminated due to runoff.

Legislation of interest includes the Plastic Waste Reduction Act which she sponsored. Rep. Hagan-McEntee recounted how fishermen and others have seen foreign objects showing up in their nets and in birds' nests, and biologists have seen plastic and other objects in fish bellies as well. The Act phases out plastic bags by 2021, and towns can opt out. They also can charge up to \$.25 a bag for those who continue use.

Also: totally against offshore drilling, especially due to the importance of the tourism industry and the impacts of oil spills based on past experience. We need to keep up with recycling. RI finally has the cesspool phase out with financing for septic system construction. The Green Buildings Act revisions

to improve standards for renovations. The RI Global Warming Solutions Act to reduce carbon emissions by 80% by 2050.

She closed by thanking the RIRC for doing a great job in addressing its mission. She recounted having gone out to do water quality sampling with Veronica last year and how impressive the level of effort is from all the volunteers in the Watershed Councils. Keep up the good work everywhere!

She quoted Barack Obama "...the threat from climate change is serious, it is urgent, and it is growing. Our generation's response to this challenge will be judged by history; for if we fail to meet it boldly, swiftly and together, we risk consigning future generations to an irreversible catastrophe. "

She said for our legacy, we need to fight it, and asked we let her know of any bills we'd like her to support.

A brief Q&A followed, including comments on proper siting of wind and solar energy installations and that cities and towns need to come up with ordinances to deal with that; and that whatever legislation comes out of the report from the Senate Committee on Water Resources needs to include appropriate funding for both the WRB and the RIRC as a proper use of public drinking water system surcharges.

She urged us to "Get in touch with your Legislators!!!"

Reports by RIRC Representatives on State Committees:

Narragansett Bay Estuarine Program: As reported by Mr. Galloway: Narragansett Bay Estuary Program is funding four research projects to help address scientific questions about the Narragansett Bay watershed and inform future reports issued by the Estuary Program. These projects are:

Sediment Profile Imagery Survey to Evaluate Benthic Habitat Quality in Narragansett Bay John King (URI): To monitor changes in benthic habitat quality, a team will rerun a Bay-wide Sediment Profile Imagery (SPI) survey previously run in 1988 and 2008 and will add several new stations. Shumchenia et al (2016) showed improvements in the benthic habitat quality of the Bay between these surveys. However, these surveys need to be run more frequently, and a new survey should be conducted now.

High Resolution Salt Marsh Mapping Using Unmanned Aerial Systems, Peter August (URI): High resolution (~10 cm pixel size) imagery collected using small unmanned aerial systems (UAS) has the potential to be a valuable, yet cost-effective, means for monitoring changes in extent and composition of

salt marsh habitats over time. These images will be used for interpretation of salt marsh vegetation. These data will directly address the gaps identified in the State of Narragansett Bay Technical Report. Specifically, these data will support the Tier 1 salt marsh monitoring and assessment plan put forth by NBNERR and others.

Further Analysis and Synthesis of Bay Oxygen, Chlorophyll, and Temperature, Dan Codiga (Independent): Several related analyses of oxygen, chlorophyll, and temperature in the Narragansett Bay Watershed—at sites from Phillipsdale Landing in the Seekonk River to the southern end of Prudence Island—will build on prior understanding and create products in support of NBEP scientific research. Objectives and tasks all address gaps that were identified by the 2017 State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed report. Benefits include improved understanding of variability and long-term trends in oxygen, chlorophyll, and temperature.

Research Needs for Marine Beaches, Dave McLaughlin (Clean Ocean Access): The project aims to advance the understanding of bacteria at high recreational use beaches in Rhode Island to improve public health and provide a model for future work at other locations in the Narragansett Bay. The benefits are improved insight into the 15+ years of microbiology dataset of Enterococci levels at high usage recreational areas along with relationships of bacterial counts and antecedent rain using advanced statistical analysis software developed and supported by US EPA.

The Estuary Program also partnered with three different lead applicants to submit pre-proposals for SNEP funding related to floating islands, atmospheric deposition and stormwater, and a comprehensive restoration plan to restoring water quality in Hundred Acre Cove.

Water Resources Board: As reported by Ms. Eugenia Marks: The WRB staff, Acting General Manager Kathleen Crawley and Supervising Civil Engineer Robert Bailey, have moved to offices in Division of Public Utilities and Carriers at [89 Jefferson Blvd., Warwick, RI 02888](#). Contact at (401) 780-2146 or Kathleen.crawley@wrb.ri.gov. The official inclusion of the Water Resources Board within the DPUC awaits passage of budget article 3 within the 2019 State Budget before the RI General Assembly.

Three meetings of the Senate Commission on Water Resources and Water Supply have received testimony on the history and functions of the WRB, as well as observations about water management in other states. In testimony from the RI State Budget Office, it was reported that of the

surcharge on customers of public water supplies that 57% goes to the General Fund, 36.1% goes to the Infrastructure Bank for use on Drinking Water projects, and 6.9% is returned to suppliers for administrative use.

Our interest in the Commission is to assure that the RI Rivers Council, which is a ward of the WRB, be accorded adequate support for its work that could help to protect watersheds of mutual interest to WRB. Some of the funds now diverted to non-water purposes could be used to replace the \$40,000 per year formerly allocated to RI Rivers Council for projects of its designated watershed members.

State Guide Plan Recreation Committee: As reported by Paul Gonsalves: An RFP (Request for Proposals) decision is pending and that the kickoff for the next update of the SCORP will occur in May or June.

Bays, Rivers & Watersheds Coordination Team (BRWCT) Funds as reported by Dr. Berounsky: This is done, just waiting to see reports from the Watershed Councils on their sampling last season.

Written Reports of Activities Received from Designated Watershed Councils:

-Pawtuxet River Authority and Watershed Council – written report submitted and presented by Charles Horbert –

We are still working to secure assistance for a couple homeless individuals who have been camping on one of our properties. We are coordinating with professionals and progress is being made with the cooperation of the individuals.

The Town of West Warwick is beginning planning for a big event in Town in June with various events and food trucks in various locations in Town and they want to include the Crompton Fishing Pier as a "learn to fish" station for the event. We will be coordinating with the Town to make that happen. No date has been set yet.

An additional cleanup has been added to our calendar: April 21 (with a rain date of April 22) will be a Riverwalk rehabilitation event at Riverpoint Park in West Warwick. This is a former pathway that has been neglected over the years. This is in addition to four other cleanups and two fishing derbies that we have planned over April and May. Our first cleanup is scheduled for this coming Saturday at Tongue Pond in Cranston. Next weekend we will be concentrating on one of our riverwalks near Arkwright in Coventry. We are also trying to get a cleanup scheduled again on the Pocasset River in Johnston; it looks like this year it will be at the Johnston Memorial Park on Hartford Avenue.

A proposal for a three-story storage facility that had been denied by the planning board has now been appealed to the Zoning Board. PRAWC will be providing testimony against the proposed project out of concerns for impacts to the pond. This meeting was recently postponed.

With Spring coming up, efforts continue on a memorial for Guy Lefebvre at our Veteran's Square property in West Warwick. We will be looking into getting a red maple tree and a stone for the memorial.

We will also be working this spring to install a few wood duck boxes into backwater areas along the river as part of a scout project.

<http://www.pawtuxet.org/>

-Salt Ponds Coalition –written report submitted and presented by Alicia Eichinger

SPC is continuing its partnership with CRMC, the Towns of Charlestown and Westerly, USFWS, Save the Bay and others to continue marsh restoration work on the ponds. Ninigret Pond was completed last year, and plant growth on the marsh looked promising. This winter work will be started on Quonochontaug Pond.

SPC is continuing its work with the Town of Charlestown, Save the Bay, and the University of Rhode Island to address pollution heading into the ponds from onsite waste water treatment systems. The goal is to upgrade and/or calibrate these systems so they work more efficiently and to see some increase in water quality in the ponds in the Charlestown area.

We are ready to start our 2018 water quality sampling season. Training will happen later this month and sampling will begin in mid-May.

Our summer safari and kayak schedule is set for 2018. This year we will be hosting 10 free public safaris and 3 paddle trips. All of our safaris will be held at Ninigret Wildlife Refuge, and this year we will be exploring Pt. Judith, Quonochontaug, and Winnapaug Ponds on our paddle trips. We will be posting the full schedule to our website shortly.

SPC is working with interested member volunteers and RIDEM's John Lake to start a biota study to complement existing work being done at RIDEM.

SPC spoke with John Lake (DEM) about working with him on a biota study in the salt ponds that would complement the existing work that he does.

We are in the midst of our 2018 membership drive, so far response has been steady.

www.saltpondscoalition.org

-Ten Mile River Watershed Council – written report submitted and presented by Keith Gonsalves

The TMRWC is starting the outside work for 2018 with our first event "Fish count training". Jen Brooks from the DEM joined us on March 28 to show volunteers what needs to be done to record returning herring at the Hunts Mills. We set the list of our events for the year, and we are just finishing up on our book about "Easy Walks in the Watershed " to be release on Kindle in May and hard copies available later April.

<http://www.tenmileriver.net/>

-Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association – written report submitted and presented by Elise Torello

Trail Advisory Committee Grant for Urban Children's Paddles

WPWA is once again grateful to have received a grant from the RI Trail Advisory Committee to continue offering kayak paddling programs on the Wood Rive for urban children. Planning is currently in the works. WPWA is also eternally grateful to our dedicated volunteers, who make these programs possible.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Study and Flood Resiliency and Management Plan

The first draft of the Stewardship Plan has been sent off to the editor and committee for review.

Water Quality Monitoring

The WPWA board has been working hard over the winter to develop a sustainable watershed wide water quality monitoring program for 2018 and beyond. They have developed a strategic plan that outlines the core sites to be monitored by WPWA volunteers and staff in 2018 and a path to restore those sites that have been suspended due to budget constraints. WPWA has developed an annual \$1000 Business Membership program that provides benefits to businesses while directing a large portion of their membership contribution to sponsoring water quality monitoring sites in the watershed. If you own a business, or know someone who does, please help spread the word and ask them to contact Chris Fox for more details on how they can help support water quality in the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed.

River Paddling Safety

WPWA is already beginning to receive many reports of blowdowns blocking the rivers. This winter's storms brought many trees down thanks to their high winds. WPWA has an open small grant from the RI Trail Advisory Committee that will help start the 2018 removal process. Because of the high volume of portages created by these blowdowns, WPWA intends to begin removing tree sections in April, far earlier than we usually do. Hopefully WPWA will be able to secure another RITAC grant in May to continue the work through the summer months. WPWA is committed to keeping the rivers safe from hazardous portages while preserving the ecological value of fallen trees and their important role in encouraging the meandering of rivers.

Website Redesign

WPWA is also focused on redesigning its website this spring. Thanks to a grant and the volunteer assistance of board member Jon Waldstein WPWA will have a fresh new presence on the web by the end of the summer. But we won't let this drain on our horsepower affect our ability to advocate for the watershed or push the National Park Service Wild & Scenic designation across the finish line!
<http://www.wpwa.org/>

-Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council – written report submitted by Kassi Archambault, presented by Doug Stevens

Greenway Maintenance & River Rangers

The 2017/2018 winter Ranger team has become 2 seniors and 2 juniors, and temporary workers. We plan to retain one Senior River Ranger and hire one new Senior Ranger in the coming season. We have recruited and hired our two new Junior River Rangers – one is a temp continuing on with us for the full season.

Invasive plant management is in progress. Cutbacks and treatments continued this winter along Promenade & Kinsley. The team has been working the rest of the Greenway for over 3 years now and expects to see better control (i.e. less work needed) along the upper reaches of the Greenway.

Clean Days on the Greenway Kickoff & Series

2018 Clean Days Series planning is underway!

Mark your calendars and join us!

Friday, April 13 – Downtown Woony Clean Day (Kickoff Event!) – 9am-4pm. This will begin with a press event including Senator Reed, DEM Director Janet Coit and Providence's Mayor Elorza.

Saturday, April 28 – Greenway Parks Clean Day (Kickoff Event!) – 10am-2pm

Saturday, May 12 – Cricket Field Clean Day – 10am-2pm

Friday May 18 – San Souci Clean Day – 12pm-4pm
Saturday May 19 – Olneyville Shines – time tbd

Amanda O'Bannon, our Community Engagement Coordinator and Community Health Worker Fellow, continues to engage with the community, coordinating Clean Days activities with the Rangers, continuing working on developing "friends groups" in our Greenway parks, and re-invigorating old partnerships.

Water Quality/River Monitoring:

Herring Return Count: Thanks to John Hake, we have all our spring fish counters in place, trained and counting fish as they return to the Woony. We are hopeful that this year we will see increased numbers of herring returning to the river thanks to state stocking that took place four years prior.

Water Quality Monitoring: We plan to begin our water quality monitoring program on the river in April. Doug Stephens is still coordinating this project. Thank you, Doug!

Green Infrastructure:

Citizens Bank at Olneyville Square: This project will greatly improve connection to the river, provide more green space in Olneyville Square and manage most of the stormwater now running off Citizens parking lot directly into the Woony.

Pleasant Valley Stream Green Infrastructure: To date we have retrofitted 10 homes. Examples include simple downspout diversions to existing gardens, rain boxes and permeable pavers. We have developed design and maintenance sheets. We are also finalizing our signs that will go up at homes with completed projects in April.

Education Programs:

Fish in the Classroom:

2 Education staff maintain three tanks in two schools. By June the educators will teach 5 – 9 lessons to 14 classes, totaling about 310 elementary school children. The goal is to sustain this and grow it.

Environmental Leaders:

1 WRWC Educator has engaged 30 high school youth this school year in learning, researching and finally teaching others about a project that particularly interests them. Currently, youth are planning their own presentations in places as diverse as their own school, a kindergarten, an elementary school and others.

Red Shed:

April Bike Camp for Girls is fully enrolled and fully funded!

EVENTS: ALL EVENTS LISTED at <http://wrwc.org/events.php>

Upcoming:

- a. Clean Days on the Greenway Kickoff – Kinsley/Promenade in Providence, Friday, April 13th, 2018
- b. Clean Days on the Greenway – Merino, Donigian and Riverside Parks, Saturday, April 28th, 2018
- c. Yellow Perch Cocktail Party Thursday, May 17th, 2018, 5:30pm- 8:30pm Skyline at Waterplace

<http://www.wrwc.org/>

-Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone – written report submitted by Judy Hadley, presented by John Marsland, The BRWC/FOB is busy with the tasks of completing the addition to our building. This will be a room in which we can hold our meetings, classes, and seminars.

In addition, we are busy preparing for our annual meeting in May, and upcoming meetings with towns throughout our watershed.

We continue to support the Water Quality Monitoring and keep up to date with the current status of the superfund site in Cumberland. We will be having another clothing drive in June and a yardsale as well. Stay tuned for more information on that.

We have clean-ups scheduled for April 21 & 28. Meet at the Sycamore Landing BRWC Environmental Center at 100 New River Road, Manville, RI, 9:00 AM. For more information or to volunteer, call Keith Hainley at 401-996-1542.

www.blackstoneriver.org/blackstone/

-Buckeye Brook Coalition – presented by Michael Zarum, No written report submitted

Mr. Zarum reported and thanked RIRC for the meeting and the new banners, brochures, etc. They'll be very helpful and the maps really facilitate the conversation. Buckeye Brook Coalition has helped restore the stream area around Spring Green Pond and hopefully new WW water quality monitoring will show it. Also, DEM is doing a new TMDL on the area. They continue with Phragmites cleanup in the area.

<http://www.buckeyebrook.org/>

-Kickemuit River Council – report submitted by Robin Hagan Aguiar
Will be meeting next month, nothing to report as of now.
<http://www.kickemuitriver.org/>

-Friends of the Moshassuck – written report submitted and presented by Michael Bradlee

FoTM Annual Board Meeting

- a. We shall be doing water testing on the Moshassuck again on 2018
 - i. Bruce Campbell submitted Report for water testing from 2017
 - ii. One monitoring site (has funding) secured
 - iii. Will try to add at least one, hopefully two sites for monitoring
- b. Continuing to work on amphibian habitat in the NBG
- c. Results of water testing for 2017
- d. Jim Kelley is retiring from the board
- e. We are also forming more of a partnership with Friends of the North Burial Ground. Details are still being worked out

Michael Bradlee will begin an informal survey of the stream, and surrounding watershed, as a means of familiarizing himself with the watershed and its natural history. Plan to target 12 sites in 2018 of the River and surrounding area.

- f. Broad brush survey of the Moshassuck River
- g. Visit one site per month
- h. ID other potential restoration projects
- i. Strengthen connection with northern part of the watershed.

www.themoshassuck.org

-Narrow River Preservation Association–written report submitted by Alison Kates and Richard Grant, presented by Richard Grant

The NRPA was formed in 1970 and since that date the citizens of SK, NK and Narragansett have been protecting the rules and regulations established by the CRMC and the DEM. Under the guidance of RI Rivers Council, NRPA stepped up its involvement with US Fish and Wildlife. The bottom line of the NRPA activities is to improve the water quality. And recently in comparing data for the last 25 years of testing, NRPA is happy to report that the water quality has improved.

In order to support the programs of NRPA, a budget of \$53,000 is necessary. During the last month, planning for the fundraising events has continued and that list includes, the 31st Annual Road Race, the 13th Annual Turnaround Swim, the 11th Annual Pettaquamscutt Paddle. And we hope that a Fishing Tournament will take place in October of this year. While the fundraising events help support the activities of NRPA, the events promote that the river

is there to enjoy, in areas of swimming, boating and a variety of hands on summer education courses such as What is in the River and Art on the River. Also, each year NRPA reaches out and judges the NK and South Kingston Science Fairs. NRPA has also planned to provide up to 4 \$1000.00 Lesa Meng College Scholarships this year. The NRPA recent newsletter highlighted several important items. (1) The President's Cove, displaying the new RIRC Map, with a statement about RIRC. And (2) an historical story about Saunders Ship Building on the Narrow River by Sarah Gaines.

NRPA Board members attended the Land and Water Summit, the Rhode Island Foundation endowment meeting and the last of 3 On Pettaquamscutt Lectures, which was presented by Linda Green of the URI Watershed Watch Office.

Board members of NRPA have reported on a proposal by USFWS to dredge the mouth of the River. River Contaminants, Canine Detection Project, CRMC Collaborations, River Clean up Program, South Side of Sprague Bridge redesign, Storm Water BMP program with the three towns, Middlebridge Tide Chart, Review of Walmsley Lane Development, W.E. R. LaFarge Park Improvement Program, and review of the proposed solar Field in NK.

Most of the programs mentioned in the last month's activities are ongoing and will be reported monthly

www.narrowriver.org

Approval of Minutes:

We had to wait for a quorum to be in attendance for voting.

March 14, 2018 Minutes: Eugenia moved, Walt seconded. Approved.

February 14, 2018 minutes: Elise moved, Ernie seconded. Approved.

Chair's Report: by Dr. Veronica Berounsky, Chair

First, I would like to express my gratitude to all the RIRC members and our colleagues involved with making this great Annual meeting happen and for finishing the various RIRC items on display here. A big thank you to Alicia Eichinger for designing and putting together the new RIRC tri-fold display. Another big thank you to Elise Torello for designing and producing the new RIRC Brochure. Thank you to all the watershed council members who worked hard and had meetings about their map-banners. Thank you to Jon Zwarg of DEM for working with the watershed councils and producing the watershed maps. Thank you to Bruce Hooke for working (including nights and weekends) to get the banners produced from the maps. Thank you to Elise, Alicia, and

Eugenia for bringing the delicious snacks to this meeting. Thank you to Megan Hamlin-Black and Deborah White for the use of the State House Library and the rotunda space. And a big thank you to State Reps Carol Hagan McEntee and Robert Craven for the \$2000 legislative grant that allowed the RIRC to purchase the trifold display, brochures, and map-banners.

Our present Vice Chair since 2012, Rachel Calabro, has changed work positions and is not working for the RI Department of Health. Because of the expected increase in her job responsibilities, Rachel is stepping down as Vice-Chair of the RIRC. She will remain as a council member of the RIRC. The RIRC would like to thank Rachel for her service as vice-chair over these years. We are particularly grateful for her work in heading up the committees that reviewed new watershed councils, renewals of designations of present watershed councils, and grants to watershed councils.

We have received several nominations for the vice-chair position. Alicia Eichinger has been nominated and had agreed to run for vice-chair. The following vote was taken:

Ms. Alicia Eichinger nominated as Vice-Chair

Dr. Berounsky moved, Ms. Torello seconded. Approved Unanimously.

Mr. Josh Butera from Governor Raimondo's Office was at the early part of the meeting and reports that the 3 nominations for the 3 vacant (or soon to be vacant) RIRC positions are moving along.

Officer Reports, Financial Report, Committee Reports:

Elise provided the Financial Report and there is no change from the March report.

Other Business: May 9 speaker to be from DEM on Alewives. There was some discussion about trying to get the Saugatucket River Council back on the RIRC.

Adjournment:

Ms. Torello moved, Mr. Horbert seconded. Adjourned at 4:45 p.m.