



RHODE ISLAND BAYS, RIVERS, & WATERSHEDS COORDINATION TEAM

October 17, 2007

2:00 – 4:00 PM

Narragansett Bay Commission Boardroom
Providence, Rhode Island

Approved Meeting Minutes

Coordination Team Members in Attendance: Kevin Flynn, Sue Kiernan (for Michael Sullivan), Tom Uva (for Ray Marshall), Michael Walker (for Saul Kaplan), Kathy Crawley (for Juan Mariscal), Jeff Willis (for Mike Tikoian)

Other Meeting Participants: Chip Young,

Coordination Team Staff: Ames Colt, Melissa Stanziale

CT Administration:

Meeting was called to order at 2:15 p.m.

Colt requested approval of draft minutes for September 19, 2007 meeting.

Motion passed unanimously to approve the 9/19/07 meeting minutes.

Economic Monitoring Collaborative Presentation (Delivered by Kip Bergstrom):

Bergstrom reported that this was conducted as an intercept survey. The interviewers had to approach many people. For every thirty-four people, one would consent to be interviewed; it took some time for them to reach a total of 300.

Key Points:

- Various kinds of outdoor activity, such as trips to the beach, scenic drives, boating, and fishing were prominent among the surveyors' findings.
- Most of the people interviewed were day visitors going to the beach. On an average they would spend \$64.00 (including parking fees), and \$122.00 in Newport. The overnight visitors spend considerably more, particularly in Newport.

- Many of these people are residents, but non-residents are where most of the money comes from. It is important to consider what the General Assembly might have to contribute for park/beach maintenance without the patronage of non-residents? What kind of volume would they have to have from residents?
- The overall cost of maintaining state parks and beaches is greater than the admission fees. There is no admission charge for the parks; technically, money collected for beach fees is what supports the parks.
- Ticket revenues have been in decline for a number of years. Cultural/historical attractions receive money from sources other than ticket sales, such as from grants or the use of the facilities for weddings and other functions. If you add up all of their total budgets, they make up 51% of the total and 71% of the administrative and program revenues.
- Most boaters are residents, but as the boats go up in length the proportion that is non-resident goes up.
- Rhode Islanders take cultural amenities for granted; they are valued much more by out-of-staters and out-of-New Englanders.
- Overnight/out-of-state visitors are one of the sources that help to preserve public access. One of the most significant threats to a vital waterfront in RI is upscale residential outbidding of all other uses.
- Rhode Islanders (day visitors) are the cause of traffic (car and feet) in tourism locales, such as Newport.
- There are a significant number of local retail businesses that are impacted by the conversion rate of summer rentals to second homes.

Bergstrom discussed the possibility of conducting baseline monitoring every three years. This could provide a window of time during which they could figure out how to apply baseline information to the development of area-specific strategies, instead of just doing additional baseline monitoring.

Colt summarized what he felt were the three most significant points of the presentation: the day-visitor to the beach does not necessarily generate significant economic impact; but the Newport visitors, who may stay in RI for a couple of days, or the seasonal rental people, or out-of-state boaters, generate significant economic impact. If they want to target investments, private or public, toward improving economic impact of the summer tourism season, these folks may be where the state should focus. The second significant point made is the decline in cultural tourism, which could significantly impact one of the jewels of RI's tourism industry-Newport's mansions. The final significant point regards the out-of-state boat owners, who own a significant percentage of the larger boats and are

an important market for the state's marinas. Is there any way to target that group to generate income that would be dedicated to protecting or enhancing the coastal environmental qualities that attract them?

Uva urged the team members to remember that the local recreational boat owner may be increasingly priced out of the marinas. This may be a good reason to enhance the state's boat ramp capacity, versus adding more fees that may make the marinas even less affordable to in-state boaters. What's still needed is a better understanding of who owns the boats and where and how recreational boating is growing or changing in Rhode Island. Recreational boaters value highly the quality of the marine and coastal environments they use, and they should be willing to contribute more if there is a need to invest more to preserve it.

Environmental Monitoring Update:

Colt reported that the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative has been relatively dormant. According to his conversations with Pete August, they have been waiting to see what would happen with the priorities that were proposed in FY 08's proposal. They have a meeting scheduled for the 22nd of October. They hope to reengage those folks and think about what they want to propose for FY 09 in terms of where they are with environmental priorities that they will have funding for. They are not sure how much funding will be available due to the process they are currently undergoing to implement the septage hauling fee, septage disposal fee, and undersea cable fee.

He (Colt) has been working with Jeff on the cable fee issue. They must go before the Policy and Procedures subcommittee of CRMC in order for them to review the fee itself and what it will be set at. The meeting was set for last night, but it was cancelled and rescheduled for next month. CRMC has the flexibility to set the amount of the fee; it's not written in stone. They are concerned about fair market value for the leasing of submerged lands for fiber optic telecommunications submarine cables. NOAA has also been looking at this in regard to the national marine sanctuaries. There is a great deal of interest in what is the fair market value for submerged lands for these cables. He surmised that it is in the \$30-50,000 range, but CRMC could charge \$10,000 per cable if they chose to.

There is still not a clear sense of how much money will be available. He reminded the team members that in a restricted receipt account, you must have the money in place before it can be spent.

Update on Systems-Level Planning:

Colt reported that he has met with Jane and Chip on reengaging the Public Advisory Committee. He is aiming to have a draft for the CT to review and approve as publicly reviewable by February 21st. This will be followed by a public comment and review phase.

Colt distributed an updated version of the outline that he had been working on. He said that the plan will continue to focus on issues; and, it would introduce some of the complexity they have discussed in terms of system analysis perspectives.

This is the outline, with more detail, that he will be presenting to the PAC. The date of that meeting has not yet been set, but it will be some time before Thanksgiving. He advised that they be mindful of the context in which they will be operating, such as reorganization ideas and budget cuts.

Finally, they are reaching the point of completing a draft of the plan, which will hopefully be approved by the CT in June. Once this draft is approved, they will draw up an annual work plan for FY 2010 to begin implementing the Systems-Level Plan. Following this, they will begin the process of having agency budgets start to align with the Systems-Level Plan. Colt said he felt it is not too early to begin discussions as to how this process will unfold next summer.

At 3:55 p.m. a motion was passed to adjourn the meeting.