

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

**APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING ON  
July 26, 2006**

**2:00 -4:00 PM  
Narragansett Bay Commission Conference Room  
One Service Road  
Providence, RI**

Participants: A. Colt, K. Flynn, M. Kerr, J. Mariscal, P. Pinault, M. Sullivan, M. Tikoian, M. Walker

Others: M. Adelman, P. August, J. Austin, K. Bergstrom, G. Cimerino, A. Liberti, A. McBride, D. Pryor, T. Uva, S. Whitehouse, J. Willis, C. Young and T. Getz

I. Approval of May 24, 2006 Meeting Minutes

The May 24, 2006 meeting notes were approved. There were no changes noted.

II. & III. Introduction of new Coordination Team Chair

Mike Sullivan introduced Ames Colt as the new Coordination Chair and turned the meeting over to him. Ames made some opening remarks that included the following:

- The legislature recognized that state agencies only had jurisdiction over some of the issues that are pressing for a healthy bay, watershed and river system. The Coordination Team (CT) was formed to transcend these agency boundaries and to integrate the state approach in this effort.
- A lot of work has been done since the CT was formed and this spirit of cooperation will be needed to continue with our successes.
- Thinks the legislature will support this effort as long as the process is perceived as well thought out and planned.
- Indicated that he will formally start the job on September 3, 2006. Expressed his appreciation to Sea Grant, especially Barry Costa-Pierce for allowing him to begin the transition to the CT prior to his official start date of September 3.

IV. Discussion of the 2006 Legislative Session and Allocation of New Funds

Mike Sullivan provided a background of the CT monitoring priorities and gave a first cut analysis to fund the priorities at a reduced level. (The PowerPoint presentation is posted on the CT website and specifics can be detailed in that document.)

Mike made the following major points:

- The Coordination Team met on November 23, 2005 to prioritize water quality monitoring projects.
- The sum needed to fund the top five priorities was \$1,288,000.

- The February 22, 2006 CT meeting agreed to add, but did not reprioritize, the \$80,000 in the budget (with a \$20,000 in-kind contribution) to fund the Economic Monitoring Collaborative proposal.

The proposed revisions to funding the priority monitoring projects include the following:

- The fixed sites bay monitoring would deploy 9 sites in 2007. It was assumed that sites being run by other entities would continue to operate their sites.
- The Big River streamflow gages would not be funded because the Water Resources Board had found another source of funding for these gages. Only three new gages would be funded.
- Large river water quality monitoring would only fund three stations, would reduce sampling from 9 times in the first year and would defer the Pawtucket River and other stations until 2008.
- The rotating assessments of coastal water quality would not be funded. This program requires significant equipment purchases and assumed the availability of FTEs to run the program. This program cannot be started without these resources.
- The rotating assessment of rivers and streams will continue to rely on contractors and outside vendors. There is a need to hire a ½ FTE to coordinate these activities. There would be a slight expansion of effort and sampling locations would increase from 45 to 60.
- The funding for the Economic Monitoring Collaborative was not recommended for funding at this time. Additional discussion needs to occur on this project and funding may have to wait until additional appropriations can be found.

The table below summarizes the proposal presented.

CT MONITORING PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY		
Monitoring Priority	Recommended Funding Level	Revised Proposal
Fixed-Sites in Narragansett Bay	\$239,000	\$40,000
Streamflow Gages	\$242,000	\$82,000
Large River Water Quality Monitoring	\$195,000	\$78,000
Rotating Assessments of Coastal Water Quality	\$250,000	\$0
Rotating Assessment of Rivers & Streams	\$360,000	\$50,000
Economic Monitoring	\$80,000	\$0
Totals	\$1,366,000	\$250,000

The meeting then focused on the discussion of the proposal.

#### **Fixed-Sites in Narragansett Bay**

Meg Kerr questioned what was going to be funded with the \$40K for fixed sites in Narragansett Bay. Sullivan indicated a ninth monitoring station would be purchased this year and maintenance will be performed on the system. He also assumed all other partners will continue to support their efforts.

#### **Streamflow Gages**

Juan Mariscal indicated there will be monitoring in the Big River area. He indicated he was able to find another source of funds for this effort. Paul Pinault questioned where the three new gages would be located. Sullivan said he thought the Queens and the Chickasheen are two and he would get back to the Team on this. (The three proposed gages are the Pawcatuck River –Upper (Chickasheen), Lower (Mainstem at Kenyon) and the Hunt River.

### **Large River Water Quality Monitoring**

Meg Kerr indicated that the Blackstone River Coalition is actively monitoring the Blackstone River from Worcester to Providence. If this monitoring could be substituted for or combined with River monitoring efforts under the CT proposal, funding could be freed up for the Economic Monitoring Collaborative proposal.

### **Rotating Assessment of Rivers & Streams**

Sullivan indicated there is a need to continue to work with watershed organizations. However, there are no plans for new, expanded assessments. The rotating basin approach of the rivers and streams program would be put on hold until additional funding was made available. Funds would be used to hire a half-time FTE to coordinate monitoring activities throughout the watersheds – linking volunteer monitoring efforts organized and conducted by the state's watershed groups with monitoring conducted by state agencies and university researchers. Colt also indicated this person could help coordinate monitoring planning and efforts led by the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative and Economic Monitoring Collaborative. Sullivan agreed this person could be used to support CT priorities in this area.

### **Revenue Sources**

Mike Tikoian asked about the status of the proposal that was introduced to the legislature but deleted from the final bill to set fees for cables in the bay. Sullivan indicated that, based on his understanding, there was some confusion in the General Assembly regarding the ownership of and the number of cables in Rhode Island waters. He complimented Jeff Willis for his work collecting relevant cable data, but suggested much of what was requested by the legislature is not collected by CRMC. Other agencies such as the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission may have the detailed information required by the General Assembly. He did think that if some of the questions could be answered, there could be traction on this issue next year. Due to the hectic nature of the legislature in its closing days, the information that was supplied by CRMC may not have been transmitted to the appropriate personnel or fully answered their questions. Jeff Willis made a point to indicate that the information CRMC had was delivered to the legislature that was requested at the May meeting in the state house.

### **Economic Monitoring**

Kip Bergstrom indicated there is a need to integrate environmental and economic monitoring initiatives to support systems integration planning. He questioned how the CT could generate a comprehensive plan without adequate data on economic activities supported by the bay and related resources. The water quality monitoring initiatives proposed for funding do not look at commercial and recreational fishing industry trends and issues, nor land use and tourism activities and developments. He acknowledged that he needed to come up with a revised proposal for his economic monitoring if the CT were going to fund only part of or none of the economic monitoring proposal.

Kip thought that even with reduced funding baseline economic conditions could be tracked in 11 of the 12 sectors, with the exception of recreation / tourism. He will miss some events this summer, but something might be able to be generated with respect to tourism since there are other sources collecting information on this sector. In addition, he would put off some detailed in depth analysis of some topics. He thought he could do most of his work if he was funded at the \$40-60K level. He also reminded the group that his group would add \$20K of resources to this project. He thought if the Economic Monitoring proposal was not funded; the economic

monitoring collaborative should be put on hold for a year. Kip suggested his fiscal needs could be met by funding the water quality monitoring proposals in the following manner:

Fixed-Sites in Narragansett Bay	\$40,000
Streamflow Gages	\$65,000
Large River Water Quality Monitoring	\$40,000
Rotating Assessments of Coastal Water Quality	0
Rotating Assessment of Rivers & Streams	\$40,000
Economic Monitoring	\$40,000

Questions were raised concerning how the economic data would be utilized to enhance planning and management. Mike Walker indicated the answer is the same in this area as it is in the water quality-monitoring arena. You need information to determine where you should invest your resources efficiently to meet the goals of a cleaner bay/river/ watershed. Reliable baseline economic and water quality data will help to drive those decisions

Sandra Whitehouse indicated that it was the intent of the Coordination Team Legislation that economic monitoring should have equal weight as water quality monitoring  
Juan Mariscal indicated the CT had spent a lot of time discussing water quality monitoring proposals, having solicited comments from the monitoring community and then prioritized the state needs. A lot of the questions he hears being raised among state leaders and around the state are related to the health of Rhode Island's water resources. The public is most concerned about the continued ready availability of water resources, fresh and marine, for drinking, swimming, fishing, and other uses requiring high quality aquatic resources. Thus the CT has not focused to date as much on economic issues and he agreed that more work needs to be done in this area.

Walker was interested in determining more about the economic monitoring proposal. He supports both economic and the water quality monitoring. He would like to see some measurable results this summer. He also questioned whether we should be doing fewer things, but doing them well versus trying to do something on all the priority monitoring needs.

Tikoian indicated his support of economic monitoring, but he needed additional information on the proposed work. Bergstrom stated that there needs to be a better understanding of the economic conflicts that occur with the varied uses of the state's waters. He mentioned conflicts between commercial and recreational fishing interests, aquaculture versus fishing and other uses of the bay. He indicated there is a need to quantify the strengths and economic values of the sectors to guide policies on where to invest in the future. Tikoian wanted a better understanding on the return on investment for supporting the economic monitoring effort.

There was an opinion expressed from the audience that the state needs baseline data to make decisions. For example, what is the cost of having a beach closed? We need to determine opportunity costs and he thought that economic monitoring would get us these answers.

At this point, Colt thought the group needed to make a decision on where to focus the money for this year. If we wait another month we will surely loose all monitoring activities for the summer. He thought there were a number of options: vote for the proposal as presented by Sullivan; or

reduce some funding in the water quality monitoring program and apply those funds to economic monitoring, but at a lower level; or allocate the funds as proposed by Sullivan and then look for additional funding for the economic monitoring initiative.

Pinault thought there were two challenges the CT needed to focus on. The CT has spent a lot of time discussing the technical issues of water quality monitoring. The group cannot ignore the economic arguments. He suggested that we should reduce some of the stream flow gages funding and reprogram it to economic monitoring.

At this point Sullivan thought we should not be arbitrary in cutting programs. He thought it might be possible to push back implementing the ninth fixed site and reduce stream flow spending by about \$15K, and large river monitoring by \$8K. He thought that it would be problematical to him to fund the economic monitoring proposal at a level of \$40-\$60K. He thought he could support a lower level of funding. Sullivan argued for cutting back on capital expenditures but supported funding operational program aspects. He, however, did not want to compromise the baseline integrity of either program.

Bergstrom indicated the targeted reductions in the water quality-monitoring program that Sullivan mentioned would cut about \$31K from the monitoring program. He suggested that this funding be moved to the economic monitoring project and he could live with that amount of funding.

The CT then worked up the following alternative spending allocation that included 30,000 for economic monitoring:

Fixed-Sites in Narragansett Bay	\$33,000
Streamflow Gages	\$67,000
Large River Water Quality Monitoring	\$70,000
Rotating Assessments of Coastal Water Quality	0
Rotating Assessment of Rivers & Streams	\$50,000
Economic Monitoring	\$30,000

Mariscal wanted to move quickly on the purchase of the gages. He might be able to pick up one of the three gage sites that would save about \$20K. Sullivan indicated DEM and the Water Resources Board would discuss these opportunities. Kerr indicated she would be interested to get additional information on the specifics of the environmental monitoring expenditures.

Flynn questioned if DEM thought the funding of the proposals at an even lower level than was presented would hurt the technical aspect of the effort. Sullivan assured Flynn that the revised proposal would be well thought out and would support the most critical monitoring needs in a useful manner.

Mariscal indicated that the revised proposal to spend the funding would need to be thought out further. He also noted the need to focus on getting back to the legislature in January to inform them of our progress and seek greater support of this effort. Sullivan indicated the group should be thinking earlier than January, since proposals to the Governor's budget were due in November.

At this time the discussion was finished and a vote was taken to fund the water quality monitoring effort by \$230K and the economic monitoring effort by \$30K. The motion was passed unanimously.

The group requested thirty minutes be set aside at the August meeting for a presentation on how the funding would be spent by the Economic Monitoring Collaborative and the anticipated study products and timelines for delivery.

#### **V. Discussion of the First-year Work Plan for the Chair**

Colt started the discussion by indicating the Systems Level Plan would take about eighteen months to complete. Kerr said the Narragansett Estuary Program's Richard Ribb was also working on a similar plan given that the Estuary Program must revise the Narragansett Bay Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan and there is a need to coordinate the two plans. Colt agreed strongly with this and said he had already been in contact with Ribb to work out a coordinated effort. Sullivan thought there was a need to develop a multi-year workplan for the Coordination Team and Chair, along with a financial plan to fund proposed activities. He thought the plan should detail state and Coordination Team efforts in three, five and ten year segments. The workplan would need to detail not only the work to be accomplished, but also the resources and expected revenue streams needed to fund and implement the plan. He thought we needed to have a revenue plan by January. Walker thought the financing plan should be the responsibility of the Chair.

Colt thought he would need contractual help to pull the systems level plan together when the time was right to begin that effort in earnest. Whitehouse stated that the Chair is not directly responsible for writing the systems level (systems integration) plan and instead will have to call upon the staff and resources of the Coordination Team members to produce the systems integration plan.

Tikoian reminded the group he chaired the Governor's Bay and Watershed Commission's Finance sub-committee. He thought a lot of relevant material concerning the fiscal needs of the group could be found in the subcommittee's final report to the Commission.

Sullivan asked that team members should forward any ideas concerning revenue sources to the Chair prior to September. Flynn expressed interest in determining the General Assembly's opinion of last year's CT revenue proposals. Sullivan indicated he was optimistic about some of the proposals. He thought the cable fee was a possibility. He thought there was sufficient time over the summer to answer questions the General Assembly had concerning this issue. He thought the UST funds proposal might not have succeeded because there was a budget article dealing with the UST Board already. This proposal might be ripe for next year. He also thought the General Assembly had not been prepared to deal with a septage fee so late in the legislative session, especially since this was an election year. His overall sense was that General Assembly leadership wanted the CT to succeed and seemed to be willing to work with us on this issue.

There was a motion for the Chair to develop a five-year plan for the CT that would incorporate the technical needs and revenue sources to fund this effort in the next thirty to sixty days. The motion carried unanimously.

Kerr also requested the Chair to develop a workplan for the next year. The CT members were requested to forward to the Chair ideas concerning the direction of the group.

**VII. New Business**

Whitehouse indicated that Representative Eileen Naughton wanted to express her thanks to the team for moving the CT agenda forward prior to the formal designation of a CT Chair. She also reiterated the need to get information to leadership in the House and the Senate in a timely manner.

**VIII. Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place on August 23, 2006, from 2-4 at the Narragansett Bay Commission Conference Room.