



NBEP Quarterly Report

September 18, 2007

Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, URI Bay Campus, Box 27, Narragansett RI 02882

Report from the Director

After the all-too-short summer, the NBEP is preparing for the September 18 Management Committee meeting to be held at the Save The Bay Headquarters in Providence. The Committee will meet on NBEP business from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.; at that time, we have invited all of the participants in the NBEP strategic planning interview process to join us for a discussion session to review the results and give the program more specific guidance on how it can be most effective in working collaboratively toward common goals. The summary results from the interviews were distributed to all participants. I will be sharing our strategic planning experience with the other National Estuary Programs and EPA Headquarters staff at the Fall 2007 national program meeting in November.

The NBEP developed and submitted an application for a NOAA education grant early this year. Entitled *Home Waters*, the grant proposal was based on a collaborative concept that included dissemination of Bay and watershed status and trends information and the involvement of student "watershed ambassadors." While the application received favorable reviews, NOAA representatives told us that their grant funding had been significantly reduced for this fiscal year which prevented them from funding all the proposals that they wanted to. They were very interested in the project and plan to discuss funding for the project with the NBEP for the next grant cycle.

The NBEP, along with the other 27 National Estuary Programs, works with the nonprofit Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP) to promote implementation of the watershed ecosystem plans developed under the NEP (I have served as ANEP Chair over the last two years). ANEP recently secured a NOAA Community-Based Restoration Program Partnership grant as an initial step in a longer-term collaborative effort to restore habitat in the nation's estuaries. \$100,000 for grant projects will be used in a competitive grant program for projects in the 28 NEP watersheds. NOAA intends to increase the partnership funding for the grant program in coming years.

In July, I was one of 25 coastal program staff from across the U.S. invited by NOAA to participate in a two-day workshop in Washington, D.C., which focused on developing concepts for a reauthorized Coastal Zone Management Act. This was a follow up activity to a series of regional meetings (Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Honolulu, and Atlanta) with stakeholders that NOAA and the Coastal States Organization held earlier this year. The results of those meetings were used as resource material for the workshop. A final report is currently being prepared. For more information, see http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/czm/czma_vision.html.

This coming November, the Estuarine Research Federation will be meeting in Providence. The NBEP has been assisting with planning this international event; over 1400 participants are expected. For information on the conference, visit www.erf.org. NBEP staff are also participating in both national and local planning committees for the Restore America's Estuaries (www.estuaries.org) habitat restoration conference to be held in Providence in November 2008.

The next NBEP Management Committee Meeting will be held on December 18, 2007.

Program Management

Richard Ribb and Margherita Pryor

Update on Status and Trends	NBEP staff are working on the Status and Trends analysis and have revised dates for delivery of the final draft report to October 31, 2007. Drafts of the report will be posted on the program's web site: www.nbep.org . Review and comments are encouraged.
Revised NBEP Website	Bay Program staff have continued to work with contractor Wickford Web Works to develop a new program website which went on-line in September at www.nbep.org . The appearance and architecture of the new site are complete, and much, though not all, of the new content has been uploaded, including a complete archive of Bay Program and Bay Project publications. The site is a significant improvement on our old one and will greatly facilitate collaborative development of NBEP's Narragansett Bay Status & Trends report.
Economic Indicators for the Bay	As discussed at an earlier Management Committee meeting, a number of NEPs nation-wide have been working with Dr. Linwood Pendleton, Director of Economic Research, and Director of the Coastal Ocean Values Center at the Ocean Foundation, to develop an innovative suite of indicators that specifically test the influence of environmental factors (including environmental regulation) on coastal activities. Dr. Pendleton has expressed interest in using Narragansett Bay and its manageable bi-state watershed as a pilot for developing some of these indicators. An example of his studies can be found at: noep.mbari.org/Download/LPclimateChange.asp
EPA Targeted Watershed Grant	The NBEP was selected in 2003 to implement \$800,000 worth of watershed restoration projects in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Because of delays in awarding the grant, several of the original partners in Massachusetts were unable to proceed. Working with EPA, Massachusetts EOEEA on August 21 issued an RFR for substitute proposals targeted at restoring resources that affect the health of Narragansett Bay. Closing date for proposals was September 12; a panel will be reviewing proposals on September 20, with announcement of selections shortly thereafter.
Implementation Review	All 28 NEPs undergo an intensive periodic review of their success implementing their CCMPs. Metrics for these reviews are intended to focus the programs on actions that should lead to environmental improvements over the long term, and are key factors in demonstrating the value of continued funding for estuary programs. NBEP and EPA Region 1 are serving on a national workgroup to develop better metrics of success, especially for programs that may not have resources for extensive project grants or self-supported projects. NBEP is currently scheduled for review in 2009, and we hope the Management Committee will be involved in preparations and feedback for that process.

Science

Dr. Christopher Deacutis



Dr. Deacutis and our two interns (Linnae Rondeau and Lesley Lambert) have completed 5 dissolved oxygen surveys so far this summer. Four neap tide surveys were completed on 6/7/07, 6/26/07, 7/24/07, 8/14/07 as well as one spring tide survey on 8/24/07. Hypoxia was minimal in all surveys. This summer appears to be a good water quality year to contrast physical and biological conditions against those of last summer, when extensive and severe hypoxia occurred in July and August. Dr. Deacutis has also attended several NOAA Coastal Hypoxia Research Program meetings as a co-PI on this important research effort by a large number of local researchers from URI, Brown, U. Conn. and VIMS investigating and attempting to model hypoxia generation in Narragansett Bay. The DO surveys NBNEP is involved in provide an important part of the field data for this modeling project.

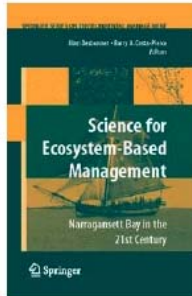
Rhode Island Aquatic Invasive
Species Management
Plan (Draft three)



Dr. Deacutis has continued providing review and comment on the Rhode Island State Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan being developed and coordinated by Kevin Cute of RICRMC. He has also become a contact point (along with Kevin and Dr. David Gregg of the RINHS) for any sightings of the Mitten crab, recently found in Nyack, NY on the Hudson River. He has interviewed for the Ch 10 "watershed report" on this topic in order to increase the awareness of the public concerning marine invasives in general, and in the mitten crab as one of the "most wanted" sightings now.

Dr. Deacutis also attended an August 23 meeting at U.Conn. Avery Point of the steering committee for the development of an eelgrass water quality standard under the Long Island Sound Study project (NEP).

Helicopter macroalgae surveys were completed on four dates: 5/14/07, 6/14/07, 7/13/07, and 8/28/07. Digital photography with lat:long info was obtained for all surveys. Our interns have provided ground truthing through shore intertidal visits and identification of dominant seaweeds present, with identification help from Dr. Carol Thornber of URI for difficult specimens. Linnae Rondeau has been analyzing photographs and has completed tables of density category data for macroalgae seen in the photos for all surveys but the August '07 set. We are looking for a way to have this data converted into GIS maps. We have a template from Paul Jordan of RIDEM, and we anticipate that this will be a straight forward task for someone with GIS expertise.



Seaweed surveys have found most green macroalgae are often the “hairy” species such as Chaetomorpha and Cladophora as well as other species along with common red seaweed species such as Agardhiella & Gracilaria growing extensively. We have not seen extensive Ulva beds this summer except on the eastern shore of the Providence River (Bullocks Cove area) and north of Conimicut Point in Warwick based on helicopter surveys. However, this may reflect the success of the RIDEM program to pick up Ulva and other seaweeds with their new beach-raking machine. Discussions with RIDEM (Jim Ball) indicate that they have removed larger amounts of what they identify as Ulva on the eastern shore of the Providence River and north of Conimicut Point this summer as compared with last summer. We have requested any pictures and details from RIDEM on amounts (truckloads) from the beach clean-ups.

The proofs for the RISEaGrant / *Springer Series In Environmental Management* book titled “Ecosystem-based Management: A Case Study of Narragansett Bay” were provided and reviewed by Dr. Deacutis in early August. He has a chapter on “Evidence of Ecological Impacts from Excess Nutrients in Upper Narragansett Bay”. Publication is expected late this fall/ early winter ‘07.

Watershed and Community Outreach

Meg Kerr



Coalition for Water Security

coalitionforwatersecurity.org

Aquidneck Land Trust
 Audubon Society of Rhode Island
 Clean Water Action
 Conservation Law Foundation
 Environment Rhode Island
 Grow Smart Rhode Island
 Narragansett Bay Estuary Program
 Narrow River Preservation
 Association
 RI Economic Policy Council
 RI Land Trust Council
 RI Natural History Survey
 RI Public Expenditures Council

Wrap up of 2007 Legislative Session: The CWS worked with House and Senate policy staff to craft legislative solutions to water management. Late in the 2007 legislative session, bills were introduced in both the RI Senate (S1098) and House (H6550) which addressed some CWS priorities. Neither bill passed, but there is momentum for a legislative package in 2008. The CWS will advocate for legislation that will protect our rivers and streams by establishing streamflow standards, create checks and balances that will ensure the permanent protection of watershed lands, and reduce demand for water, particularly in the summer months.



18 month work program: The CWS is formulating a 18 month workplan to achieve our goals for sustainable water use in Rhode Island. We will continue to work on streamflow standards and demand management through outreach to state agencies and with legislation. We will support this work with fact sheets describing rivers currently stressed by water use, information on strategies for reducing water demand such as once a week lawn watering, a public campaign with grassroots canvassing by Clean Water Action and Environment RI and regional forums targeted at local decision makers.


<p>Sierra Club Rhode Island Chapter Save The Bay The Nature Conservancy Trust for Public Land Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association</p>	<p>Funding: The CWS is funded by grants from the Rhode Island Foundation, Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust and Prince Charitable Trusts. The CWS grant funds help support NBEP's work.</p>
<p>Land and Water Partnership – Empowering RI's grassroots conservation organizations</p> 	<p>http://www.landandwaterpartnership.org/index.htm</p> <p>October 13 Workshop: Trail Planning and Design. Offered by NBEP, RI Land Trust Council and the National Park Service for watershed councils, land trusts, conservation commissions and others interested in creating trails on protected lands. Workshop will be held at the Audubon Powder Mill Ledges facility in Smithfield.</p> <p>March 15, 2008 – Land and Water Conservation Summit. The date and venue (URI Memorial Union) are set. Planning will begin shortly.</p> <p>Donor/Member services – we have selected the non-profit Salesforce as our software package. We are reviewing proposals from two vendors interested in working with us to develop a template system for our member organizations.</p> <p>Volunteer Management – we have posted volunteer management tools on our web site and will be hosting a workshop in September or October on volunteer management best practices.</p> <p>Funding: This work is supported by grants from the Rhode Island Foundation and Third Sector New England. Grant funds do not support staff time.</p>
<p>Rhode Island Blueways Alliance</p> 	<p>Creating a management structure for the Blueway project: In June, the partners who have been working on the Blueway project met and decided to begin forming an organization, the RI Blueways Alliance, to create a lasting management structure for the project. The Alliance has developed a draft workplan for the year, is negotiating with the Greenway Alliance of RI (GARI) as a possible fiscal agent and have agreed on weekly conference calls to keep the project moving forward. Members of the Blueways Alliance include representatives from outfitters, watershed organizations, RI Canoe and Kayak Association (RICKA), NRCS RC&D and DEM. A leadership team (Bruce Hooke, Terry Meyer, John Monroe, Meg Kerr) will move the work forward with the goal of moving the project to the Alliance by the end of 2008.</p> <p>National Park Service Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) – The Alliance has written a proposal requesting a year of technical assistance from RTCA. The proposal received support from RI's full federal delegation. Decisions will be announced in September for start up on October 1.</p> <p>ExploreRI.org: Phase 1 of the Blueway web site (funded by the RI Rivers Council) is scheduled for completion in September. We are focusing on data</p>

	<p>entry and hope to have an interesting cross section of river access sites available on line by the end of 2007.</p> <p>Publicity: The GARI Trail Mix and the NBEP Narragansett Bay Journal provided excellent coverage of the Blueway project. RI Monthly's August magazine had a small note about the project.</p> <p>Funding: RTCA provides technical support (John Monroe). We plan to approach the RI Foundation and selected businesses to support portions of our 2008 workplan.</p>
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Restoration and Communication

Tom Ardito

<p>Narragansett Bay Journal</p> 	<p>In August, Bay Program staff completed publication of the twelfth issue of the <i>Narragansett Bay Journal</i>; however distribution has been hampered by a problem with the U.S. Post Office regarding non-profit mailing rates. We believe we're now on track to rectify the problem. Bay Program staff met in early Sept. to discuss broad communications issues and agreed that current resources (staff and funding) can support only two issues of <i>NBJ</i> annually; in the future, therefore, we'll focus on putting out a Fall and Spring issue. We're developing a new communications strategy for NBEP, including revised budgets for <i>NBJ</i>, in order to continue to improve the scope and cost-effectiveness of NBEP's communication program.</p>
<p>Statewide and Regional Habitat Restoration Activities</p>	<p>Tom Ardito and Meg Kerr are both members of the Technical Advisory Committee for the R.I. Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration Trust Fund, a restoration grants program administered by RICRMC. We've participated in discussions resulting in revision and improvement of the grants application and evaluation procedures and will again evaluate grant applications. We're also organizing a meeting of the R.I. Habitat Restoration Team, which NBEP co-chairs, aimed at information management decisions—e.g., how best to manage web-based restoration project inventories, and how best to proceed with Bay-wide restoration planning and priority-setting.</p>
<p>Pawtuxet River</p> 	<p>Work continues to develop and select a preferred alternative for restoration of fish passage at Pawtuxet Falls. We are now reviewing an alternatives analysis developed by our contractor, Milone & McBroom, Inc., and expect to finalize that report this month. We have also been working with MMI to oversee development of "visualizations" of potential alternatives at the dam. We're planning a public meeting for the fall at which the alternatives and visualizations will be presented as a first step toward selecting a preferred alternative for restoration of Pawtuxet Falls that is broadly supported by Pawtuxet Village residents as well as Narragansett Bay stakeholders.</p>

<p>Town Pond</p> 	<p>After six years of planning, permitting, engineering and construction, the Town Pond restoration is nearly complete. The area was a coastal pond until 1950, when it was filled as a disposal site for dredged material, completely destroying its value as marine and estuarine habitat. NBEP has been closely involved in planning the project since its inception, and was instrumental in assembling the more than six million dollars in federal and non-federal funding necessary for its completion. More than 20 acres of fill have been excavated in order to recreate intertidal and subtidal wetland habitat for fish, shellfish, waterfowl and other coastal species, as well as public shoreline access for a variety of recreational uses. NBEP will participate in a press event (tentatively scheduled for September 21) to mark the opening of the restored tidal breachway, flooding Town Pond with salt water and reconnecting it to the estuarine environment of Mount Hope Bay for the first time in more than half a century. As construction activities wind down, the focus of NBEP's activities will shift toward developing a management plan for the area in collaboration with RIDEM, which owns and manages the site, and local stakeholders.</p>
<p>Blackstone River Restoration</p>	<p>We continue to stay in touch with ongoing efforts to restore fish passage along the lower Blackstone River, although this work has not required much of our time over the last quarter. As a result of Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) agreements which NBEP helped to develop, contractors hired by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service are beginning design and engineering for fish passage facilities on three of the four dams within the project area. We understand that R.I. DEM is investigating acquisition of the fourth in order to facilitate restoration—an idea first proposed by NBEP several years ago, when the hydroelectric facility there was initially removed from service.</p>