



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, December 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  
Walter Galloway  
Eugenia Marks  
Ernie Panciera

##### B. Guests in Attendance:

Bill Aldrich, Buckeye Brook Coalition  
Kassi Archambault, Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association  
Sara Canuel, WRWC  
Keith Gonsalves, Ten Mile River Watershed Council  
Richard Grant, Narrow River Preservation Association  
Jennifer Paquet, RI DEM  
Douglas Stephens, WRWC  
Julia Twichell, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program

Call to Order: Dr. Berounsky called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m. There was a quorum.

Review and Approval of November 13, 2019 meeting minutes: Motion to approve made by Dr. Berounsky. Seconded by Mr. Bradlee. Motion passed.

Introductions: All attending board members and guests introduced themselves.

Guest Speaker: Jenny Paquet, MCP, Senior Environmental Planner with RIDEM's Office of Water Resources (previously a municipal planner) speaking on "How to Receive Hearing Notices for Proposed Projects, Developments, and Other Activities in Your Watershed!"

The same Rhode Island general law that sets up the Rivers Council also grants watersheds the right to notification for upcoming applications before municipal boards, and for certain applications before State agencies for projects within the watershed.

There is a process for going about receiving this notification. Items covered in the talk included a 'request to be notified' template letter, understanding the different types of applications your organization may wish to be notified of, and how notification occurs. The talk also noted other avenues for receiving notifications for different types of actions (i.e., Notification Registry for amendments to local regulations), the timing of when different types of notices (i.e. Master Plan, zone change, etc.) occur at different stages of local review processes, and how to watch out for notices in local papers and sign up for automatic e-mail notices from the Secretary of State's Open Meetings webpage.

Below is a summary of main points:

- Notification is not automatic. The watershed councils need to "opt in" by sending a request for notification letter.
- There is a list of actions that watershed organizations can receive notification for, and this list can be accessed through the hyperlink in the presentation. (It is contained in the *RIRC Rules for Watershed Council Grants and Notification of Proposed Actions to Watershed Councils*)
- watershed organizations should decide which specific actions they wish to receive notification on
- send requests to the specific department that sends the notices, and include in the request letter which specific actions you wish to receive notices on
- a map of the watershed jurisdiction, with enough detail, is required to be included in the request letter. This is needed so that the official sending the notice is aware of the areas of the watershed boundaries.
- Good idea to resend notices and update every two years – staff turnover, election of town officials, etc.
- Reviewing agendas gives you an idea of what kinds of actions and projects are coming up, before you receive an official notice.
- Some items that the Watershed organizations can receive notice on are activities that the watershed organization could be involved in-- local

comprehensive planning and/or the stormwater management MS4 program.

- Don't confuse a Community Comprehensive Plan with the Comprehensive Permit Ordinance/Regulations: Comprehensive Permits have to do with low/moderate income housing projects – because of density of projects, watershed organizations may be interested.

Q and A and comment session followed Ms. Paquet's presentation.

Eugenia Marks noted for the Water Resources Board notice is needed for new water lines and extensions.

Paul Gonsalves noted that Statewide Planning sends notice to watershed organizations when they get a municipal Comprehensive Plan to review. He noted that there are two ways watershed organizations can get notice—through the State review process and from the municipalities.

Kassi Archambault asked if a Municipal Comprehensive Plan is legally binding. Ms. Paquet noted Yes, if it has been approved by the Town Council. Mr. Gonsalves noted that for zoning purposes, there can be an 18-month lag time between when the Comprehensive Plan is approved and the time when the Zoning Map is amended.

There was discussion on recognizing that there should be an update to the RIRC rules at some point. Ernie suggested he'd look at the rules. He noted that the rule making process is more complicated than it used to be, but the experienced members can guide new users.

There was discussion on receiving notice via e-mail and the benefits of being able to electronically search in documents.

Ms. Paquet concluded by handing out copies of a template letter that watershed councils could use for requesting notifications. The presentation and materials can be found on the RIRC website at: XXXXXXXX.

#### Reports by RIRC Representatives on State Committees:

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

- Blackstone Needs Assessment Kick-off Meeting on December 11<sup>th</sup> – This is the first meeting of a series of five. In the meeting, participants will discuss the project and purpose, brainstorm watershed needs and key participants, and

agree on a process to meet the mission of the group. NBEP will also discuss the availability of capacity-building grants.

- Judith Swift (SC Chair), John King (SAC Chair), and Jim Boyd (SC Chair) have departed and will be greatly missed for their many important contributions. A send-off celebration was held after the December 4<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee meeting.
- We are in the process of nominating our short-list of six new Steering Committee members. Eventually we will bring the number up to 35, with an effort to identify new members from regional interests not presently represented on the Committee such as municipalities, departments of health and transportation, commercial fishing, and environmental justice communities.
- *Landscape of Change* story map is available on our website.
- A productive subcommittee meeting for NBEP's *Vision 2032*, our regional plan set for release in 2022, was held on November 18<sup>th</sup>. This third meeting completes the introductory part of our process. Next, we'll begin a deep dive into developing goals, objectives, and actions with the subcommittee. The next meeting will be February 20<sup>th</sup> in Rhode Island—location and agenda pending.

**State Guide Plan Advisory Committee**– Paul Gonsalves

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)”.

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

Revised Freshwater Wetlands Rules – DEM has reviewed comments received on the Fall draft version of the Rules. A revised draft is being prepared with planned distribution/public notice in January or February 2020..

**Water Resources Board** – Eugenia Marks

WRB reduced to one person. Relocation is put on hold for the moment. Final Approval for site in 235 Promenade – do not know when move will happen. Asking how council might review the process of hiring, of developing comprehensive land plan for Big River (because management of land effects water supply and Big River)

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 attended a meeting hosted by URI Watershed Watch and RI Department of Health about the bacteria issues in our coastal waters, and what can be done as far as education and advisories for the public. Several other water-based environmental groups were also in attendance.

SPC continues to work with Harbour Island Improvement Association and the Town of Narragansett to deal with water quality and habitat issues near the Foddering Farm Causeway. We are co-applicants on a grant that the town is applying for through RIEMA. And SPC went before the Narragansett Harbor Commission to update them on the project and to try and maintain their support.

SPC just published its Fall/Winter Newsletter.

SPC was awarded a Women's Club of South County Grow Hope Grant to fund one water quality monitoring station in Point Judith Pond in 2020.

SPC had a booth at this year's Charlestown Holiday Ramble. We were able to do some outreach at the Cross Mills Library during the stroll.

We are starting to prep for 2020 in terms of creating goals for the year and revamping our membership materials.

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

### **Ten Mile River Watershed Council** –Keith Gonsalves

Nothing new to report, only that the Council anticipates working with the city's planning department soon.

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

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

#### *Wild and Scenic Rivers*

The Stewardship Council elected officers, finalized all committee mission documents and updated the website to reflect these committees and their members. Taking a long holiday break and then having speakers and practice sessions so members can describe the Council, the Partnership Wild and Scenic River Program, and the WSR designation.

### *Ecosystems and Flood Resiliency*

WPWA has helped promote the recent RIDEM 319 Grant program and provided letters of support to at least one applicant.

In late January, WPWA will be participating in a process to unify watershed Water Quality Monitoring protocols, with specific attention to temperature monitoring, and ways to review and report on each year's data.

### *Organizational Development*

The new WPWA website is up and running.

WPWA Board finalized the 3 year strategic plan.

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

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

### *Greenway Maintenance & River Rangers*

Rass Morm, our 3-year Senior Ranger, has moved on to another position. We will keep Rangers on as long as weather permits. They continue to work on the winter project list such as supply inventory, ordering, PQS evaluation, sign installation, and pruning.

*Woonasquatucket Adventure Park:* The park and press events are complete. The project and WRWC continue to receive press for our role in the transformation.

*San Souci Greenway:* The project is nearly complete. We secured an additional \$10,000 for repaving San Souci and \$16,000 for the overlook from the Providence Redevelopment Agency thanks to Providence City Council President Sabina Matos.

*Salmon Street Gateway:* WRWC gave Providence Housing input on signage placement to be incorporated into the final designs for this brand new connection to the Greenway right near the Route 6 mural. Narragansett Creamery, a neighbor on Salmon Street, has agreed to repaint their building to improve the area adjacent to our new gateway.

*Jewels of Smithfield:* A designer has been selected to produce 4 signs highlighting areas along the Woonasquatucket River, using Greenway branding for signage. We will complete an additional 6 signs based on our mall signage for Georgiaville Pond area and Whipple Field to highlight the river in Smithfield and the efforts of the WRWC. The 10 signs should be completed in the spring with community and press events to follow.

*Meadows Restoration:* We are in years 2 and 3 of meadow restoration at several locations. We have established solid vegetation coverage and minimized erosion.

Meadows are put to bed for the year, and next steps will be to increase native plant communities while eliminating invasives.

*Kinsley/Promenade Redesign:* WRWC is working with the City of Providence and the design team to refine conceptual designs for Kinsley Avenue from Eagle Street to Dean Street and Promenade Street from the Mall to ALCO. We have met with many community neighbors, and we are working with the state historic commission to discuss changes in the railing design. The city met with RIDEM and will begin testing soils next month. Once all neighbor meetings are complete, we will refine and complete designs.

*Water Quality/River Monitoring:*

*Centredale Superfund:* Our first meeting with EPA and their restoration consultants, Skeo, will take place in December to determine how best to restore the lost uses, both habitat and recreational, at the Superfund Site. We will advocate for developing fish passage and running the bike path through the cleaned up site.

*Dredging:* The dredging of the Woonasquatucket has begun. The basin at Water Place Park is completed. The dredge will be upstream around Francis St. and the mall all next week. Then they will work from the basin south.

*Green Infrastructure:*

*Citizens Bank at Olneyville Square:* This project is complete and looks fantastic! We will wait until spring for a press event.

*Greystone Mill Social Club:* Final designs and REDEM permits are complete. Our engineering team, courtesy of RIDOT is developing an RFP for construction. Greystone Social Club will determine what they can do in-kind first so we will know what will remain for a construction contractor. We will select a contractor this winter for construction in the spring of 2020.

*Pleasant Valley Stream Green Infrastructure:* Two of the four tree filters have been installed as well as all the scuppers. We expect this project to be substantially complete by the end of December!

*Cleaning and Greening Manton Avenue:* We selected DiCenzo as our construction contractor to install the tree filters on Manton Ave. They are also the contractors for Pleasant Valley Parkway, so they now have experience with these installations. It is unlikely that the installation will be complete until spring 2020. However, they will do as much as they can in December to help us use up our RI Housing Grant that is partially funding this project.

*Education Programs:*

*New Voices at the Water Table:* This two-year grant focuses on climate resilience in Onleyville. Students in our high school program completed a GIS lesson with Sara as part of a stepping-stone for this project – five students from this program will be creating a Story Map through the GIS software on Climate Resilience. We have also purchased all equipment necessary for filming, and are meeting with all partners to secure written agreements and define partner roles.

*Environmental Leaders:*

Our high school program's first trimester has been a huge success, and students are now working on researching topics of their particular interests to develop a community-based project, due the end of May.

*River Adventures:*

Fall programming has concluded with great success and 100% student retention; WRWC was approved to run a Spring Session at Delsesto.

*Fish in the Classroom:*

Fish in the Classroom program now has trout eggs at both schools and weekly lessons are running smoothly. We are running two elementary afterschool programs this January in partnership with Kids Klub Inc., at Greystone Elementary and Stephen Olney Elementary in North Providence.

*Trash Skimmer:* The Hot Club Marina Trash Skimmer program has concluded for the season, and tours will continue in the spring. In total, 685 individuals participated in Skimmer Education Programs in 2019.

*Red Shed Bicycle Programming:*

*Adult Education:* We collaborated with the Rhode Island Bicycle Coalition (RIBike) to offer an LCI (League Certified Instructor) seminar at Bike Newport in November. This three-day class offered by the League of American Bicyclists certifies new bicycle educators. Donny Green acted as site facilitator, assistant educator and co-organizer of the event. All eight candidates earned their LCI certification.

*Youth Education:* Our pilot in-school program has wrapped up for 2019. In partnership with RIDOT we conducted a four-part bike safety course at three Elementary Schools in Rhode Island. These classes included both on bike and classroom bike safety lessons. The Red Shed provided the bikes, equipment and lead educator. We are coordinating and planning Spring programming now.

*Recreation:*

Programming is done for the season and will return in the spring.



## EVENTS

Low Key Holiday Party 45 Eagle St. Suite 202 Tuesday, Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>, 4-7pm

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

**Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone** – Written report submitted by Judy Hadley

*Saturday April 13<sup>th</sup>*, we did an Earth Day clean-up at Scott Pond in Lincoln, RI. Forty-three volunteers showed up on a cool and drizzly day to clean the banks of Scott Pond and other areas in Lincoln too; including the bike path area in Manville. Volunteers collected more than 71 bags of trash and large items such as: couches, car parts, tires and construction debris.

*May 9*, our new website: [www.blackstoneriver.org](http://www.blackstoneriver.org) went live. On this website, we now have a calendar of events that people can search for all of our upcoming events. We also have summaries and photos from the events. There is a new online "eco-friendly" membership page where people can go to join us and renew their memberships. Under the Programs/Explore section we have interactive maps that show the different locations to put in a canoe. And much more!

*Saturday May 18<sup>th</sup>* was the Grand Opening of our new environmental center. The long awaited and highly anticipated opening of our environmental education building was a very festive affair. Our featured guest speaker was Director of RIDEM, Janet Coit. She spoke about the long standing support and partnership between the DEM and the BRWC. We were treated to a very special presentation of music and song from the Eastern Medicine Singers, an Algonquin drum group from Providence. Local senators and representatives presented the BRWC/FOB with citations and guests enjoyed refreshments. It was a wonderful day!

*Four different Saturdays June – September:* We ran a Connect with Canoes program that allowed people to enjoy a two hour guided canoe trip down the Blackstone River, starting just behind our building. For a nominal fee guests could use one of our canoes and be guided down a fairly gentle section of the river and one of our board members told them a little about the history of the river, our clean-up efforts and some of the wildlife that calls this river home.

*Saturday July 6<sup>th</sup>*, bright and early, the Valley Boys began assembling at Pratt Dam in Cumberland. Each year, the BRWC executes a major, annual clean-up of the five stone archways that funnel the Blackstone River under what used to be a railroad bridge, but now is part of the Blackstone River Bikeway. Seasonal windstorms and flooding cause many trees and debris to fall into the river and anything that is north of the Pratt Dam

eventually finds its way south and can get lodged at the dam. Twelve volunteers had the 20 foot high pile cleared in three hours!

*Speaker series:* As intended, our new educational center was host to a number of interesting talks and presentations this year. The first one was an evening moth mingle in July presented by David Gregg of the RI Natural History Survey. Visitors learned about the various moth species that can be found in the area. As darkness fell, we got to identify a few moths. Local river enthusiast and blogger Erik Eckilson presented a talk on the history of Rhode Island mill villages along the Blackstone River. He told stories of the old mill buildings and how the river played a role in their manufacturing and the history of Woonsocket. In September we hosted internationally renowned local paper artist May Babcock. May has come up with a unique and creative use for the invasive plant Japanese knotweed. She makes paper out of it. May took us through the entire papermaking process from start to finish and each person got to make their very own piece of hand crafted paper.

*Saturday November 2nd:* Fall and the arrival of cooler weather is not enough to stop the hearty souls of the Valley Boys. This daylong clean-up adventure centered on the Fanning Wilderness area in Cumberland. An unscrupulous individual illegally dumped a dozen large, red, Lowes shopping carts down a steep embankment. They had been there for quite a while. It took several passes with chainsaws and a truck winch to finally free them. Tires and a lot of other trash and debris were removed as well.

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

**Buckeye Brook Coalition** – No written report

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

**Friends of the Moshassuck**- No written report submitted. Michael Bradlee noted there were no activities going on right now.

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

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

*NRPA Announces 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Events throughout 2020*

In celebration of NRPA's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2020, NRPA has announced a slate of events throughout the year.

Our first event will be a presentation on 50 years of NRPA's accomplishments on Sunday, January 26 from 1-3pm at Narragansett Public Library as part of the On Pettaquamscutt Winter Speaker Series. Our topic will be: "50 Years of Protecting and Preserving the Narrow River and its Watershed." Leaders of NRPA share the

organization's most significant challenges and accomplishments over the past 50 years with a look toward the next 50 years of caring for the watershed loved by so many. After the presentation, conversation will continue at Trio, a wonderful restaurant right next door.

More On Pettaquamscutt presentations will occur on February 23 and March 29.

We'll be hosting 'Navigating the Narrow', a watercraft safety discussion on Saturday, April 4 at Mettatuxet Yacht Club. (See below for more information.)

Also in April, join us for our Spring Narrow River Cleanup on April 26.

The 33rd Narrow River Road Race is set for Saturday, May 9.

In June, we'll host What Lives in the River, our family science exploration event on the 13th, and the 15th Annual Narrow River Turnaround Swim on the 20th.

The 13th Annual Pettaquamscutt Paddle, hosted by Narrow River Kayaks, is scheduled for July 17th with a rain date of July 18th.

Art on the River, our popular art event along the bank of the Narrow (Pettaquamscutt) River is scheduled for Saturday, August 1st.

In concert with Gansett Days, we'll host another What Lives in the River event on September 12.

On September 27, we'll host our Fall Narrow River Cleanup at sites throughout the watershed.

NRPA's 50th Annual Meeting will be held on October 1st at the Coastal Institute at the URI Bay Campus.

In November, join us to dance the night away at our Golden Gala. (More details soon!)

### *Safely 'Navigating the Narrow' and Preserving Narrow River*

NRPA is collaborating with the Mettatuxet Improvement Association to host a watercraft safety event on Saturday, April 4, 2020.

Navigating the Narrow will provide information to boaters, kayakers, paddleboarders and others about how to enjoy the Narrow River while being safe and preserving Narrow River.

Doors open at 1pm and at 1:30pm, a panel of local experts (harbormasters, representatives from RIDEM, CRMC, US Fish and Wildlife, and others) will lead a

discussion about safe boating and ways that boaters can protect the delicate local ecology. We welcome questions submitted ahead of time and asked in person. We hope that the event will engage local residents – boaters and non-boaters alike – and provide increased communication among the stakeholders.

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

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

There is not a lot going on during the winter months. We wrapped up our fall cleanup schedule with a cleanup at our Harris Dam property in Coventry. We will be targeting this property for future improvements over the next few years.

Planning is continuing for a spring fundraiser. Our finance committee will be meeting with our fundraiser to discuss plans for a motorcycle ride through the watershed.

We will be participating by having a booth with informational displays at the RI Saltwater Fishing Show in the RI Convention Center in March, as we have in the past.

There have been two recent actions in the watershed where existing hydroelectric projects, one at Royal Mills upper dam and one at Arctic Dam, both on the South Branch Pawtuxet River, have petitioned the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to surrender their existing exemption licenses. This would mean that these sites would disconnect their projects from the grid and decommission the equipment. While this may mean some water quality improvements in this river, it may make it more difficult in the future to facilitate any fish passage improvements at these sites should fish passage become available downstream of these sites.

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

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

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

#### Chair's Report:

- Website being updated with material on old website
- Annual meeting in February/March – Hope to announce new members then.
- New nominees: Doug Stephens and Joe Unsworth – No news. Maybe after New year
- Memorial for Guy – Looking to do a spring event (Birthday was March 19<sup>th</sup>)
- Donations for Memorial: if interested, send to Alicia
- Dr. Berounsky (and also Ms. Eichinger) attended the RI Department of Health and URI Watershed Watch November meeting about problems with high bacteria levels and invasives such as clinging jellies. The importance of long term monitoring was emphasized.

Adjournment: A motion for adjournment was made by Dr. Berounsky, seconded by Mr. Galloway to adjourn at 6:06 pm.