DRAFT
Meeting Notes
Narragansett Bay & Watersheds Coordination Team
Narragansett Bay Commission Conference Room
November 23, 2005

Meeting Attendees
Coordination Team Members
K. Flynn, M. Kerr, J. Mariscal, M. McMahon, P. Pinault, W. Sullivan, M. Tikoian

Other Attendees
M. Adelman, J. Austin, C. Deacutis, A. Dzykewicz, S. Kiernan, A. McBride, D. Pryor, M. Pryor, R. Ribb, T. Uva, M. Walker, B. Vild, H. Ward, S. Whitehouse, J. Willis, C. Young, T. Getz

M. Sullivan	Called the meeting to order and asked if there was anyone on the Team who was willing to chair the meeting. There was no one who wanted to chair the meeting and Mike was encouraged to continue in this role for the meeting. Mike asked the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) if they had a report.
C. Young	The PAC had made comments to the draft CRMC Marine Resources Development Plan. Due to time constraints they were not able to get prior approval of the Coordination Team.
M. Sullivan	The normal process for committees is to request approval from the Coordination Team (Team), before comments are forwarded to an organization.
M. Kerr	This was agreed to in the past and this procedure should be used in the future.
D. Pryor	He did not have anything to report from the Scientific Advisory Committee.
Sue Kiernan	Sue Kiernan was asked by Peter August to report on the prioritization by the RI Environmental Monitoring Collaborative (RIEMC) on proposed monitoring activities. The Coordination Team at the last meeting requested this prioritization. Sue said the group was e-mailed the list of projects and her report is the result of this prioritization effort. The RIEMC rated each proposed program as either essential or important, or no opinion. She reported votes for two programs were classified essential, i.e., Large River Monitoring and Fixed Bay Monitoring. Nutrient and river flow measurements are important activities that need to be continued to calculate estimates of pollutant loadings into the Bay. She mentioned that the prior contract between DEM and USGS for monitoring quarterly in large rivers was suspended in October 2002 and data has not been collected since then. This summer there were 13 fixed stations in the bay; 9 were operated by DEM, 2 by NBC and 1 by URI/GSO and 1 by Roger Williams University. Federal funds received in 2004, allowed the number of fixed stations to increase from 9 to 13 stations. She said after 2006, the federal funds were not yet assured. Without the funds, deployment of DEM stations in 2007 is in jeopardy. She said two programs received no votes as being essential, i.e., Emergency Response Data Review and Monitoring Development Grants Program. All other projects received a mix of essential and important votes.
M. Sullivan	Questioned if the prioritization included funding for the Chair or administrative staff. Sue indicated they did not include this item in their prioritization.
M. Kerr	Suggested the group should take administrative support off the table and focus on monitoring projects. Team consensus acknowledged.

S. Kiernan	Sue continued with her presentation of projects that were rated below the most essential category. - Streamflow monitoring was proposed for expansion and the request was for 10 new gauges to be added to the 20 gauges in the existing network that is maintained by USGS in partnership with the state. She said the priorities for where to locate new gauges have been previously identified and most of the highest priorities involve freshwater streams, some of which do not impact the bay. - Fish tissue monitoring in freshwaters does not currently exist. This program would start to monitor fish throughout the state in alignment with the rotating basin approach. Sampling would be on a ten-year timetable. She thought that freshwater fish tissue sampling would uncover problems that would lead to additional fish consumption advisories. - Database capacity assessment was rated high although it is not a monitoring program that collects new data. It does, however support dissemination of information. - Dissolved oxygen surveys were increased in FY 2005 over the number conducted in 2004. The NBEP, working with Brown U. and DEM, increased sampling. The gap reflected in the proposed program represents funds needed for data processing and dissemination for surveys expected to continue in 2006.Rotating assessments of coastal waters would target embayments and coastal ponds not otherwise monitored through the fixed-site network or other programs. - Expanded beach monitoring in freshwater lakes would be conducted with HEALTH applying the risk-based approach that is currently used at saltwater beaches. Coastal beach monitoring is subsidized by federal funds not available for freshwater beach monitoring. - Continuation of lake and stream monitoring by volunteers. Funding would stabilize the URI - Watershed Watch program and ensure continued availability to the state of the data generated by participating volunteers. - Development of an invasive species-monitoring plan. Project would cover terrestrial and aquatic species. - Rotating basin assessments of rivers and streams that would monitor a specific basin for one or two years. Basin monitoring is a federal Clean Water Act requirement. This monitoring is not duplicative of other monitoring.
M. McMahon	Questioned if each proposal could be broken down with respect to personnel, capital and operating costs and wanted to determine the actual monitoring that was going to be performed. He also wanted to know if the monitoring was site-specific and what were the skills needed to conduct monitoring. Can any of the monitoring be consolidated in order to take advantage of economy of scale issues?
S. Kiernan	Most monitoring could be described as either measuring water biota or water chemistry with biological monitoring requiring a specific skill set. Within the different types of water chemistry sampling, there is potential for cross training to some degree. The collective proposals would create an ambient baseline-monitoring unit within DEM that would allow opportunities for cross training and efficiencies in terms of field operations. She thought this could be accomplished with an additional 4-5 FTEs.
M. McMahon	Questioned if this was reflected in the proposal.

S. Kiernan	Indicated that DEM-OWR is involved with many of the programs contractually and that coordination of these efforts is achieved to avoid duplication etc. She also thought the volunteer-based lake monitoring by URI was efficient and did not see much room for improvement.
M. Sullivan	Mentioned that NBC has a substantive monitoring / analytical capability. Should the state consider NBC for additional work in this area?
P. Pinault	Indicated an expanded monitoring / analytical capability would need to be approved by the PUC. NBC would like to be considered for an expanded role in monitoring especially if it helps to determine loadings coming into the bay from Massachusetts.
M. Sullivan	Questioned NBC if they would perform the analysis at cost? Would NBC consider the role?
P. Pinault	He indicated they could and would consider. The Team all acknowledged such action would need to be outside of NBC ratepayer costs.
M. McMahon	It would appear that a number of agencies are performing monitoring in their core programs. If this is so, why are there gaps in our monitoring? Are there any possibilities for better utilization of state resources? For example, can we schedule additional bay monitoring activities if boats were scheduled better? He discussed an example where oil companies pooled resources in providing supplies to drilling rigs in the Gulf of Mexico.
S. Kiernan	At this time, the large river monitoring is a contractual cost for the state with not a lot of potential for cost savings in this area. In several other areas, the university performs monitoring for the DEM water program through contracts where funds are available. There is not a lot of long-term water quality data collection that is conducted by the universities (with the exception of research); which is already subsidized by state-agency funding. She also indicated that DEM would be consolidating the operations of its portion of the fixed-site network in the bay in order to accomplish efficiencies with respect to the use of its boats next year.
K. Flynn	Questioned if the $80K for the URI Watershed Watch could only be a $30K expenditure if federal funding continued to be available. S. Kiernan indicated this was correct. But that there was not a real shortfall noted at this time but a proposed offset of loss of Federal or other dollars. DEM already pays $25K of this effort. The Team took input from attendees at this time.
S. Whitehouse	Thought that data synthesis, analysis and dissemination were important functions that drive the information needs of state decision-makers.
D. Pryor	Commented it was important that the partners collaborate on issues. These discussions lead to efficiencies of operation. Indicated the large river monitoring work that was being performed by USGS had a rigorous quality assurance (QA) component. It is important to compare the QA components of proposals to determine if they are equivalent.
M. Kerr	Thought it was time to begin to discuss the prioritization of the projects.
M. Sullivan	Agreed there was a need to begin the prioritization process. Expressed opinion that it was important to translate these priorities into a potential fiscal packaged that could be discussed in the legislature. There was Team consensus to do so.
M. Kerr	The Rivers Council prioritized the projects and it differed somewhat from the results reflected in the RI RIEMC analysis. Their group thought the rotating basis assessment of rivers and streams was essential and needs to be a higher priority.

J. Mariscal	Suggested all projects discussed were high priority and all needed to be funded. This list is the result of prioritizing other projects; and these are the ones that the RIMEC proposed to the Coordination Team. He did recognize that all projects may not be able to be funded and the prioritization reflected the thoughts of those who actually provided input into the effort. He thought the RIEMC did a good job, especially in the analysis of the results of the survey.
S. Whitehouse (RI House)	Questioned if the RI Economic Collaborative should be consulted in this prioritization effort. Also wanted to know if there was funding for monitoring in the Governor's budget.
M. Sullivan	There was a placeholder figure in the budget for monitoring. Referred to M. Adelman for details.
M. Adelman (RI Gov.'s Office)	The Governor's budget did not have a precise number, and was waiting to see the recommendations from this group. He indicated last year's budget for monitoring was about $1-1.3M, but did not care to comment specifically on this year's total.
M. Pryor (USEPA)	A state monitoring strategy was a high priority from USEPA's perspective and supported the high priority of the large river monitoring and the rotating basin assessments of rivers and streams.
M. Sullivan	Questioned Ms. Pryor if she was supportive of Ms. Kerr's priority. Ms Pryor indicated she was supportive.
M. Kerr	In order to set priorities, she suggested each member should choose the most important project.
J. Mariscal	If the budget was approved for $2M then all projects could move forward. Another option was to support all projects to some degree, possibly pushing out the implementation dates. This might be better than just fully funding a few projects.
M. Sullivan	Wanted to determine if there is Team consensus for the top five projects. The Team could then discuss how it wanted to proceed.
A. McBride (RIEPC)	Reminded the group that people are prioritizing from many different perspectives of state and federal mandates, including the system level plan along with historical and future funding streams.
M. Sullivan	Agreed with that statement, but indicated he thought this was a continuing process. There is a need now for a prioritization of the projects consistent with RI General Assembly or Governor's need to prioritize. Asked the Team members the question of 'should we prioritize or let others? He indicated the final Team request must address all it's priorities including the $66K requested by the Economic Monitoring Collaborative and $150K for staff support of the Team.
J. Mariscal	Questioned if there was any funding for support of the PAC, and at what level.
C. Young	Indicated the PAC had requested $60K for staff.
J. Mariscal	Questioned if the NBC water-monitoring proposal of $42K was being considered.
M. Sullivan	This is a question he also has and wanted to know if NBC could be specific on the level of funding needed to continue to fund water-monitoring projects. Discussion occurred and decision on process and involvement of NBC left to another agenda after internal discussions.
S. Kiernan	Indicated that all projects recommended by the RIEMC supported the system level plan.
J. Mariscal	Questioned if they were voting on a one-year funding level or a ramp up of funding for monitoring activities.

M. Kerr	Suggested that both rotating monitoring projects, i.e. assessment of coastal waters and basin assessments of rivers and streams, be combined into one project. This could achieve some cost savings.
S. Kiernan	Sue indicated capital costs might be shared between the projects, but there would be no savings in staffing costs or laboratory costs.
	At this time a vote was taken on the prioritization of the projects. Each team member voted on the projects that they supported as essential. Based on the Team voting, the projects were ranked (vote totals are in parentheses following the project.) as follows: - Fixed-site monitoring in Narragansett Bay (7) - USGS streamflow monitoring (7) - Large river monitoring by USGS on a monthly basis (6) - Rotating assessments of coastal waters (6) - Rotating basin assessments of rivers and streams (5) - Dissolved oxygen surveys (3) - Fish tissue monitoring - freshwaters only (1) - Database capacity assessment (1) - Development of an invasive species-monitoring plan (0) - Lake & stream monitoring (0) - Expansion of beach monitoring -freshwaters (0) - Emergency response data review (0) - Monitoring development grants program (0) The sum needed to fund the top five priorities is $1.28M. At this time M. McMahon excused himself from the meeting due to another meeting. There was a discussion on staffing needs of all the committees.
J. Mariscal	Suggested that $150K should be budgeted for coordination of all the committees.
M. Kerr	Suggested there is a need for a Chair but questioned if agency staff could be used to help with administrative activities?
M. Sullivan	Thought it was important for the prioritization of monitoring needs be gathered into a presentation for the General Assembly. Requested appropriate staff (Sue Kiernan) review the top five projects for possible efficiencies. He also requested DEM staff to come back to the next meeting with an administrative plan to support the Team, and committees. He also requested the top five projects be broken down into operating, capital and staffing costs.
J. Mariscal	Requested that the dissolved oxygen survey and administrative support be added to the prioritization list. Thought that phasing in some of the large projects would allow these two projects to be funded.
At this time the discussion focused on the Chair of the Team.	
A. McBride	The job description should include administrative support of the Economic Monitoring Collaborative. Agency staff has supported this effort to date. In addition the current job description needs to support a high-level person who can deal with the General Assembly and agency heads.
S. Whitehouse	She mentioned she is working on a letter to be forwarded to the House leadership regarding the funding levels to include in next year's budget to support the state monitoring effort. She indicated she was going to forward the $1.28M figure that was identified to fund the top five projects voted on today.

J. Austin (Save the Bay)	We need to be careful on how administrative costs are discussed and presented in the budget.
J. Mariscal	Wanted to reiterate that the Team had just prioritized high priority projects and in an ideal world all of the high-priority projects should have been funded.
M. Sullivan	Indicated the state's monitoring needs are in the neighborhood of $2.3M.
P. Pinault	Suggested we look at the administrative support needs of the Coordination Team ($150K), PAC ($60K), Economic Monitoring Collaborative ($80K) and the RIEMC as a package, to determine if there is any efficiency in combining staff support. Also wanted to determine if office space could be supported as an in-kind contribution by one of the team members.
J. Mariscal	Advocated $42K to be used for water monitoring by NBC. It is important to determine the loadings coming into state waters from Massachusetts.
M. Sullivan	The Team should look at the NBC proposal; this seems to be an efficient way to support the monitoring effort.
M. Kerr	Wanted to discuss the part-time chair position. Consensus was to put to next meeting
M. Sullivan	He would continue to convene the meetings in the short-term, if this was the group's desire, but thought at some point there would be need for additional staffing for this effort.
M. Kerr	Agreed there is a need for support staff and the Team should continue to advocate this position.
M. Sullivan	He received comments on the position description from Meg and Juan. He was looking for input from other team members. Would like to come back to the next meeting to discuss this issue further.
J. Mariscal	There is a need for a Chair to work on issues between meetings. In addition, he suggested that a smaller group meet to discuss finalizing a job description for the position.
M. Sullivan	Asked for volunteers to work on a job description. Meg Kerr, Jeff Willis, Juan Mariscal and Mike Sullivan agreed to meet on this issue.
	At this point the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting was set for 3 PM, Wednesday December 21, 2005.