

Narragansett Bay Estuary Program

2nd Quarter Status of FY 2010 Workplan Projects

Ecosystem Science & Monitoring

Ecosystem Indicators Development:

- Completed workshops/summary/draft indicator for impervious cover, beach closures, flow
- Final workshop on invasives scheduled for Dec. 15
- Ongoing work on measuring management response to IC, planning for Earth Day roll out of indicators, planning for next suite of indicators



EPA Biological Condition Gradient Pilot Project

- Continued participation in partnership project to develop a BCG pilot study using Greenwich Bay information and data as an initial test case approach to development of biological criteria for Narragansett Bay in coordination with the EPA AED. US EPA has contracted E. Shumchenia to write a pilot application of the BCG approach in collaboration with C. Pesch of AED. Deacutis participated in meetings and discussions during this period concerning report topic coverage and outline. A draft is expected by spring 2011. Deacutis will be involved in review of draft / recommendation for additions/changes.

Nutrient Criteria Development

- NBEP has continued to support RIDEM in development of nutrient criteria. Deacutis provided a draft Strategy document for numeric nutrient criteria to RIDEM in June 2010. NBEP helped organize the Rhode Island Aquatic Sciences Collaborative retreat (Oct. 27, 2010) for the RIBRWCT in collaboration with Ames Colt (CT) and Barry Costa-Pierce (RISG) and presented an overview of the Numerical Nutrient Criteria Strategy Development for R.I. Waters at the RIASC retreat. A breakout group of scientists discussed the materials, and a follow up to the retreat is being planned

Water Quality Monitoring & Assessment

- NBEP completed monthly seasonal dissolved oxygen field surveys; with Brown Univ. partnership, with some Bay Window funding support. D.O. surveys occurred on: June 8, July 8, July 21, Aug 5, Aug 19, Sept 2, and Sept 16. Oxygen maps are available on the Brown Insomniac web site. Summer 2010 was a very mild summer hypoxia-wise, with winds and low FW flow allowing much of the Bay to remain well mixed and oxygenated. Only the Providence River and western Greenwich bay experienced any significant hypoxia, and that was mainly short-lived events.

Bay Macroalgae Surveys

- Helicopter surveys were completed for early and mid summer 2010 for macroalgae distribution in the Providence & Seekonk Rivers and the western shore of Narragansett Bay. Surveys for August, Sept., and Oct. had to be cancelled due to grounding of the state helicopter for state budgetary reasons. This work included substantial ground-truthing for macroalgae identification and biomass estimates at ten sites. Distribution maps are available through the NBEP web site. As part of this effort, a URI grad student is assisting NBEP by developing an image analysis tool

that will calculate percent cover from digital photographs. The tool should be ready for use by spring 2011. Buzzards Bay NEP also is interested in also applying the tool in their estuary.

Benthic Microbial Community Surveys in Narragansett Bay

- As part of the effort to understand the effect of changes in nutrient loading in the Bay, improve ecological indicators and identify ecological research questions, NBEP worked with Dr Bethany Jenkins (URI) to examine changes in the benthic microbial community under hypoxic conditions. We completed five video surveys in summer 2010 with the assistance of CRMC to examine the microbial community. Salinity/Temp/DO for surface and bottom were measured and short videos of the bottom were made at each station, and both sediment and water samples were taken for DNA analyses.

Assisting RIDEM Permitting: Biological Impact Review of Providence Power Plant

- Deacutis met with S. Kaplan of RIDEM OWR on a biweekly basis to discuss issues associated with the biological impact review of the renewal of National Grid's Manchester St. Power Plant. NBEP provided advice and discussion of objectives during the development of the monitoring plan for the plant. Monitoring was completed in summer 2010, and NBEP will assist OWR in reviewing the implications of the monitoring data. The project is expected to continue over at least a 1 year period. RIDEM provides schedule for meetings.

Community & Watershed Projects

Coalition for Water Security

- Local adoption of water conservation – advocated for water conservation in North Kingstown. Attended Town Council meetings, testified, wrote letters supporting water use restrictions and 4th tier in water rates for high water users.
- State Water Resources Board development of water efficiency regulations. Reviewed draft regulations, helped prepare response, attended WRB meetings, advocated for adoption of more comprehensive regulations.

Coalition for Transportation Choices

- Proposals will be submitted to the RIF, vanBeuren Charitable Trust and Prospect Hill
- Coordinate weekly development of Constant Contact e-blasts on transportation issues
- Assist with planning for House hearing on transportation and the environment

Building grass-roots capacity

Identifying strategies for expanding grassroots organizational support through meetings with New Roots Providence, United Way, etc.

Blueways

- NBEP will work with the R.I. Blueways Alliance (RIBA) to obtain grant support from the Taunton River Watershed Alliance to complete water trail maps for 2 segments of the river. Oversee and manage the project through completion.
- Will work with RIBA board on maps for Bristol Harbor.

- Will work on organizing a workshop (October 27) bringing together outfitters, paddlers, state agencies, and RIBA to discuss the status of the water trail network and safety issues and identify priorities for action.

Land & Water Summit

- NBEP will initiate planning for March 26, 2010 Summit. This involves lining up workshops and presenters, planning for food and logistics, and contacting sponsors, etc.

Habitat Restoration/Technical Assistance

Lower Pawtuxet River Ecosystem Restoration

- NBEP continues to lead a community based process to restore the lower Pawtuxet River in order to provide spawning habitat for anadromous shad and herring; restore wetlands and water quality; and reduce property flooding. Working with stakeholders, the project team selected partial dam removal at Pawtuxet Falls as the preferred alternative for restoration. In 2010/2011, permit applications for the project were submitted to RIDEM, RICRMC, and ACOE, and the project team is now working with regulators to finalize the project and permits. The project team has continued to engage in extensive community and stakeholder outreach and to provide technical assistance to a local NGO, the Pawtuxet River Authority (PRA). We continue to oversee project administration, outreach and engineering, and will work with our engineering contractor to oversee construction of the project. We advocated for, and secured, a new grant of \$75,000 from NRCS for engineering through completion of the project, in addition to funding commitments for construction in place from NRCS and RIDEM. We are developing grant contracts for construction; pending regulatory approval, we expect to remove the dam and complete the project in late summer or early fall of 2011.

Construction of the Pawtuxet dam removal is expected in July-October 2011, pending receipt of final regulatory and legal approvals. As manager of the project, NBEP will be required to devote significant effort to assisting our partner Pawtuxet River Authority in this phase of the work, including administration of three major funding grants (\$675,000 total); completion of regulatory and legal processes; and development, award, administration and oversight of engineering and construction contracts. In addition, we will continue to coordinate an interdisciplinary project management team, and conduct much of the stakeholder, community and legislative outreach necessary to complete the work, in partnership with Save The Bay, Pawtuxet Village Association, the Pawtuxet River Authority Watershed Council, and others.

Roger Williams Park Ponds Restoration

- NBEP continues to provide technical assistance to City of Providence on a project to restore water quality and freshwater habitat, while improving urban environmental quality in and around a 100-acre ponds complex which is the centerpiece of Roger Williams Park, the City's largest and most important area of green space. In September 2010 the City was awarded \$424,000 to fund construction of stormwater BMPs and other water quality improvement measures at the Park. The City has committed more than \$300,000 in match toward the project, in cash and in-kind. NBEP will continue to coordinate the steering committee and provide technical assistance and guidance to the City of Providence. Early in 2011 we'll advertise and award several important contracts to move forward with implementation, including a large contract for design and engineering. Later in the year we'll support the City in

finalizing a master restoration plan for the Park Ponds, working with community groups and other stakeholders to ensure extensive public input. Following completion of the master plan, we'll work with the City to begin final design, permitting and other preparations for BMP construction, planned for 2012. We will also work closely with EPA Atlantic Ecology Division to develop and implement water quality and fish tissue sampling plans for the Ponds.

Restoration Policy Development

- In 2011 the NBEP is co-leading a renewed and increased focus on statewide habitat restoration planning, led by the R.I. Habitat Restoration Team under the coordination of CRMC. We will co-chair a working group on river restoration and intend to participate in other working groups on specific habitat types. The river restoration group will be defining restoration priorities, needs and strategies, and will be working with regulatory agencies to examine restoration permitting issues, with the goal of improving the regulatory environment for habitat restoration in Rhode Island.

Bay & Watershed Priority Setting

Integrated Plan Implementation Framework

- The NBEP organized a series of technical stakeholder workshops in October 2010 to solicit input on the review draft of the integrated plan. NBEP has just completed a second iteration of the draft plan based on plan development workgroup and stakeholder comments and is providing a copy of the draft to the MC at the December meeting. Based on comments, NBEP has reshaped the draft to be goal-based, added more detail to the sections, condensed goals and actions, reorganized the goals/strategies tables, and developed a new introduction and vision section. Once a final draft is complete, NBEP will create a shorter, reader-friendly public summary which will be used at a series of five regional public meetings to be held early in 2011.

Program Planning and Management

- NBEP has developed and will implement the newly revised staff performance evaluations; staff evaluations are scheduled to get underway in January.
- We have shifted responsibility for most tasks associated with the electronic Narragansett Bay Journal over to Lesley Lambert and Meg Kerr and have developed a new workplan and schedule for the NBJ.
- Budgets will be prepared based on the new template developed by the NBEP director and the Executive Committee
- Development of the FY2011 NBEP Workplan will be based on the priorities developed through the integrated plan process. Plan finalization should be taking place about the time that the NBEP needs to finalize its workplan submission and it will be possible to ensure that the workplan targets priorities identified in the plan.