



The Rhode Island Rivers Council
c/o RI Water Resources Board
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Minutes of RIRC Meeting
Wednesday, October 9, 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
Paige Dolci, Mass Audubon
Richard Grant, Narrow River Preservation Association
Jennifer Paquet, RI DEM
Douglas Stephens, WRWC
Julia Twichell, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program
Joe Unsworth, GZA
Danica Warns, Mass Audubon

Call to Order: Dr. Berounsky called the meeting to order at 4:09 p.m. There was a quorum.

Review and Approval of September 11, 2019 meeting minutes: Motion to approve made by Ms. Eichinger. Seconded by Mr. Galloway. Motion passed.

Introductions: All attending board members and guests introduced themselves.

Guest Speaker: Paige Dolci, MA Audubon MetroWest/Central Regional Coordinator –
“Valuing Ecosystem Services in the Narragansett Bay Watershed”

Narragansett Bay is home to ~2 million people. 60% of the watershed is in Massachusetts.

Valuation of economic sectors -- 13 sectors analyzed

Total annual revenue and expenditures = \$14+ billion.

97,000+ full and part time jobs.

Tourism largest revenue generator and largest employer.

Modeling of land use changes, sediment/nutrient transport, wellbeing changes and value

Modeled potential development changes in 2060 and resulting impacts to water quality.

Willingness to Pay analysis for upper bay (\$44/year/household) and lower bay (\$59/year/household).

Literature Review:

Database of 68 ecosystem services valuation studies.

Five ecosystem services fact sheets produced – forests, grasslands and farms, coastal, wetlands and waterways, urban.

Q and A session followed Ms. Dolci’s presentation. She concluded by handing out copies of the report “Narragansett Bay Watershed Economy – The Ebb and Flow of Natural Capital.”

Related Discussion: Mr. Galloway brought up the need to connect with the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance. It was suggested that the representatives from the MA Rivers Alliance be invited to one of our meetings for a presentation/discussion.

Ms. Dolci’s PowerPoint presentation is on the RIRC website,
<http://www.ririvers.org/meetings.htm>

Reports by RIRC Representatives on State Committees:

Narragansett Bay Estuary Program – given by Julia Bancroft, Julia Twitchell and Walt Galloway

- Five stormwater planning grants were recently awarded funding by the Southeast New England Program.
- Applications for shovel ready projects are currently being reviewed for funding with \$200,000 from the Southeast New England Program.
- Discussion has begun on the 2022 update of the “The State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed Technical Report.”

- Updating of the 2012 “Narragansett Bay Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan” – next meeting of the Steering Committee will be November 18, 10–4, open to the public to begin engagement with the Plan stakeholders.

State Guide Plan Advisory Committee (Outdoor Recreation) – given by Paul Gonsalves

- The update of the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan is complete.
- The next State Guide Plan update will be for the State’s Land Use Plan – “Land Use 2025: Rhode Island’s State Land Use Policies and Plan (2006)”.
- The DOA Division of Planning has moved into the Foundry building at 235 Promenade Street, Providence.

Department of Environmental Management Watershed Section – given by Ernie Panciera

- The Nonpoint Source Program (319 Federal Program) is accepting grant applications for projects that protect and restore water quality and aquatic habitats. Applications are due November 22, 2019. Projects must be within specific watersheds identified that have a watershed plan or are in the process of developing a watershed plan.
- Discussion of watershed planning. Mr. Panciera pointed out that although DEM is working on developing watershed plans, DEM will assist others that wish to take the lead on developing a plan. A watershed plan can be prepared for the entire watershed or any sub-watershed, lake, etc.

Water Resources Board – submitted by Eugenia Marks, read by Chair Berounsky

- The Water Resources Board will soon be moving to the Foundry building.
- Kathy Crawley, Acting General Manager, will be posting to fill 2 vacant positions in the coming months.
- The Water Resources Board will be sending out a Survey to the water suppliers with the goal of developing statewide funding initiatives. Survey will include question on climate change resiliency.
- Sue Licardi has retired from the North Kingstown Water Dept, but she will remain as Chairperson of the Water Resources Board.

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:

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

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Interim Chair, Jon Ericson, and WSR Coordinator, Kassi Archambault, attended the Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Gathering. There are 16 Partnership WSRs. Of these, Wood-Pawcatuck is one of three with segments designated as “wild!”

Recreation

A fall foliage and evening paddle may take place.

Ecosystems and Flood Resiliency

WPWA is looking into projects to propose for the RIDEM Section 319 funding.

Organizational Development

WPWA is up for RIRC re-designation in November. Kassi will present at the monthly meeting.

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

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

Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council – written report submitted by Sara Canuel and read by Doug Stevens

Greenway Improvements:

We have put a lot of focus on tree and shrub planting where we removed invasive plants. The hardest part is keeping up with watering. Invasive removal continues through fall.

Woonasquatucket Adventure Park: The park is under completion. The final piece of the bike skills course/pump track are just under construction. We are planning a ribbon cutting press event with partners for Wednesday, October 23rd, 12:30 PM.

San Souci Greenway: Due to some unforeseen delays, this project is now scheduled for completion in November.

Kinsley/Promenade Redesign: We are now starting to refine conceptual designs and have been meeting with nearby users and abutters to assure local buy-in. So far, the team has met with Providence Place mall, The RI Blood Center, The Foundry, The

Steel Yard, Farm Fresh RI, Coca Cola, and the Paul Cuffee School. We are planning meetings with Monohassett Mills Residents, 903 Residents, Foundry Residents, Nicholson File and Quality Meats. Once these meetings are complete, we will refine and complete designs.

Water Quality/River Monitoring:

Centredale Superfund: Our Technical Advisory Group (TAG) met with site trustees including folks from US Fish & Wildlife, NOAA, and RIDEM to help make recommendations for restoration of the Oxbow (wooded wetland in the site). We submitted our recommendations to EPA and requested a follow up meeting to discuss. In addition, Lisa and Alicia started a process with Skeo Solutions, a group hired by EPA to work with local stakeholders on developing improvements as part of Superfund cleanups. They will help us navigate a process to potentially develop fish passage and the Johnston section of bikeway as part of the Centredale cleanup.

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

Electrofishing Assessment: All assessments complete for the year. We have not begun analysis but will set this up through the environmental committee. Six sites were assessed, the Upper and Lower Woonasquatucket, Upper and Lower Mosshassuck, and Upper and Lower 10 Mile. Students from Jacqueline Welsh, Wheeler School, and the MET school participated.

Green Infrastructure:

Citizens Bank at Olneyville Square: This project is substantially complete. There are a few punch list items needed but the River Rangers are getting ready to plant. The project looks amazing. Once San Souci is on track for completion, we will hold a press event for both projects.

Greystone Mill Social Club: Design is being finalized. Construction may not begin until late August or even into Spring of 2020.

Pleasant Valley Stream Green Infrastructure: This project was delayed but will now be complete by the middle of November. We are planning a ribbon cutting for this one as well.

Cleaning and Greening Manton Avenue: We completed design for this project. It will include adding 4 tree filters to lower Manton Avenue in October and grass strips along the street. It will provide stormwater treatment and greenspace to Manton. The River Rangers will plant and maintain the landscape aspects of this project.

Education Programs:

New Voices at the Water Table: This project will first engage our middle and high school students in developing a story map and presentation they will give in the spring to engage adult stakeholders in Olneyville in becoming a learning cohort to speak for their community on climate readiness and planning. It is a two year project with many partners. Alicia Contelmo, our Environmental Educator, will be taking the lead on the project. Our new Brown intern Isabela will assist as will Sara Canuel and Alicia Lehrer. We are just about to call our first meeting of the project team that includes eight local partners.

Environmental Leaders:

Our high school program with the MET has begun and we have 30 students exploring the Woonasquatucket Watershed! Students have already made it to the Hot Club Marina Trash Skimmer, Riverside Park, Red Shed Bike Shop, and Southside Community Land Trust. These field trips build a sense of environmental awareness which guides the program into the next trimester of learning.

River Adventures:

Our middle school program has begun. Students will be hiking, biking, and kayaking within our watershed as part of an afterschool program with Delsesto Middle School.

Fish in the Classroom:

We have met with both schools and will continue to run the Fish in the Classroom program at the same, 315 student capacity starting next month. Six of our teachers are planning to seek Carter Spark Grants, to help us fund the program.

Red Shed:

Youth Education:

We are running in-school programs planned with RIDOT Bike Safety in 4 schools in RI. Participating schools are in Pawtucket, Providence, North Kingstown and Barrington. It is going well – and the goal is to reach 12 schools by the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

Recreation:

Free Paddles in the Park: Although we have not tallied final numbers yet, our pilot free paddles at Riverside Park throughout the summer were wildly successful. We plan to continue this program to help residents who live near the river make a stronger connection to it. This program was funded by the Cricket Foundation.

EVENTS

Dash Bicycles – Woony Fun Ride:

As we did not hold a Woony Ride this year, Dash Bicycles, joined up with Lisa and other WRWC staff to hold a low-key fun ride to benefit WRWC on Sunday, September 29th. They raised about \$2,000 and had a great time.

Upcoming:

Tour de Fish Ladder – Volunteer Extraordinaire Betty Bourret and Alicia Lehrer will host a bike ride tour of the Woonasquatucket Fish Ladders on Friday, October 18th from 4 to 6 PM. Riders will learn about and see our fish passage projects on the easy 5 mile ride. We start and end at Rising Sun Mills.

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

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

www.blackstoneriver.org/blackstone/

Buckeye Brook Coalition – No report submitted

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

Kickemuit River Council – Report submitted by Robin Hagan Aguiar

No activities to report on.

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

Friends of the Moshassuck- No written report, but report given by Michael Bradlee
Michael Bradlee noted that the FOM is looking for more volunteers and asked other watershed councils for ideas. Suggestions were using your local paper to highlight stories of watershed activities, and advertising for volunteers. Also have present volunteers mentor potential volunteers.

www.themoshassuck.org

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

NRPA's 49th Annual Meeting

On Thursday, October 3, NRPA held its 49th Annual Meeting. The featured speaker was Will Helt, Coastal Restoration Scientist at The Nature Conservancy of Rhode Island on the topic of '*Narrow River Oysters*'.

Due to oysters' recognized importance, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is restoring oyster reefs not only in Rhode Island but across the globe. In Narrow River, TNC has

partnered with the Narrow River Preservation Association to study one of the few remaining natural oyster stocks in our state. With the help of the community, TNC scientists have been evaluating recruitment rates of oysters throughout the River. Early results are promising, and the team is hopeful this effort will create new opportunities to strengthen oyster populations in Narrow River!

The Annual Meeting also included a report on findings from NRPA's River Watch program. The take home message was that municipal sewers and stormwater abatement projects are helping improve water quality, but it takes years to document improvements. The 28 year Riverwatch Program is invaluable.

NRPA's W.E.R. La Farge Memorial Friend of the River Award was presented to Board member Craig Wood for developing NRPA's Osprey Education Program and bringing it to hundreds of students and community members, for being NRPA's liaison to the Narrow River Land Trust, and for his service to the Narrow River Preservation Association.

Narrow River Fall 2019 Cleanup

On Sunday, September 22, two dozen volunteers cleaned up along the Narrow River. Some sites (including marshes and two islands) were accessed by boat and other locations on foot. Volunteers collected bottles, cans, plastic, cigarette butts, beach chairs, a 6 foot long 4"x4" wooden post, several shoes, floats, a tire and part of an old sign.

NRPA is planning river cleanups again in April and September 2020.

Unveiling of Informational Panel about Little Red Shack on Sedge Island

On Tuesday, September 17th, in concert with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, NRPA unveiled a panel commemorating a little red shack that had been a favorite landmark of locals for generations. The brief ceremony was attended by about 30 people, two of whom were in their 90s and had spent time in the shack as Girl Scouts. The Narragansett Times featured the sisters and the panel on the front page that week. The ceremony was an unexpectedly touching event, engaging people from the fishing community, local families and local artists and photographers.

www.narrowriver.org

Pawtuxet River Authority and Watershed Council –No written report submitted but report given by Chuck Horbert

Fall cleanups are taking place.

Family friendly fishing derby day coming up on October 19.

Still working on plans for the dedication of the stone and tree to past RIRC Chair, Guy Lefebvre.

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

Salt Ponds Coalition –Written report submitted and given by Alicia Eichinger: SPC met with the Town of Westerly and the Coastal Resources Management Council to discuss the Army Corps of Engineers upcoming dredging project in Winnapaug Pond which is planned for eel grass restoration and beach nourishment.

SPC is currently planning its annual Volunteer Appreciation night for all of our water quality monitors and education programs volunteers – we are planning to host it at the Break Hotel in Narragansett.

SPC attended an event at the Rhode Island Surf Company in Westerly – proceeds from the raffle at the event were donated to SPC.

SPC was invited to speak to cadets at the US Coast Guard Academy about the salt ponds, and we will be working on a project in the ponds with a small group of the cadets this semester.

We are almost done with our 2019 water quality sampling season, and for 2020 we are considering doing some extra bacteria sampling in the ponds.

SPC was invited by the Charlestown Land Trust along with other groups including the Town of Charlestown, DEM, USFWS, and Save the Bay to discuss land that could/should be preserved in Charlestown in order to address local ecological issues and concerns.

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 collected tide gauges that were placed in the water that will help us to determine if installing a culvert under the causeway would increase flow significantly between the two coves and positively impact water quality. We are waiting to receive that data.

www.saltpondscoalition.org

Ten Mile River Watershed Council –No Report

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

Other Business:

Mr. Bradlee brought up the topic of the need for increased engagement of the public and members in watershed council projects. Discussion about need to involve more of the membership beyond the Board members. Need for relatable stories that capture people's interest (and the press).

Three watershed councils are up for re-designation in November – Salt Ponds, Buckeye Brook, and Wood-Pawcatuck. Application materials are due to Ms. Calabro by October 25. The November meeting will include a public hearing on these re-designations.

Mr. Horbert noted that the US EPA is proposing changes for review of Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification projects to reduce the scope of the review. Comments on these proposed changes are due October 21.

Chair's Report:

- Bruce Hooke will be working on improving the RI River's Council website with the \$2000 legislative grant. Conference call will be arranged soon with all those involved.
- November meeting will include a public hearing on the watershed council re-designations.
- Dr. Berounsky suggested that we have a dedication event at the location of the Guy Lefebvre memorial stone.
- RI Rivers Council Vacancies update:
 - Doug Stevens has been nominated for the Conservation Organization vacancy;
 - Jason Considine has been nominated for the Chamber of Commerce vacancy;
 - Applications (resumes) have been received from Joseph Unsworth for the Environmental Scientist vacancy and from Raymond Hartenstine for the General vacancy.

Adjournment: A motion for adjournment was made by Mr. Horbert, seconded by Ms. Calabro to adjourn at 6:05 pm.