



The Rhode Island Rivers Council  
c/o RI Water Resources Board  
235 Promenade St, Suite 230  
Providence, RI 02908  
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Minutes of RIRC Meeting  
Wednesday, September 11, 2019 Meeting – 4 pm  
DEM Office of Water Resources - Conf. Room 280C  
235 Promenade St Providence, RI 02908

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present:

Veronica Berounsky, Chair  
Alicia Eichinger, Vice Chair  
Michael Bradlee  
Rachel Calabro  
Paul Gonsalves  
Chuck Horbert  
Ernie Panciera

B. Guests in Attendance:

Kassi Archambault, Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association  
Julia Bancroft, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program  
Sara Canuel, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council  
Judy Colaluca, Save The Lakes  
Ron Entringer, Save The Lakes  
Keith Gonsalves, Ten Mile River Watershed Council  
Richard Grant, Narrow River Preservation Association  
Alison Hamel, RI DOT  
Ray Hartenstine, Watershed Steward  
Brian Moore, RI DOT  
Jennifer Paquet, RI DEM  
Arthur Plitt, BRWC/FOB  
Michael Zarum, Buckeye Brook Coalition

Call to Order: Dr. Berounsky called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. There was a quorum.

Review and Approval of August 14, 2019 meeting minutes: Motion to approve made by Ms. Eichinger. Seconded by Ms. Calabro. Motion passed.

Introductions: All attending board members and guests introduced themselves.

Guest Speaker: Allison Hamel, Principal Environmental Scientist in the Office of Stormwater Management at the RI Department of Transportation (RIDOT).

Ms. Hamel kicked off the presentation by stating that Brian Moore, who is the RIDOT Stormwater Administrator, is also attending the meeting and can help answer questions.

The RIDOT is responsible for approximately 1,100 miles of roads, 1,162 bridges, 5 rails, and about 60 miles of bike and pedestrian paths. As part of RIDOT's maintenance program, there is a growing requirement for the agency to monitor and help impaired water bodies.

In 2014, the US Department of Justice took court action against RIDOT, regarding their part in the impairments of water bodies surrounding RIDOT maintained roads and bridges and lack of compliance with the Federal Clean Water Act. Litigation was ultimately avoided through the enactment of a consent decree. RIDOT was then required to enact remedial actions on stormwater, which included a compliance plan. In order to carry out these tasks, RIDOT has 16 staff members dedicated to compliance along with a \$110 Million budget over 10 years. The three major focus areas of their efforts are:

- Illicit discharge detection & elimination
- Good housekeeping (street sweeping, catch basin cleaning, manhole and outfall maintenance)
- TMDL & impaired waters (must create stormwater control plans)

Other key topic areas of the program include:

- Implementing green infrastructure
- Development of a storm water manual
- Partnerships and collaborations with watershed councils
- Focus on controlling sources rather than "end of pipe"
- Available grants for stormwater infrastructure-related projects (in conjunction with the RI Infrastructure Bank)

DOT Stormwater Control Plans (SCP) are based on watersheds. Plans are due in 12/2019 for the Kickemuit River, the Saugatucket River, and the Lower Blackstone River. Plans are due in 12/2020 for the rest of the Blackstone, the Ten Mile River, and Lower West Passage of Narragansett Bay.

More details about DOT's Stormwater Management Program can be found at:

<http://www.dot.ri.gov/about/stormwater.php>

## Reports by RIRC Representatives on State Committees:

### **Narragansett Bay Estuary Program – Julia Bancroft**

Ms. Bancroft reported the following:

- Our RFQ for shovel-ready restoration projects was send out on 8/20. Submittals are due to NBEP on Tuesday, September 17<sup>th</sup> by 5:00pm. There is roughly \$200,000 for 2 to 3 projects in the \$50,000 to \$100,000 range.
- Our next CCMP meeting will be held on Thursday, September 19<sup>th</sup> from 10am-4pm at the Blackstone Heritage Corridor Visitor Center at Worcester. RIRC members are welcome to attend to provide input on the process of updating our CCMP in 2022.
- The next meeting after that will be in RI on November 18<sup>th</sup> from 10am-4pm, Room 300 of RIDEM, 235 Promenade St Providence, RI. RIRC members are welcome to attend to provide input on the process of updating our CCMP in 2022.

### **State Guide Plan Advisory Committee (Outdoor Recreation) – Paul Gonsalves**

- Mr. Gonsalves reported that State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is now approved. Final approval for the plan occurred on August 29, 2019. The entire approved plan can be found at the following link:  
<http://www.planning.ri.gov/documents/LU/2019/SGP-152-SCORP-2019.pdf>

### **Department of Environmental Management Watershed Section – Ernie Panciera**

Mr. Panciera reported that an RFP for watershed projects (\$3 million) was released. He also stated that the non-point source management plan is out for comment.

### **Water Resources Board – Paul Gonsalves**

Mr. Gonsalves reported that the Office of Statewide Planning has moved to the Foundry Building (where DEM is located), 235 Promenade St, Providence in Suite 230. Although the WRB is under Statewide Planning, no word on if they have also moved.

## Officer Reports, Financial Reports:

- Ms. Eichinger noted that there were no changes to the financial report. The balance is still \$3,287.17.

## Written Reports of Activities Received from Designated Local Watershed Councils:

**Salt Ponds Coalition** –Written report submitted and given by Alicia Eichinger:  
SPC has joined forces with members from the Harbor Island Improvement Association and the Town of Narragansett to plan for improvements along the Foddering Farm Causeway. Fuss and O’Neil has placed tide gauges in the water to determine if installing a culvert under the causeway would increase flow significantly between the two coves and positively impact water quality.

SPC has finished all of its public programming for the summer season, capping it off with our annual meeting what featured Janet Freedman from RI CRMC. Nearly 80 people came to the meeting about how sea level rise and climate change will affect the coastal ponds area.

[www.saltpondscoalition.org](http://www.saltpondscoalition.org)

**Ten Mile River Watershed Council** –Report given by Keith Gonsalves:

Mr. K. Gonsalves mentioned that there has been ongoing cleaning work done on the river in order to make it passable for paddlers. Other than that, council members have been busy preparing for the fall.

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

**Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA)** – Written report submitted and given by Kassi Archambault:

*Wild and Scenic Rivers*

Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) Stewardship Council has adopted bylaws and has 3 standing committees. The main focus is creating procedures and processes. Current projects include: commenting on RI DEM Draft Freshwater Wetland Regulations, designing river crossing signs and revising the website.

Interim Chair, Jon Ericson, and WSR Coordinator, Kassi Archambault, are attending the Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Gathering. This multi-day conference is attended by WSR groups and NPS staff.

*Recreation*

Many members continue to use their unlimited boat use.

Programs are winding down, as school has started. In August, over 10 programs took place. In one week alone, volunteers donated at least 87 hours.

Trees making the rivers non-navigable were cleared throughout the Wood and Pawcatuck Rivers.

*Organizational Development*

High school students from the watershed have continued working with us, even as school started.

WPWA Board is having strategic meetings to plan for the upcoming years.

The WPWA Board of Director's is actively seeking new members. If you have a passion for the watershed and are interested in serving with a focus on Governance and Fundraising, please contact Ian Willets (Pres.) at [gmthemaltedbarley@gmail.com](mailto:gmthemaltedbarley@gmail.com) <http://www.wpwa.org/>

**Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council** – written report submitted and given by Sara Canuel:

*Website*

Thanks to Delin Design and our creative team, we have finally launched our new website! Now mobile friendly – always outdoor friendly. Check it out at:

<https://wrwc.org/wp/>

*Summer Staff*

We hired about 15 summer interns through Providence's Youth Job Program for Red Shed, River Rangers and office. Two of the Ranger interns are staying on part time during the fall.

*Greenway Improvements:*

Riverside Park: Looking to do an event at Riverside Park around opening of the newly installed Cannonball Safe. Would be an 1800's cocktail party/picnic in the park type of event.

*San Souci Greenway:*

Construction is underway! New bike path area framed out. Substantial completion by end of August.

*Water Quality/River Monitoring:*

Herring Return Count: Preliminary count for the Woonasquatucket this year is approximately 5,947 fish, which is down from last year's 9,103. This could be due to a couple days of missing counts and several days of single counts while fish were moving. This is a relatively normal cycle for herring, so two down years aren't a red flag.

*Water Quality Monitoring:*

Water Quality monitoring at four locations now happening thanks to Doug Stephen's volunteer team.

*Electrofishing Assessment:*

We have completed all assessments of the Woonasquatucket River and are planning to finish the Moshassuck and do an assessment of the Ten Mile River. One volunteer

assessment remaining on Sept, 20 @ Willett Elementary School. Contact Sara Canuel if interested (scanuel@wrwc.org)

*Green Infrastructure:*

Citizens Bank at Olneyville Square: Project began July 22<sup>nd</sup> and has continued steadily since then. We put up construction banners highlighting this as our project. We expect substantial completion by the end of September. We are planning a ribbon cutting event with the Governor for this project and San Souci Greenway.

*Manton Avenue in Olneyville:*

We are designing tree filters for lower Manton to treat street runoff that would otherwise go directly into the river. Construction to be completed by late October.

*Greystone Mill Social Club:*

Design is being finalized. Construction may not begin until late fall, or spring of 2020.

*Pleasant Valley Stream Green Infrastructure:*

Dicenzo selected to construct four tree filters and tree scuppers early October. We are designing the signage for this project right now. We will also have a ribbon cutting and tour for this project in October.

*Education Programs:*

As a recap of 2018-2019, WRWC reached approximately 1709 total participants in education programs. We plan to engage even more this year.

*Education Programs:*

All programs will continue for the upcoming school year. We will be running: Fish in the Classroom, River Adventurers, Fun with Fish, and Environmental Leaders. We will also continue to run Skimmer Tours for interested school and community groups.

*Community Outreach:*

We have been working with ONE NB on a Climate Resiliency video and are planning to facilitate climate workshops in the Olneyville community this month. This short video, produced with the help of Steer, and is meant to; educate residents about the damage of the 2010 flood, offer preparedness solutions, explore the difference between landlord and tenant responsibility following a disaster, and educate the public on the impacts of climate change.

*Red Shed Bike Program:*

We have in-school programs planned with RIDOT Bike Safety for 5 schools in RI. Will include schools in Pawtucket, Providence, North Kingstown and Barrington.

Bike Camp has been completely filled every session – with a total of 91 campers. We have had more kids learning to ride this year (about 40 so far).

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

**Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone** – No report submitted.

[www.blackstoneriver.org/blackstone/](http://www.blackstoneriver.org/blackstone/)

**Buckeye Brook Coalition** – Report given by Michael Zarum

Mr. Zarum reported that the coalition's education programs were ongoing and have included local members of the Boy Scouts. Mr. Zarum had some concerns about the notification system in the watershed, where he believes that the proper process was not being followed in all cases. He stated that they remain open to suggestions.

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

**Friends of the Moshassuck**- Report given by Michael Bradlee

Mr. Bradlee stated that the Friends of the Moshassuck (FOM) are actively seeking new projects. They have also discussed an upcoming effort to reach out to more municipal and state officials in order to get them to know more about the FOM. One of the major upcoming goals identified aims to address food waste and divert it from the watershed in the form of increased composting efforts.

[www.themoshassuck.org](http://www.themoshassuck.org)

**Narrow River Preservation Association** – Written Report by Alison Kates, given by Richard Grant:

*NRPA to unveil informational panel in partnership with US Fish and Wildlife Service*

A little red shack on Sedge Island in the Narrow River was a beloved Narragansett icon for generations. Visible due west of Sprague Bridge, the shack was enjoyed by people fishing, kayaking, boating, bird watching and simply sightseeing. By November 2016, it had become a hazard and was removed.

NRPA and US Fish & Wildlife Service have worked together to create an informational panel in remembrance of the shack. The panel will be unveiled on Tuesday, September 17 at 6pm at the south west corner of Sprague Bridge overlooking Sedge Island and the still visible remains of the shack's foundation. In case of rain, the unveiling will be held on Wednesday, September 18 at 6pm. All are welcome to the brief unveiling ceremony. (If using GPS, enter a nearby address 298 Boston Neck Road, Narragansett)

*Dead striped bass on Narrow River*

Over the past several weeks, more than 35 dead, adult striped bass were found floating along Narrow River. NRPA sent a sample to a laboratory in Maine which found a bacterial pathogen routinely detected in finfish. Based only on the one sample, they believe that the fish died of a systemic infection from this bacteria.

Corresponding with a few of the scientists, the best guess so far is that the conditions in the river at that time were such that they could have accelerated the growth of the bacteria, leading to the deaths. The surface temp in the upper pond was 89 degrees F at that time, so that alone could have played a major role.

#### *2019 NRPA Upcoming Events*

- September 14, Saturday – ‘Gansett Days What Lives in the River, 9-11 am and Salt Marsh Walk hosted by Narrow River Land Trust 10am - noon, Middlebridge
- September 17, Tuesday – Unveiling of Sedge Island Shack Informational Panel on Narrow River, 6:00pm at southwest corner of Sprague Bridge, Narragansett
- October 3, Thursday - NRPA’s 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, 7:00pm, URI GSO Bay Campus Auditorium

[www.narrowriver.org](http://www.narrowriver.org)

**Pawtuxet River Authority and Watershed Council** –Written report submitted and given by Chuck Horbert:

The pace of our cleanups has slowed with the hot weather, but we have been maintaining the properties and also recently cleaned up a lot of dumped garbage on Kenney Drive in Cranston near our Howard Preserve, which is a constant problem spot. We are going to try new “No Dumping” signs and spruce up the cul-de-sac so it looks more like it is being cared for.

We will be organizing more cleanups this fall and currently have a paddling trip and river cleanup planned for this coming Saturday down the Pawtuxet with the RI Canoe & Kayak Association.

We have heard that the redevelopment of Hope Mill will be breaking ground next May; the PRAWC is expecting to receive a recreational easement over a large area of the property across the river from the development as part of Town requirements.

We responded to reports of oil leakage on the South Branch and have been monitoring the DEM response. A number of underground oil tanks on adjacent property will be removed.

We will be in the process soon of picking a vendor for engineering services to perform a fish-passage and flood resiliency feasibility study on the Pontiac Dam with the grant we recently received from NBEP.

A family fishing tournament is planned in conjunction with the Town of West Warwick at their Crompton Fishing Pier on the South Branch Pawtuxet.



The memorial rock for long time RIRC Chair Guy Lefebvre was finally engraved and put in place. Mr. Horbert showed a couple of photos of it. A dedication ceremony will take place this fall. If you would like to donate to the memorial, let Chair Berounsky know.

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

**Kickemuit River Council** – No written report submitted.

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

#### Chair's Report:

- Dr. Berounsky noted that three watershed councils will be up for re-designation in November: Salt Ponds Coalition, Buckeye Brook Coalition and Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association. Written applications are due in October and a public hearing will be held at the start of the RIRC regular meeting on November 13<sup>th</sup>. RIRC member Rachel Calabro is head of the re-designation committee and has contacted the watershed councils on what they need to submit. Mr. Horbert and Mr. Panciera will serve on the committee. October 25 is the deadline for the three watershed councils to submit written materials.
- Next month's speaker will be Paige Dolce from Mass Audubon, who will talk about "The Value of Ecosystem Services in the Narragansett Bay Watershed."
- Bruce Hooke will work on the RI Rivers Council's website this fall, funded by the \$2000 grant from Representative Carol Hagan McEntee
- Long-serving member Chuck Horbert will no longer have the time to serve on the RI Rivers Council with his new position. He will stay on until January when new members can be appointed by the governor and approved by the RI Senate. Chuck will be missed for his expertise on so many issues.
- Dr. Berounsky is chair of the nominating committee and members are Vice Chair Eichinger and Mr. Panciera

Adjournment: A motion was made by Vice Chair Eichinger, seconded by Mr. Horbert to adjourn at 6:10 p.m.