

RHODE ISLAND RIVERS COUNCIL HISTORICAL OUTLINE

1989-1990: *Lieutenant Governor's Task Force on Rivers, Final Report & Recommendations*, 58 pages, February, 1990.

1991-2000: Governor Bruce Sundlun inaugurated January 1, 1991.

General Assembly created RI Rivers Council (RC) – RI General Law 46-28.

Kenneth Payne became RC chair.

Statewide Planning Program provides staff support to RC.

RC concluded in 1992 that "more effective integration of existing programs and authority for rivers is needed."

RC formulated draft classifications for rivers in 1993.

RC held four workshops in northern, central, southern and eastern RI in 1994 to refine draft river classifications.

Governor Lincoln Almond inaugurated January 1, 1995.

Michael Cassidy, Planner for the City of Pawtucket, became RC chair.

RC, working with the Division of Planning, created digital maps of the state's watersheds.

The State Planning Council adopted the *RI Rivers Policy and Classification Plan*, in January 1998, as State Guide Plan Element 162.

RC established policies for recognizing local watershed councils in 1998.

The Blackstone, Saugatucket and Wood-Pawcatuck were first river systems to have watershed councils designated by RC.

Note: Designated watershed councils have certain legal authority and standing to represent their water bodies in state and local jurisdictions as well as be eligible for state grants via RC.

2001-2007: Meg Kerr became RC chair.

General Assembly commences in 2001 providing annual legislative grants to RC from \$22,000 to \$52,000 range.

Annual grant rounds commence from RC to designated local watershed councils generally in \$2,500 to \$7,500 range from Fiscal Year 2002 to the present.

Staff support for RC shifts from Statewide Planning Program to Water Resources Board.

RC made an "associated function" of Water Resources Board by General Assembly.

Governor Donald Carcieri inaugurated January 1, 2003.

Ten watershed councils have been designated by RC as follows: Blackstone, Buckeye Brook, Kickemuit, Moshassuck, Narrow, Pawtucket, Salt Ponds, Saugatucket, Wood-Pawcatuck and Woonasquatucket.

Amended *RI Rivers Policy and Classification Plan*, May 2004, adopted by State Planning Council.

The RI Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team established by General Assembly. RC is one of seven state governmental entities made a coordination team voting member.

RC regulations filed with Secretary of State entitled: *Rules and Regulations of the RI Rivers Council for Watershed Council Grants and Notification of Proposed Actions to Watershed Councils*, July 2005.

RC *Riparian Buffer Policy Paper* submitted to the Governor and General Assembly at their request.

RC conducted four RI Watershed Stewardship Programs from 2004 to 2006. Each session consisted of six weeknight classes and two Saturday field trips. Eighty stewards were matriculated in four sessions held in Providence, Warwick, North Kingstown, and South Kingstown.

RC was reconfigured in conjunction with Separation of Powers amendments to RI General Laws. Nine appointments are to be made by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate; two state agencies (DEM, DOA) to continue as voting members; four agencies (CRMC, EDC, LCT, WRB) to be non voting members.

Sharon Pavignano became chair, March 2007.

2008-2013: Guy Lefebvre and Jane Sherman became co-chairs, December 2007.

RC enabling statute reviewed in formal facilitation process led by Walter Galloway of the USEPA Atlantic Ecology Laboratory.

RC provided guidance to Cornell University staff developing New York State Watershed Stewardship Program.

RC transferred ExploreRI website ownership to RI Blueways Alliance which was assisted in its start-up by RC

RC conducted annual grant program for state designated local watershed councils each year.

RC redesignated two local watershed councils for five year terms from 2008 to 2013: Blackstone River Watershed Council / Friends of the Blackstone, and Narrow River Preservation Association.

RI Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team adopted the *RI Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Systems-Level Plan: 2009-2013*, July 2008.

RC redesignated three local watershed councils for five year terms from 2009 to 2014: Buckeye Brook Coalition, Salt Ponds Coalition, and Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association. Saugatucket not redesignated.

Guy Lefebvre became sole RC chair, March 2010.

Extensive flood end of March and beginning of April 2010, Warwick Mall closed.

RC sent letter, 5/20/10, to EDC and DOT requesting improved labeling of rivers on *State Highway and Tourism Map*. River naming improvements made in transition from 2010 to 2011 map.

RC website, rivers.org, extensively updated in 2010.

Governor Lincoln Chafee inaugurated January 1, 2011.

RC moved with Water Resources Board (WRB) from 235 Promenade to One Capitol Hill; WRB placed in RI Department of Administration in June, 2011.

RC sent letter to Congress, 2/7/11, supporting creation of Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park as permanent unit of National Park System.

RC sent letter to Congress supporting Wood & Pawtucket (including Beaver, Chipuxet and Queen) rivers being added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

RC participated in TF Green Airport Improvements EIS starting approximately in 2007, Record of Decision (ROD) made September, 2011.

RC participated in hydropower element of RI Renewable Energy Siting Project conducted by URI and State Energy Office in 2011 and 2012.

RC conducted annual grant program for state designated local watershed councils each year.

RC redesignated four local watershed councils for five year terms from 2011 to 2016:

Kickemuit River Council, Friends of the Moshassuck, Pawtuxet River Authority & Watershed Council and Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council.

RC participated in RI Bays, Rivers & Watersheds Coordination Team.

RC acquired travelling exhibit in March 2011 whose design by Lisa McGreavy of RIDEM features state designated local watershed councils.

RC participated in Roger Williams Park Zoo Party for the Planet Earth Day Fair each April starting 2011.

RC participated in State Historic Preservation Conference each April starting 2012.

RC participated in Town of Narragansett Beach Environmental Awareness Day each July.

Eight new gubernatorial appointments made February 2013, RI Senate confirmations made April 2013: Veronica Berounsky, PhD; Robert Billington, PhD; Rachel Calabro, James Cole, Walter Galloway, Judith Hadley, Charles Horbert, and Elise Torello.

RC passed resolution in June 2013 urging Congress to pass the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park Establishment Act, and postal mails resolution to ten Members of Congress, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and several other relevant government officials.

RC held summer meeting in August 2013 at Coastal Institute, URI Graduate School of Oceanography, URI Bay Campus; welcomed by Dean Bruce Corliss, and learned about National Science Foundation Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research's "watershed sensors" project from URIGSO Professor of Oceanography Jennifer Specker.

RC Chair Guy Lefebvre's last recommendation as chair is for RC to utilize the "story-structure-strategy model" formulated and advocated by Dr. Marshall Ganz of Harvard University for government agency and nonprofit organizational development.

2013-Present: RC elected new officers at the September 2013 meeting: Veronica Berounsky, Ph.D., Chair; Rachel Calabro, Vice Chair; and Lisa McGreavy, Secretary. RC appointed Chair Veronica Berounsky and Member Judith Hadley to be representatives to the RI Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team; Vice Chair Rachel Calabro to be representative to the State Guide Plan Advisory Committee; and Member Walter Galloway to be representative to the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program. At the November 2013 RC meeting, the council approved fifteen thousand dollars in grants to the nine state designated local watershed councils, and redesignated two local watershed councils for five year terms from 2013 to 2018: the Blackstone River Watershed Council / Friends of the Blackstone and the Narrow River Preservation Association.

The January 2014 RC annual meeting speaker was Ken Payne, first chair of RC, who put forth that the recreation and related programs conducted by local watershed councils are the primary ways that people experience and enjoy their rivers and streams in comparison to the more technical aspects of water quality defined by the state and federal government.

The February 2014 RC meeting speaker was Linda Green who presented a quarter century overview of the URI Watershed Watch program.

In late February 2014, one finding of a major study of the "Biogeochemistry of RI's Rivers" conducted by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and Save the Bay stated that the three major rivers - Blackstone, Pawtuxet, Taunton - that discharge to Narragansett Bay are not the principal sources of nutrient contamination to Narragansett

Bay.

The March 2014 RC meeting speaker was David Smith of the Friends of Canonchet Farm who made a presentation entitled "Ten Steps to Habitat Restoration."

The April 2014 RC meeting speaker was Alisa Richardson of RIDEM who addressed hydropower development and regulation.

The May 2014 RC meeting speakers were Nancy Hess of the RI Statewide Planning Program and Susan Kiernan of RIDEM who addressed the development of a new water quality element for the State Guide Plan.

On June 2, 2014, in Pittsburgh, PA, Jane Sherman was the recipient of the River Hero Award presented by the River Network.

On June 11, 2014, the RI Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team voted to grant the RC twenty thousand dollars to address stormwater and green buffer infrastructure working with state designated local watershed councils.

The June 2014 RC meeting speaker was Arthur Eddy who addressed green infrastructure from the perspective of a landscape architect.

The August 2014 RC meeting was held at the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association whose leaders described their efforts to obtain national Wild and Scenic Rivers designation for waterways in their watershed.

The September 2014 RC meeting was held at the RIDEM Division of Water Resources and the meeting speaker was Chuck Horbert who made a slide presentation about the 101 mile north to south Paddle Across RI that he made in July 2014 with Jim Cole and two other paddlers.

The October 2014 RC meeting was held at the RIDEM Division of Water Resources and the meeting speakers were Greg Gerritt of the Friends of the Moshassuck who showed videos of tadpoles active in the watershed and Dave Urban and Dana Warren of the Kickemuit River Council who presented and demonstrated their Denil fish ladder working model.

At the November 2014 RC meeting, three local watershed councils were redesignated for five years - the Buckeye Brook Coalition, the Salt Ponds Coalition, and the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association - and grant awards were made to seven state designated local watershed councils.

At the December 2014 RC meeting, Christine Dudley and Catherine Sparks of RIDEM discussed proposed regulations for boating, fishing and education organizational activities requiring a permit from the RIDEM Division of Fish & Wildlife.

On December 17, 2014, the RC held its first Stormwater Projects workshop with watershed council representatives from the Blackstone, Moshassuck and Woonasquatucket Rivers.

On December 19, 2014, President Obama signed into law the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park Establishment Act and the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Protection Act, a preliminary major step towards national Wild & Scenic River designation.

The January 14, 2015, the RC annual meeting took place at the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in Pawtucket. The speaker was Dr. Robert Billington, Director of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and RC member. Dr. Billington provided a history of the Blackstone River Valley through a tour of the museum exhibits at the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. The meeting was very celebratory given the recent

establishment of the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park by Congress - Number 402 in the National Park System.

At the February 11, 2015, RC meeting, Alicia Lehrer of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council and Denise Poyer of the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association made a presentation entitled: "Volunteer Fishing Monitoring – It's Shockingly Good!"

At the March 11, 2015, RC meeting, Eivy Monroy, Watershed Program Coordinator, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, made a presentation entitled: "Grants for the Greater Narragansett Bay Watershed – Requests for Proposals."

At the April 8, 2015, RC meeting, Wenley Ferguson, Director of Habitat Restoration, Save the Bay, made a presentation entitled: "Salt Marsh Adaptation in Rhode Island."

At the May 13, 2015, RC meeting, Jennifer Pereira, Director of Grant Programs, The Rhode Island Foundation, made a presentation entitled: "Grant Writing Tips."

At the June 10, 2015, RC meeting, Natalie Carter, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and Sue Kiernan, RIDEM provided an overview of the RI Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team's stormwater grant reimbursement process for grantees.

The August 10, 2015, RC summer meeting was held aboard the Blackstone Valley Explorer Riverboat in Woonsocket with a tour narrated by Dianne Mailloux of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Approximately twenty-five people were in attendance.

At the September 9, 2015, RC meeting, Rachel Calabro of Save the Bay and RC Vice Chair, made a presentation entitled: "Fish Runs in Rhode Island."

At the October 14, 2015, RC meeting, Kenneth Burke, General Manager, and Kathleen Crawley, Staff Director, RI Water Resources Board, made a presentation entitled: "The RI Water Resources Board and the New Normal for Water Resources and Supplies." One fact they pointed out was that RI annual precipitation has been increasing one inch per decade for the past seven decades.

At the November 18, 2015, RC meeting, the Ten Mile River Watershed Council received its original "state designation" by the RC making it the tenth local watershed council to be operating with state designation. The RC also approved approximately fifteen thousand dollars in fiscal year 2016 state grants to state designated local watershed councils.

At the December 10, 2015, RC meeting, Alex Kuffner, Energy and Environmental Reporter at the *Providence Journal*, conducted a "conversation" with the RC addressing stories related to stormwater pollution, climate change, wetland restoration, dam removal and how these issues directly impact people and their watersheds.

The January 13, 2016, RC Annual Meeting was held at the State House Bell Room. State Senator Susan Sosnowski, Chair of the Environment and Agriculture Committee, addressed the meeting. A General Assembly Resolution was drafted and introduced to the RI House of Representatives by Representative Eileen Naughton and introduced to the RI Senate by Senator Sosnowski and Senator Michael McCaffrey. The resolution was entitled: "Congratulating the Rhode Island Rivers Council on the Occasion of its 25th Anniversary." The resolution was read aloud and passed by both the Senate and House Chambers. Representative Naughton introduced a RI Rivers Council delegation to the RI House of Representatives consisting of Dr. Veronica Berousnsky, RC Chair; Rachel Calabro, RC Vice Chair; Lisa McGreavy, RC Secretary; Meg Kerr, RC Chair, 2000-2007; Guy Lefebvre, RC Chair, 2008-2013; and Michael Zarum, President, Buckeye

Brook Coalition located in Rep. Naughton's home district. A delegation of RC members in the Senate Gallery was also acknowledged by the RI Senate.

On January 22, 2016, RC Chair Veronica Berounsky on behalf of RC in collaboration with the URI Watershed Watch Program and the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council submitted a grant application to USEPA Region 1 to perform water quality monitoring at forty-nine sites in six watersheds over four years with two hundred forty-five thousand dollars in funding.