



## **RHODE ISLAND BAYS, RIVERS, & WATERSHEDS COORDINATION TEAM**

### **Meeting of June 5, 2013**

Conference Room A  
RI Department of Administration  
Providence, RI

### **Final Minutes**

Members in Attendance: Sue Kiernan, Tom Uva, Jared Rhodes, Kathy Crawley

BRWCT Staff: Ames Colt, Melissa Deciantis

Observers: Meg Kerr, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program  
Alisa Richardson, DEM Office of Water Resources

#### **CT Administration**

*Meeting was called to order at 2.00 pm.*

Meeting minutes for the May 21, 2013, special meeting were approved unanimously.

#### **SLP Implementation Proposals for Review**

*(All the proposals discussed at this meeting are appended to these meetings. Please refer to them for details.)*

DEM Proposal to fund in FY 2014 DEM Office of Water Resources contracts with the US Geological Survey for the Stream Gage Network, monitoring for large river water quality and groundwater

Kiernan reviewed a proposal from DEM for the BRWCT to continue funding in FY 2014 DEM's contract with USGS to maintain stream gages, and conduct large river water quality monitoring and groundwater observations. The total request is not to exceed \$342,711.

Uva stated that the CT had previously requested detailed information on the cost of another entity performing streamflow, water quality, and groundwater monitoring functions traditionally handled by USGS. In addition to concerns regarding the competitive value of the USGS contracts, Uva noted that as USGS continues to shift the costs of operating its monitoring programs to the states, RI should be developing the

information necessary to ensure that USGS is providing these monitoring services in the most cost-effective manner possible. He expressed his disappointment that a written analysis of alternative approaches to operating these baseline monitoring programs was not provided along with DEM's request for funding FY 2014 to support the USGS monitoring contracts.

Kiernan replied that DEM Office of Water Resources (OWR) is forbidden by state purchasing regulations to request formal quotes from private vendors simply to compare costs from different service providers. Instead, OWR developed cost estimates to build and operate a stream flow gage network equivalent to what USGS provides to RI and other states. A former USGS employee based at OWR developed detailed information on the required streamflow network equipment and operating needs. The analysis showed that the DEM could not build and operate the state's stream gage network at lesser cost than USGS, primarily because it would have to invest in new staff positions for which there is no funding. Additionally, bringing the stream gage network in-house would also require persuading USGS to give to Rhode Island the equipment it has invested at Rhode Island streamflow gage stations, as well as building a new on-line data reporting and access system. Richardson stated that no private firm could replace the streamflow monitoring services that are performed by USGS at a lower cost.

Rhodes asked how much funding the BRWCT has previously provided to support the USGS Monitoring Contracts and how much additional funding was being requested by DEM for FY 2014. *(Final FY 2013 costs were \$250,000 from the OSPAR allocation and \$16,272 from the BRW Revenue Account for a total of \$266,272.- Colt)* The total requested funding for FY 2014 is \$342,711. This amount includes the \$22,000 supplement that would have to be provided to WRB if the General Assembly does not approve its request for supplement operations funding in FY 2014. The most expensive single component of the program is \$162,851 for the large river water quality monitoring program contracted with USGS by DEM. The Stream Gage Network costs to be covered by the BRWCT will not exceed \$135,620 (\$133,380 for DEM and \$2,240 for WRB). The actual expenditures in FY 2014 will be about \$304,000 given the timing of USGS invoicing across FY 2013, 2014, and 2015.

To review this DEM/WRB request in the context of the overall BRWCT FY 2014 budget, Colt distributed a draft FY 2014 budget for the BRW Revenue Account. He explained that the budget's line item for USGS contracts at \$54,000 reflects costs above the \$250,000 OSPAR monitoring allocation that would have been dedicated entirely to the FY14 USGS contract.

Rhodes asked what would happen if the BRWCT was not willing to fund the USGS Contracts. Kiernan replied that it would require decisions on how to eliminate one or more stream gages, groundwater observation wells, and large river water quality stations, and where to seek other funding sources.

*Uva moved that the BRWCT fund the proposal from DEM for the BRWCT to fund the FY 2014 USGS contractual agreement with DEM for an amount not to exceed \$304,000 in FY 2014, with an the additional commitment of paying the fourth quarter bill from USGS in FY 2015 for a total grant not to exceed \$342,711. Rhodes seconded. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously with DEM abstaining.*

CRMC Proposal to fund the 2013 Marine Invasives Rapid Assessment Survey

Colt distributed a cover letter to the proposal submitted by CRMC's Kevin Cute. The Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management, in cooperation with MIT Sea Grant and the RI Coastal Resources Management Council, will conduct a survey of floating docks and piers for marine invasive species with a team of academic expert taxonomists during August 2013. This is the fifth such survey organized by MA CZM and MIT Sea Grant and is conducted every three years to search for new invading species and to assess the range changes for already present invaders and native species. Past surveys have detected new invaders, including some not previously recorded in North America, providing support for government efforts to manage vectors. RIBRWCT supported the last survey, conducted in 2010, and has received copies of the survey report. The Survey will sample locations from Narragansett Bay to Casco Bay and the team will be based in Providence for four nights of the survey. Funds are requested to support basic survey costs for transportation, housing, and food for the approximately 20 team members.

The Rapid Assessment Survey will contract with the North and South Rivers Watershed Association (Norwell, MA) as fiscal agent for the project. The Association has an ongoing contract as a partner to the Massachusetts Bays National Estuary Program and supports a staff person the Mass Bays NEP. Participants in the survey donate all of their time on the survey. Grant funds are to cover travel and laboratory costs for survey with a small fee to the North and South Rivers Watershed Association to manage project finances. MA CZM will hire an intern to assemble data and to issue a final report in the fall of 2013.

*Uva moved to fund the project as requested at an amount not to exceed \$5,000. Kiernan seconded. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.*

Governor's Office Proposal to support a public picnic for Governor Chafee's Narragansett Bay Day

Colt reviewed a proposal from the Governor's office requesting \$8-10,000 to fund the Governor's Bay Day picnic scheduled for Sunday July 28, 2013, at Colt State Park. Previous funding sources used by the Governor's Office for this event have been fully expended. DEM will organize the logistics of the catered picnic as part of several events that day at Colt State Park associated with its annual Great Outdoors Pursuit.

Rhodes asked if there are educational programs planned for Governor Chafee's Bay Day and other events the same day at Colt State Park. Colt replied that there will be many educational offerings, although the request from the Governor's Office only entailed the picnic.

*Kiernan moved to fund the proposal as requested for an amount not to exceed \$10,000 stipulating that the BRWCT would not consider a similar proposal to fund the picnic for the 2014 Governor Chafee's Bay Day. Uva seconded. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously*

### **Current SLP Implementation Projects**

#### Middletown Stormwater Utility District Feasibility Assessment

Colt reviewed the slow progress on the Middletown SUD Feasibility Assessment study. Elizabeth Scott and he will write a letter on behalf of the BRWCT to the Middletown Town Administrator advising him that Middletown must make tangible progress implementing the project by the next meeting of the BRWCT (scheduled for September 25, 2013). If no significant action were taken by then on the project, the BRWCT would consider at this meeting the possibility of reducing or eliminating support for the project.

#### Other Projects and Tasks

Kiernan announced that the RfP for the climate change wastewater treatment facility risk assessment had been released. Colt reported that he will be on the review team with Kiernan, Bill Patenaude, and Jeff Willis.

Colt reported that a new roster for the RI Environmental Monitoring Collaborative had been formally proposed to the Governor and he hoped to have it approved this summer.

Colt also reported that the Conservation Law Foundation analysis of stormwater utility district law was nearly complete and to be finalized in June 2013.

### **Review of the Draft BRWCT FY 2014 Work Plan**

Colt reviewed the draft BRWCT FY 2014 Work Plan previously circulated to the BRWCT. He noted the expiration of the current version of the Bays, Rivers, and Watersheds Systems-Level Plan as of the end of FY 2013. The SLP would thus need to be reviewed and updated in the near future. He noted that the SLP update had been delayed primarily with regard to progress or completion of several important strategic planning processes for water resources, particularly a new State Guide Plan element dedicated to watershed and water quality management. The draft Work Plan discusses briefly how the SLP would relate to the State Guide and Colt asked for comment on that section of the draft Work Plan. Rhodes agreed with how Colt described the relation between the State Guide Plan and the SLP in the draft Work Plan. Colt stated that in his opinion the BRWCT should plan on launching an SLP update process by mid-2014.

Colt referred the members to sections of the draft work plan containing descriptions of the projects that the BRWCT had agreed to fund in FY 2014. He noted a slight change to the project plan for the Upper Bay Water Quality Stakeholders Process: there would be an initial convening of a group of experts and then a convening of a larger stakeholder

group. Colt reported that he had drafted and circulated a RFP to hire a facilitator for this project. The draft RfP is under review by NBC and DEM.

Colt stated that he would insert into the Work Plan project descriptions for projects the BRWCT would consider for funding at today's meeting.

Colt noted that Rhode Island is responsible for co-chairing the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) for about eighteen months beginning in October 2013. He stated that he may be asked to help the appointed co-chair (Coit or Fugate) handle this responsibility, as he still serves as an alternative delegate to NROC.

Uva noted that on page 21 the draft Work Plan states that the BRWCT Science Advisory Committee and Economic Monitoring Collaborative would be supported only if there were available resources. Uva requested an addition to the draft to specify a start date of September 2013 for soliciting members for a revitalized BRWCT Economic Monitoring Collaborative. Rhodes stated that the Statewide Planning Office may be able to help as it is putting together an Economic Advisory Committee for its Sustainable Communities Initiative. He stated that this Advisory Committee would require a subgroup to work on economic development for RI's water-reliant economy.

Colt said he will amend the Work Plan to strengthen the priority for developing an Economic Monitoring Collaborative along the lines proposed by Rhodes. He will also revise the draft Work Plan to describe the developing partnership with the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program to develop and maintain a Narragansett Bay and Watershed Science Advisory Committee.

Uva asked about the status of the BRWCT Public Advisory Committee. Colt replied that he has been focused on the RI Environmental Monitoring Collaborative and the Science Advisory Committee. He suggested that the NBEP's focus on grassroots stakeholders provided an alternative forum for engaging the public on Bay and watershed management issues, but acknowledged that public advice and input for water supply, economic development, and other BRWCT water resource and environmental priorities were not being actively sought.

Uva called for renewed attention to a public advisory body for the BRWCT, noting that the BRWCT had been remiss in not seeking greater public input into and awareness of BRWCT efforts. Colt expressed concern about setting up another committee that would attract many of the same participants as other, similar fora. Uva emphasized his concern that the BRWCT was "not getting its message out", and that the BRWCT needed to do more to articulate and communicate the funding challenges that Rhode Island faces in water resources management. He suggested that connecting Watershed Counts to a Public Advisory Committee would be one way to gain greater public input and visibility for the RI BRWCT.

*The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.*