



The Rhode Island Rivers Council
c/o RI Water Resources Board
One Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908
www.ririvers.org
info@ririvers.org



Minutes of RIRC Meeting
Wednesday, January 9, 2019 Meeting – 4 pm
DEM Office of Water Resources – Conference Room 280C
235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present:

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

B. Guests in Attendance:

Bill Aldrich, Buckeye Brook Coalition
Sara Canuel, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council
Keith Gonsalves, Ten Mile River Watershed Council
Jenny Paquet, DEM
Douglas Stephens, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council

Call to Order: Dr. Berounsky called the meeting to order at 4:15 pm

Review and Approval of December 12, 2018 meeting minutes: Approved with change of PUC to DPUC. Ms. Torello moved, Mr. Horbert seconded. Motion passed.

Introductions: All attending board members and guests introduced themselves.

Guest Speaker: This month's speaker was scheduled to be Liz Garofalo who was slated to present a second draft of the Legislative Grant-funded RI River Council and Watershed Councils booklet. She who was not able to attend due to illness, but the booklet draft was presented on the screen in the conference room for all to see. Discussion of draft report with full participation of those present ensued. Alicia Eichinger recorded the comments and changes and will work on them with Liz Garofalo.

Reports by RIRC Representatives on State Committees:

Narragansett Bay Estuary Program: As reported by Walt Galloway:

We are looking forward to the arrival of our new Program Director, Mike Gerel. Walt referred to an official announcement with the following text:

“Mike Gerel, an environmental scientist who has led and contributed to watershed health and resilience initiatives on both coasts, will lead the bi-state Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP) starting February 4. The organization protects and preserves Narragansett Bay and its bi-state watershed. It is one of 28 national estuary programs designated by the U.S. EPA.

Gerel has more than twenty-five years’ experience in ecosystem-based planning and restoration, facilitation and collaborative governance, and public policy. As NBEP’s program director, he will oversee all operations and lead the development and implementation of initiatives and partnerships related to such matters as water quality, stormwater mitigation, habitat protection, and climate change. He joins NBEP as it is advancing work based on a comprehensive study of the health of the bay and estuary that was released in late 2017.

Gerel, who has New England roots, has held scientist and management positions with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Sustainable Northwest, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and other nonprofit, government, and private consultants. His work has been in concert with those whose livelihood and culture are tied to the land and water, such as farmers and foresters, commercial and recreational fisherman, Native American tribes, developers and other business interests, and federal, state, and local government regulatory officials.

Judith Swift, who chairs NBEP’s Steering Committee, noted Gerel’s work on “the study, recovery, and protection of some of the nation’s most important river basins from their headwaters to the sea.” That experience, she said, “makes him the ideal person to further NBEP’s work in the bi-state successes and challenges outlined in the program’s 2017 report, *State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed*.”

“Mike’s scientific background and decades of experience employing science to answer management and policy concerns connects well with the direction the NBEP has taken following its 2017 *State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed*,” said John King, the chair of NBEP’s Science Advisory Committee. “His enthusiasm and experience will increase momentum at the Estuary Program as we move forward with our mission,” he said.

Susan Sullivan, the executive director of the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission also welcomed Gerel. The interstate commission has been NBEP’s institutional “host” since 2012, providing programmatic and institutional support and advice. “Through science-based decision-making and authentic collaboration among diverse local interests, Mike will work with the Estuary Program’s partners to address and advance key issues in the

Narragansett Bay watershed. He will bring valuable experience and expertise to this role and provide pivotal new leadership to the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program,” she said.

Gerel holds a Master’s in Environmental Sciences from Johns Hopkins University and a Bachelor’s in Biology from the University of Richmond. He is a graduate of the Virginia Natural Resource Leadership Institute.

State Guide Plan Recreation Committee: As reported by Mr. Chuck Horbert

The last SCORP advisory committee meeting was held on December 14, 2018, and discussion centered on feedback that has been received so far on the recreational assessment surveys. The survey has received over 600 responses to date. The issue of “e-bikes” seems to be an emerging conflict issue with respect to the speed of electric bikes, and the potential need for registration. Survey responses will continue to be solicited until March.

As we near the end of the public input phase, we will be proceeding into drafting the plan. The last public workshop is scheduled for January 23, 2019 at 6:00 in the Edward King House in Newport.

The next SCORP Advisory Committee Meeting is scheduled for January 18, when we will focus on a Vision Statement and work toward updating the plan’s Goals. The website is:

<http://dem.ri.gov/programs/planning/scorp/>.

Water Resources Board: As reported by Ms. Eugenia Marks:

There is no new news to report. Next meeting is Friday January 18 at 9 am at DPUC.

Bays, Rivers & Watersheds Coordination Team (BRWCT) Funds: As reported by Dr. Berounsky

No updates. It is unclear where money previously assigned to these funds will end up.

Officer Reports, Financial Reports:

- Ms. Torello provided an updated financial report. The legislative grant has been deposited, which brings the new balance to \$3931.44 after one new expense to Liz Garofalo of \$610 for 30.5 hours on the RIRC Booklet.

Written Reports of Activities Received from Designated Local Watershed Councils:

-Buckeye Brook Coalition – Report presented by Mr. Bill Aldrich. No written report submitted. Plans for 2019 include fish counting, T.F. Greene Airport discussions, review of documents for

RIRC renewal, TMDL for heavy metals.
<http://www.buckeyebrook.org/>

-Kickemuit River Council – Report submitted by Ms. Robin Hagan Aguiar
There is no news to report.
<http://www.kickemuitriver.org/>

-Friends of the Moshassuck – No report.
www.themoshassuck.org

-Narrow River Preservation Association – Report presented by Dr. Berounsky, written report submitted by Alison Kates.

Membership Drive:

As we wrap up our 2019 Membership drive, we are very pleased to report that we have surpassed last year's campaign. We have reached 394 members with a total of just more than \$24,000 in donations.

2019 Sponsor Campaign

Our focus this month is on trying to get as many sponsors as possible for our 2019 event season. We are expanding the reach of our previous year efforts by adding to our mailing list 149 companies located at Quonset and about 60 organizations and individuals who have supported other environmental efforts in Rhode Island recently.

NRPA Presents to Narragansett Harbor Commission

On Tuesday, January 8, Dr. Veronica Berounsky and Annette DeSilva presented "Monitoring water quality and managing inputs for a quarter century (1992-2016) in the Narrow River (Pettaquamscutt Estuary) with comparisons to Lower Narragansett Bay and 1970s data" to the Narragansett Harbor Commission.

On Pettaquamscutt Winter Speaker Series Schedule

The Friends of Canonchet Farm, Narrow River Preservation Association, South County Museum and the Maury Loontjens Memorial Library along with generous support from Trio Restaurant, are collaborating for the eighth year to sponsor the Winter Speaker Series *On Pettaquamscutt: Presentations on the Environment and the History of the Narrow River Watershed*.

Winter 2019 presentations:

Sunday, January 27, 2019 1-3pm Friends of Canonchet Farm will present: "*Linear Park at Canonchet Farm*" by Randy Collins, BETA Group. Landscape Architect Randy Collins will discuss the design of a linear park on the east side of Canonchet Farm along Boston Neck Road.

Sunday, February 24, 2019 1-3pm South County Museum will present David Chidakel speaking on "*The History of Shadow Farm*." Resident and local historian David Chidakel will trace the ownership of Shadow Farm from the Colonial times of the Hazards and Robinsons to its development as a condominium project in the 1980s. Sunday, March 31, 2019 1-3pm Narrow River Preservation Association will present: "*Waves of Blue, Waves of Green*" by Jane Hennedy, Site Manager of Historic

New England's Casey Farm. Casey Farm stretches from Narragansett Bay to the Narrow River. The talk traces centuries of changes to the land and compares it to its sister, Watson Farm. Their shared mission of historic preservation, landscape conservation, producing local food, and innovative educational programs comes through when following the seasonal rhythms of the farms in pictures and stories.

The presentations will take place on selected Sundays from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Maury Loontjens Memorial Library, 35 Kingstown Road, Narragansett. After each event, participants are encouraged to continue the conversation at Trio Restaurant, 15 Kingstown Road, Narragansett.

www.narrowriver.org

-Pawtuxet River Authority and Watershed Council – report written, submitted, and presented by Chuck Horbert:

We are working through our attorney to adjust a bill by a tree service who went well beyond what the discussed scope of work was at our Pawtuxet Falls property that resulted in clearcutting of a small area of trees on the riverbank wetland, requiring us to replant the area. We hope to settle for approximately half of what the tree service billed us for.

We have recently had our property at the Harris Dam, on the North Branch Pawtuxet, surveyed, discovering things we did not know about the property. For example, there is a significant encroachment of lawn from an adjacent property onto our property which we will resolve. Our property does not have frontage on Main Street like we believed, but does have a right-of-way through property owned by the Town of Coventry. This may provide a future collaborative effort with the Town to improve access at this property for boating and fishing, and we will be focusing efforts on this property towards those goals.

The deadline for bids to renovate our Pontiac Canoe Launch will close on January 11th, and we hope to move on this long-delayed project this year.

We will also continue to assess the possibility of restoring fish passage up through Bellafonte Brook and Pond into Roger Williams Park. This will be a long term effort.

We will be teaming up again with Save the Bay at some point this year for a major tire cleanup on the segment of river which flows along Belmont Park in Warwick.

Progress is being made for the memorial for Guy Lefebvre at our Veteran's Square property.

Given the discussions that have recently cropped up with respect to the Providence Water Supply Board trying to shift management of the Scituate Reservoir to a private party, and considering that a) the reservoir has capacity to provide significantly more water for downstream flows without threatening its water supply obligations and that b) doing so could significantly reduce flood risks downstream as well as c) assist downstream treatment plants to meet their permit limits more easily and with less costs to ratepayers, with attendant benefits to the river, the PRAWC will be exploring taking a far more active role in these discussions and advocating for better flow releases into the river.

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

-Salt Ponds Coalition –Report written, submitted, and presented by Alicia Eichinger:
SPC welcomed another board member, Susan Carr-Sparkman, from Westerly (Winnapaug Pond).

Dredging and Marsh restoration work has officially begun in Quonochontaug Pond. They are basically done dredging the Western Channel and adjacent marsh and are beginning work on the main channel and adjacent Eastern marsh. Work should be completed by the end of the month.

SPC, along with other went before the Charlestown Town Council to get their approval for maintenance dredging that needs to be done this winter in Charlestown Breachway as parts of it have shoaled unexpected. Our biggest concern was water quality – so we hope to see it improve after the area is re-dredged.

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. We are in the process of writing a full application to CRMC's Coastal Habitat Restoration Fund which has to be submitted this month.

www.saltpondscoalition.org

-Ten Mile River Watershed Council –As reported by Keith Gonsalves:

Will have a January Board meeting. Joined with the Blackstone for a Holiday Party and a good time was had by all.

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

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

Water Quality:

Temperature reading I-Buttons were removed from the water. Data was logged. Those with cases still function, although half of those without did not. WPWA's 10 monitoring sites did have cases around the I-Buttons.

Education and Recreation:

Kassi is forming a 3-5 year strategic education plan and for this season, considering offering many types of recreation programs.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Study:

In December 2018, the Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers bill was heard in committee and recommended by the National Parks Service. Both are good signs for approval in this new Congressional session.

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

-Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council – written report submitted by Sara Canuel and presented by Ms. Canuel and Doug Stevens

Greenway Maintenance & River Rangers

The Rangers completed installation of a green roof on their work containers at Riverside. Our Ranger program is winding down a bit now as colder weather approaches.

The Woonasquatucket Adventure Park, adjacent to Merino Park in Providence, construction has officially begun! Donny, our Red Shed Director, is working directly with the construction crew to assure a safe, maintainable, and usable space. The crew has built two bridges so far.

Climate Resilience

WRWC is working with One Neighborhood Builders on the Olneyville Health Equity Zone Climate Resiliency Project. We will be surveying the neighborhood over the next month to see how prepared and aware the community is on the effects of climate change.

Community Engagement

Our amazing community engagement coordinator is stepping down into the Riverside Community Garden Coordinator role so she can focus on family matters. We will be planning to fill her position immediately – if folks know any great community organizers, please send them our way.

Water Quality/River Monitoring:

Centredale Superfund: The WRWC Centredale Manor Superfund Technical Advisory Group (TAG) met with EPA, the team hired to do the final cleanup plan, and RIDEM to discuss the current plan to finish the cleanup study. They are seeking our TAG's advice on how to study and conduct the final cleanup. TAG team will be meeting regularly to work with EPA on the cleanup.

Water Quality and Electrofishing Monitoring: The WRWC's monitoring programs have concluded and will continue in the spring!

Green Infrastructure:

We are pleased to have signed an agreement with RIDOT to develop green infrastructure projects over the next 5 years in the Woonasquatucket Watershed! Currently WRWC is working with RIDOT and their on-call consultant to develop a prioritized list of projects.

Education Programs:

K-12 programming will continue throughout the school year. Our Environmental Leaders (high school) are now deep into researching environmental issues and narrowing down their project ideas. We have hired two high school students as Environmental Mentors for the program starting in January. Maria and Layla, our new mentors, are both in 12th grade and have already completed the Environmental Leaders program.

Middle School programming ended on December 6th, and was very successful based on student feedback and post testing results. We have applied for a Spring session as well, and are waiting to hear back. The Fish in the Classroom elementary program started the first week of November in two schools. Trout eggs arrived in the classrooms on December 11th,

and have now hatched into sac fry. Our elementary after school programming will begin late January at Johnston and North Providence Elementary Schools.

Red Shed Bike Shop:

Donny Green, Our Red Shed Director, is officially full time as our Bicycle Programming Director. He has fostered partnerships with Recycle-A-Bike, 1PVD Cycling, Rhode Island Bicycle Coalition, Manton Avenue Project, YWCA, the city's Jump Bike program and of course the Red Shed.

Upcoming programs for the winter include:

- We have Smart Cycling classes for adults scheduled throughout the winter.
 - The first class was on Dec 9th. He will be organizing more classes for the new year as well.
- Our new grant with RIDOT on Bike Safety is underway. We will be receiving and building a fleet of adult and teen bikes for use in bike education programs.
- Ongoing construction of the Woony Adventure Park.

Upcoming Events:

Weekly Woony Walk! This initiative includes elderly and people who may not normally walk the Greenway to join each other in a group walk. The walk runs from 133 Delaine St at 10:30am, then walk to 80 Curtis Arms, arriving at 11am, then walking back to Delaine St.

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

-Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone – No report

www.blackstoneriver.org/blackstone/

Committee/Legislation Reports: No reports provided.

Other Business: The Environment Council of RI (ECRI) held their annual "Legislative Coffee Hour at State House Library, 1/16/2019, 3-4 p.m. Dr. Berounsky and Mr. Gonsalves were in attendance.

Chair's Report: Annual Meeting currently planned for March 13, 2019 in the State House Library, displays 2-3 p.m., meeting 3-5 p.m. Please suggest speakers.

Land and Water Summit will be at URI Saturday March 9. RIRC will host the watershed meeting again.

Adjournment: A motion was made by Mr. Galloway, seconded by Ms. Torello to adjourn. Motion passed, and the meeting adjourned at 6:07 pm.