



RHODE ISLAND BAYS, RIVERS, & WATERSHEDS COORDINATION TEAM

Meeting of September 25, 2013

RI Department of Administration DRAFT Minutes

Coordination Team Members in Attendance: Sue Kiernan, Tom Uva, Jared Rhodes, Mike Walker, Veronica Beronsky.

BRWCT Staff: Ames Colt, Melissa Deciantis

Others: Meg Kerr, Hal Walker

CT Administration

Meeting was called to order at 2.00 pm.

Meeting minutes of the June meeting were approved with one revision.

Chair Report

Colt issued a final cost accounting of FY 2013 revenues and expenses for the Bays, Rivers, and Watersheds Fund. He noted that in the near future the BRWCT would be provided a list of all BRWCT funded projects going back to FY11. This list will be a basis for a multi-year review of the BRWCT. Colt identified a rollover balance of \$510,000 from FY 2013 going into FY 2014.

He pointed out a new cost item added to the FY 2013 cost accounting, catalogued as Project 13-2 and totaling monitoring contract support is a rollover issue in terms of invoicing and allocating US Monitoring contracts between OSPAR and CT account. Kiernan added that this accounting adjustment was due to a delay in the previous year where \$30,500 was transferred from, the Economic Monitoring Project to OSPAR to optimize using OSPAR.

Colt reported that net revenues (10% of total revenues collected go into the state general revenue fund.) from the Septage fee totaled just under \$400,000 in FY 2013, considerably less than the FY 2012 septage revenue total which was about \$491,000. Revenues from the new trans-Atlantic cable fee in FY 2014 totaled \$56,499.

Colt noted out that revenues from the trans-Atlantic cable fees will decrease to \$36,000 in FY 2014 and will remain at the level in future years. The FY 2013 cable fee revenues were higher because of one-time payments that were negotiated between CRMC and AT&T in the fall of 2012 (Two one-time payments made by AT&T for non-functioning cables that have not been removed, and payment of a partial annual fee for the sole active cable in FY 2012).

Since FY 2009 when the septage fee was first implemented, it has averaged about \$413,000 in net annual revenues. For FY 2014 Colt projected \$405,000 for Septage fee revenues in recognition of the steep drop in net revenues in FY 2013.

Finally, Colt pointed out that the BRWCT advisory committees did not request funding in FY 2013.

BRWCT Tri-fold Brochure

Colt distributed a final draft of a tri-fold brochure that provides a basic introduction to the BRWCT. The total cost of professionally printing 1,000 copies of the brochure is about \$400. Colt asked for any final comments or suggested revisions to the tri-fold by Wednesday October 2.

BRWCT Funded Project Updates

- **Maritime Port Development** - Colt reported that he had discussions with EDC's John Riendeau and Mike Walker, as well as the Governor's staff regarding possible next steps for the BRWCT to take in maritime port development. In particular, Colt is looking into the value/utility of drawing data and findings generated by the regional ocean planning initiative being led by the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) for use in RI's Freight Planning initiative, the maritime port component which is being funded by the BRWCT in FY 2014. The idea is that linking these two planning efforts will help the Freight Planning working group understand the regional maritime context and inform the regional ocean planning effort of NROC regarding RI's maritime transportation interests and priorities.
- **RI Climate Change Commission (RICCC)** – The RICCC was not sun-set by the General Assembly in its 2013 session. Instead, it will now be chaired by the Director of the RI Department of Administration. Colt has discussed with DOA Policy Director Ally Rogers next steps for the Commission. It was agreed that the Commission should schedule a fall meeting and issue its second report by of March 2014. Local foundations have shown interest, in particular the Van Buren Foundation, to provide funding for development of a statewide climate change strategy
- **Narragansett Bay Science Advisory Committee** – The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program Management Committee has been working to launch a bi-state Science Advisory Committee (SAC) for Narragansett Bay and its watershed. An initial work group has been selected which Colt will participate in. The Work Group will be tasked with specifying the new committee's responsibilities and functions, including by-laws, membership, and initial project focus. An initial task will be to support development of the NBEP's Status and Trends Report. It has been agreed that the new committee will also provide science advisory support to the BRWCT in lieu of a separate Science Advisory Committee for the BRWCT.
- **Development of a new Water Quality Element for the State Guide Plan** – Colt announced that DEM and Statewide Planning have launched an effort to produce a State Guide Plan Element focusing on water quality. Colt will sit on the advisory committee. This planning effort will assist the BRWCT by updating comprehensively the state's long-term priorities for water quality and watershed management and thus providing an important basis for updating the Systems-Level Plan starting in FY 2015.
- **RI Environmental Monitoring Collaborative Report** – Colt announced that the RIEMC's 2012 Summary Report is nearly completed and now includes documentation on 21 monitoring priorities. Colt indicated that a press release from the BRWCT and the URI Coastal Institute will be

forthcoming. The URI Coastal Institute has appointed a new Chair for the RIEMC, Nicole Rohr, recently hired as an Assistant Director of the URI CI.

Colt asked for discussion on whether and how the BRWCT should work to bring the report's identified funding needs to the attention of the Governor's Office within the next couple of months in hopes that additional funding for environmental monitoring would be proposed in the Governor's FY 2015 budget. Colt noted that since the BRWCT is for budgetary purposes considered a part of the DEM Director's office, he works with DEM CFO Terry Maguire to develop a fiscal year budget for the Bays, Rivers, and Watersheds fund. Thus, any effort by the BRWCT to make budgetary requests for new money must take place within the context of annual budgeting for DEM. During the first years of the BRWCT (prior to establishment of the Bays, Rivers, and Watersheds Fund in FY 2008), a "white paper" budget request for the BRWCT was developed and submitted to the Governor's Office. These first budget submittals for the BRWCT entailed requests for environmental and economic monitoring.

Rhodes underscored the importance of effective narratives to accompany requests for funding of a subset of the identified monitoring priorities. He recommended simply generating and submitting the budgetary request. If the Governor's Office turns down the request, at least the BRWCT made the ask. Uva agreed that a budgetary request should at least be sent to the Governor, and indicated that the NGO's would be critical to generating support for such a request.

Walker asked if priorities identified in the RIEMC report are priorities that exist in other agencies' work plans. Kiernan stated that the report's 21 monitoring priorities are a combination of existing and proposed monitoring activities. They did not attempt to define the amount of money already invested. The critical shortfalls identified in the RIEMC report are the \$400,000 of this year's cuts to replace the CT investment. They do not want to continue to rely on BRWCT funding for the stream gage network and other USGS contracted monitoring programs. Kiernan suggested that perhaps the BRWCT draft a proposal and take stock of the situation after the October 1 deadline for agencies to submit their budgets to the Governor's Office. Kiernan also suggested that Colt discuss with Terry Maguire any steps he takes to restore operations funding in the DEM OWR budget to fund the USGS monitoring contract that the BRWCT will underwrite for FY 2014.

Uva added that that good environmental monitoring is necessary to promote and direct economic development in Rhode Island. If the state lacks adequate baseline information on its water resources, such as water supply availability, how we can expect we expect businesses to invest in new in-state facilities? Uva recommended presenting the RIEMC 2012 Summary Report to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee early in the legislative session, as opposed to releasing it in April during the Watershed Counts State House presentation.

BRWCT FY 2014 Work Plan

Colt reviewed the final draft of the BRWCT Work Plan for FY 2014, and noted that there was continued discussion between himself, Kiernan, and Uva regarding the precise purpose of the Upper Narragansett Bay Water Quality Stakeholder Project and the forthcoming Request for Proposals to hire a consultant for the project. After the BRWCT FY 2014 Work Plan is approved, hopefully at this meeting, Colt will post it on the BRWCT web site and develop a press release announcing its availability.

Referring to the FY 2014 Budget provided in the Work Plan, Walker inquired about the Lobster survey, and asked for clarification on how the costs for the 2012 and 2013 surveys were being recorded. Colt replied that since the surveys were performed June to September each year, a single survey's expenditures

were incurred across two fiscal years. For clarity he has recorded the 2012 survey costs in the FY 2013 budget, and will place the 2013 survey costs in in the FY 2014 budget. He will continue to monitor the project to ensure that BRWCT funds are spent efficiently.

Walker further noted that the RIEMC 2012 Summary report states that the total annual cost for the ventless trap lobster survey is \$52,000, higher than the request for funding submitted to the BRWCT by the DEM Division of Marine Fisheries. Kiernan replied that the purpose of the RIEMC 2012 Summary Report was to provide accurate costing information on key state environmental monitoring priorities and to stipulate that the BRWCT should refrain if at all possible from providing stop-gap funding every year for the state's baseline environmental monitoring programs. If the data in the RIEMC summary report is used as a basis for a funding request to the Governor, and it will explain more precisely what is needed to maintain these programs. Walker said that for the Governor and the General Assembly, this growing funding gap in environmental monitoring will be considered a problem that the BRWCT is addressing and thus not be willing to fulfill a new request for funding.

Colt noted that for FY 2014 the OSPAR monitoring allocation is devoted entirely to the USGS contracts, but that it will be increasingly untenable to do so again in FY 2015. In FY 2014, the USGS contracts will require \$304,000 in funding, \$250,000 from the OSPAR account and the balance from the BRWCT's Bays, Rivers, and Watersheds Fund. Hopefully the total cost will be finalized at a lower amount depending upon the ongoing discussions between DEM, WRB, and the USGS.

In FY 2015 there would be a FY 2014 fourth quarter USGS payment that the BRWCT would have to pay, leaving a remaining available balance of \$212,000 in the OSPAR allocation for FY 2015. Colt stressed that what the BRWCT OSPAR monitoring allocation is used should be re-assessed by the BRWCT with guidance from the RI Environmental Monitoring Collaborative (RIEMC), as the monitoring allocation should not continue to be devoted to a single monitoring priority. There are 21 monitoring priorities that need help, and we should consider reallocating funds to other needs.

Walker asked if the RIEMC had identified which of its 21 monitoring priorities stem directly from statutory mandates. Kiernan replied that half to two-thirds of the RIEMC's monitoring priorities come from state or federal statutory mandates. Uva suggested developing a table indicating which monitoring priorities are required by statute. Kiernan stated that the RIEMC's directive is to create a comprehensive environmental monitoring strategy and hence the report sought to be comprehensive regarding Rhode Island's environmental monitoring needs.

Uva asked why the draft FY 2014 Work Plan does not prioritize re-establishing two of the BRWCT's standing committees: the Economic Monitoring Collaborative and the Public Advisory Committee. Colt acknowledge that no funds or time were specifically been allocated to these tasks, but that there is a \$10,000 line item for advisory committees in the FY14 budget that had yet to be fully committed. Colt stated he is not in a great position to start organizing an economic monitoring collaborative in FY 2014 given the time he must put into developing a new Science Advisory Committee for Narragansett Bay in partnership with the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program.

In terms of the public stakeholder engagement process, Colt felt that there is little interest among external stakeholders in establishing a BRWCT Public Advisory Committee. He pointed out that the key value of such a committee would be to increase public/private interest and engagement with the BRWCT. Colt stated that he could accomplish this goal through other means, such as personal meetings with key stakeholders, and that he welcomed additional suggestions on how to do so. He also noted that the NBEP

Management Committee is proposed to be expanded to a 24 members and that it may also provide a means to solicit public input and appreciation for BRWCT activities. Finally, as some its funded projects

begin to move forward, the BRWCT will engage in public communications efforts such as contacts with local media to highlight the value and accomplishments of these projects.

Uva replied that despite these efforts, it would still be a good idea to re-establish the Public Advisory Committee. He believes that currently the BRWCT functions as a “one-legged stool” without all the advisory committees up and running. He stated that BRWCT should be focusing on how to enhance RI’s natural environment and utilize these resources environment sustainably for the greatest overall economic benefit. Currently, the BRWCT is doing a great job of covering budget shortfalls and helping the BRWCT agencies fulfill their basic mandates, but it is not doing enough to get the word out about these accomplishments. For that, the BRWCT should invest in all of its advisory committees going and give them specific, coordinated charges. Uva said if Save the Bay, the Nature Conservancy, and other advocacy groups participate in a revived Public Advisory Committee, they could hold an annual press conference highlighting such issues as funding shortfalls for environmental monitoring, thus cultivating public awareness and support for key water resources management issues.

Uva noted too that Colt should not be trying to do everything on behalf of the BRWCT and that he needs to be able to rely on the advisory committees to fulfill the BRWCT mission. Colt said he would prefer to implement the BRWCT state law in its entirety and that would mean establishing all four advisory committees, but he has sought to be as responsive as possible to the priorities given to him by BRWCT agency leadership and the two RI Governors he has served under. That has meant some aspects of the BRWCT law are not being fully implemented. Rhodes asked if BRWCT funds could be used for to hire additional staff. Colt said they could, but at this time only contractually. In previous years he had inquired whether it would be possible to hire additional staff to carry out the work of the BRWCT and had been informed that it would not be possible, in part because being based at DEM means that any additional hire by the BRWCT would count against the DEM FTE cap.

Colt asked if any of the CT members had any further comments on the draft work plan and that if there were none asked for a motion to approve the BRWCT FY 2014 Work Plan, dated 9/25/13.

Such a motion was made by Uva and seconded by Kiernan, and passed unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.