



NBEP Quarterly Report

December 18, 2007

Report from the Director

At the December 18 Management Committee meeting, the program will provide a short report that identifies specific workplan actions consistent with the results from these stakeholder interviews. We used that effort to refocus program operations and resource allocations based on the input we received. Committee direction at the December meeting will be incorporated in a final NBEP strategic plan that in turn will guide development of the FY08 NBEP workplan to be submitted to EPA by the end of March 2008.

NBEP Funding: In the last federal funding cycle, Washington operated under a Continuing Resolution (CR) which resulted in a 15% budget cut to each NEP, and FY07 funding per program of \$418xxx. For the FY2008 budget, Congress is currently operating again under a CR until later in December. Since both houses of Congress have passed versions of appropriations bills favorable to increased NEP funding, the NEPs could fare much better than last year. A best case scenario is acceptance of the House bill that directs that each NEP receive \$600,000; a worst case scenario is likely a small increase over last year's level. The final funding status will not be known until early January.

On November 1, 2007, the U.S. EPA Office of Water held an event in its Washington, D.C. headquarters to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the National Estuary Program and to recognize the successes of the NEPs. I attended as representative for the 28 NEPs. While in DC, I met with officials from the NOAA Community Based Restoration Program regarding the new NOAA/ Association of National Estuary Programs partnership grant. This grant program is providing funds that are being competed across the 28 NEPs to support habitat restoration projects that benefit NOAA trust resources (e.g., fisheries, salt marshes, sea grasses, etc.). NOAA has committed to providing funds annually for three years; the first year allocation was \$100,000 and is projected to increase in the next grant cycles. The NBEP and partners have submitted a proposal to help fund a coastal wetland restoration project in Somerset, Massachusetts, on a tributary of the Taunton River.

NBEP staff recently participated in a meeting convened by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse to discuss Senate legislation to create a cap and trade system for greenhouse gases that is intended to be a response to global warming. Senator Whitehouse was seeking local stakeholder input on the elements of the bill and informed the group of his effort to direct some of the revenue from the bill to implementing federal and state coastal program actions that help address climate change. The Senate bill was approved by the Senate Environment and Public Works committee on December 5 and will likely be voted on by the full Senate early in 2008.

In program news, NBEP Intern Linnae Rondeau has completed her internship and is off to new career opportunities. Linnae did excellent work for the program and her positive outlook made her a pleasure to have on board. Best of luck in the future, Linnae!



The NBEP staff wishes you all a wonderful and peaceful holiday season.

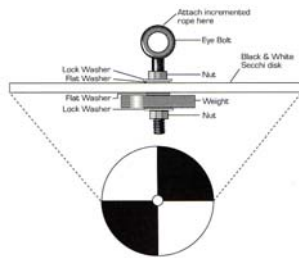
► Program Management

USEPA 20th Anniversary of National Estuary Program Event



NBEP Director Richard Ribb with EPA Administrator for Water Ben Grumbles (on left) and EPA Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds Chief Craig Hooks (on right) at the November 1, 2007, Washington D.C. event.

Status and Trends



NBEP staff have been working on developing a straw document version of the Bay and Watershed Status & Trends report. The S&T report will be a web-based effort that will save on printing costs, allow for continual updating as new data are developed, and make the report widely accessible. The NBEP will be providing draft material from the report to the NBEP Management Committee for comment and suggestions. Marisa Guarinello, an EPA Region 1 employee who has expertise in sediment toxics, has offered to help with the S&T report by addressing the sediment toxics issues for the marine waters.

ANEP/EPA National Estuary Program Fall 2007 Meeting



Directors and staff from the 28 NEPs convened Nov. 13-15 in San Juan, Puerto Rico for the Fall 2007 national meeting. The event was hosted by the local NEP, the San Juan Bay Estuary Partnership, which had arranged for representatives of Central and South American estuary programs to participate in the meeting and share lessons learned. Special technology transfer sessions were held to examine how different NEPs dealt with monitoring, habitat restoration, invasive species and other estuary management issues.

► Science

Summer Monitoring Surveys


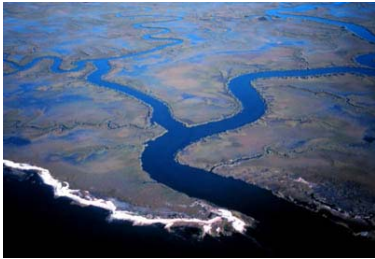




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NBEP staff completed 5 dissolved oxygen surveys this past summer. Hypoxia was minimal in Summer 2007 in all surveys. This past summer appears to have been a “good water quality” year, and will provide useful contrasting physical and biological conditions against those of last summer (2006), when extensive and severe hypoxia occurred in July and August.

Five helicopter macroalgae surveys were completed this past survey season. Digital photography was obtained and ground truthing was conducted through shore intertidal visits and identification of dominant seaweeds present, with identification help from URI's Dr. Carol Thornber. NBEP and EPA AED are using the data from the surveys to develop the GIS coverages.

► **Science** (cont.)

<p>Summer 2007 Water Quality in Narragansett Bay:</p> 	<p>The dissolved oxygen (DO) monitoring results for summer 2007 from both surveys and fixed sites show only very mild hypoxia this year except in the Seekonk River. A collaborative project with RIDEM and URI GSO to statistically characterize all low DO events that have been recorded through the URI / RIDEM / Bay Window fixed site monitoring platforms 1999-06 was undertaken this Fall. Results show that June freshwater flows strongly correlate with summers of severe hypoxia (e.g., 2006), while low flows in this period are associated with good summer oxygen levels (2007). Wind and tidal energies affect the breakup of hypoxic events, especially in the mid- Bay but sites in the Upper Bay and Providence River are more affected by freshwater flows than by these factors. Greenwich Bay exhibits the most severe hypoxic impacts, and does not track with the rest of the Bay.</p>
<p>Coastal Hypoxia Research Project</p> 	<p>NBEP's Chris Deacutis provided an update on the NBEP oxygen surveys in 2007 and participated in the Fall NOAA Coastal Hypoxia Research Project (CHRP) annual meeting. Participating researchers made presentations on the development of physical models for water transport in Narragansett Bay and development of a simple ecological model that links to this physical model. In a related dissolved oxygen talk, Dr. Deacutis presented a synthesis of recent pertinent water quality information and research at the RI CRMC public workshop on the Greenwich Bay Special Area Management Plan.</p>
<p>Toxics</p> 	<p>Eric Morgan, a recent M.S. graduate student working with URI's Dr. Rainer Lohmann, has been analyzing PCBs in fish in Rhode Island waters. The researchers are using passive polyethylene samplers to mimic tissue uptake. Passive samplers and fish from fish trawls were used to look at bioaccumulation of PCBs in fish. They have found that fish in Narragansett Bay tend to show a specific congener "marker" of PCBs that can be linked to the Taunton River as a source.</p>
 <p>ERF Conference Poster</p>	<p>The NBEP co-authored a poster for this Providence conference that summarized the data from water quality fixed monitoring sites, concentrating especially on the Bullock's Reach buoy site. The poster characterized typical hypoxic events in the Bay, and discussed the analysis to-date across sites that focused on using software that details specific violations to oxygen water quality criteria; this was a particular interest to RIDEM.</p>

► **Science** (cont.)

<p>Nutrients in Narragansett Bay</p> 	<p>There were several sessions relevant to Narragansett Bay nutrients and invasive species issues represented at ERF. Noted in several sessions was the fact that, at the global level, there appears to be an <i>increase</i> in the amount of algae growth that occurs per pound of nitrogen. This is being interpreted as suggesting that original targets to decrease nitrogen loads may not be low enough to return marine waters to adequate water quality levels.</p> <p>In light of these findings, the discussion concerning the response of the Bay to nitrogen loads based on data down-Bay is a critical issue that needs to be further investigated. After discussions with local scientists and managers, the NBEP is suggesting a collaborative workshop for managers and research scientists, convening both local and national level expertise to address this issue. Based on the anticipated availability of new research data on the Bay, a late Fall early-Winter 2008 time-frame for this workshop was discussed. The NBEP has offered to be a co-sponsor of this workshop. The workshop would help examine and clarify issues raised a Providence Journal newspaper article that some scientists have perceived as a misleading account of scientific consensus on the impacts of nutrients in the Bay. The workshop would provide a neutral forum to examine data and further explore this key issue.</p>
<p>NBEP contribution to RI Sea Grant ecosystem book</p>	<p>The NBEP has contributed a chapter on “Evidence of Ecological Impacts from Excess Nutrients in Upper Narragansett Bay” coming out in the RI Sea Grant / <i>Springer Series In Environmental Management</i> book titled “Ecosystem-based Management: A Case Study of Narragansett Bay”. The publication is now projected to be released in January 2008.</p>
<p>Bay Climate Change Issues in the Media</p>	<p>National Public Radio station WRNI interviewed NBEP Chief Scientist Dr. Chris Deacutis on the topic of climate change impacts on the Narragansett Bay ecosystem. He also provided comment to environmental reporter Beth Daley on a special report she published recently in the Boston Globe on this topic.</p>
<p>Bay Mapping</p> 	<p>The NBEP is a member of the Mapcoast steering committee member and partner on this URI - multi-agency bottom mapping effort, which is partially funded by NRCS, and includes the US EPA AED, USGS, URI, NBEP and others. Latest results of this collaborative project are found in the latest RISG publication 41 degrees North, also available on-line at: http://seagrant.qso.uri.edu/41N</p>

► Watershed & Community Outreach

Coalition for Water Security

Aquidneck Land Trust
 Audubon Society of RI
 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
 Sierra Club RI Chapter
 Save The Bay
 The Nature Conservancy
 Trust for Public Land
 Wood-Pawcatuck

<http://www.coalitionforwatersecurity.org/>

Funding: The Coalition recently received notice that the Prince Charitable Trust is funding CWS work for another year. We have proposals pending with Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust and the Rhode Island Foundation. The Environment Council of RI Education Fund is the fiscal agent to the CWS.

Work for 2008: The CWS will work with state agencies and the legislature to address the following top priorities:

Resource Protection. Development of streamflow standards. CWS will develop fact sheets describing areas of the state where streamflow impacts from water withdrawals is an issue. Identified areas include the Hunt and Chipuxet Rivers.

Manage Demand: The CWS has developed a portfolio of strategies to limit water use and provide incentives for demand management.

Land Conservation to Protect Water Supplies: The CWS will continue to work with the WRB to improve rules and policies that ensure that land protected by water suppliers is permanently protected.

Outreach: The CWS will be working with Action Media to develop a message that will resonate with the public (thanks to additional funding provided by Prince Charitable Trusts). We will host regional forums, bringing together local officials, legislators and grassroots organizations to discuss water management strategies. We will continue outreach to water suppliers and business leaders, arguing for water management as essential to the state's future economic development.

Land and Water Partnership – Empowering R.I.'s grassroots conservation organizations



John Monroe explains trail design at the October 13 workshop

<http://www.landandwaterpartnership.org/index.htm>

Funding: The L&WP has submitted a grant to Third Sector New England to expand its Infrastructure Collaborative initiative. The Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association is fiscal agent to the Collaborative.

Workshops/Conferences:

Two successful workshops have been completed during this quarter. On October 13, thirty people participated in a workshop on **Trail Planning and Design**. John Monroe with the National Park Service Rivers and Trails program was lead trainer with supporting presentations by Ted Clements (Aquidneck Land Trust). The excellent materials from this workshop are posted on the web in the Land and Water Partnership's Resource Library: <http://www.landandwaterpartnership.org/library.htm>.

On November 13, the Partnership hosted an evening workshop on **What your Land Trust Needs to Know About the IRS, RIDBR and other Regulators**. Land Trust and Watershed Councils were represented and this information will soon be posted on the web.

► **Watershed & Community Outreach (cont.)**

Land & Water Conservation Partnership (cont.)

March 15, 2008 – Land and Water Conservation Summit. The Summit is jointly sponsored by the RI Land Trust Council, the RI Association of Conservation Commissions and NBEP. Planning is underway.

Infrastructure Collaborative. Donor/Member services – we have hired a consultant to implement the non-profit Salesforce as our software package. We have contracted with Cause & Effect to provide consulting services to member groups as they implement these new programs. We continue to support the volunteer needs of grassroots organizations by collecting and posting volunteer management tools on our web site and publicizing volunteer opportunities.

Rhode Island Blueways Alliance



Funding: The Blueways Alliance received a mini-grant from the RI Foundation to support data entry into ExploreRI.org and development of a logo and identity package. The RINHS is fiscal agent for this request.

The Rhode Island Blueway Alliance has been selected for a final year of support from the **National Park Service Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)**. John Monroe is our RTCA mentor.

Tourism Packages: The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and Blackstone Valley outfitters have partnered on development of a tour package for the Blueway effort. On October 3, leaders of the Blueway project “tested” the package with a guided paddle from River Island Park in Worcester to Lonsdale. Other tour packages are under development for South County by Marie Fonseca with Kayak Today.

Logo and Signage: The Alliance is selecting a graphic artist to develop a logo and identify package for RI Blueways. We are also working with the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission on implementation of their West Side Blue Trail. We will use the signage developed for this project as a model for future Blueway signage.

Blueway Launch: We will launch the Blueway in spring 2008. We are planning PaddleRI, a series of paddling events on rivers and the bay as part of the launch. Other activities are under discussion.

Creating a management structure for the Blueway project: We are using a list serv, bi-weekly conference calls and quarterly meetings to engage a broader network in management of the project. We plan to incorporate the Blueways Alliance in early 2008.

► Restoration

Pawtuxet River Restoration



In November, NBEP chaired a meeting of the Pawtuxet River Project Management Team to review a recently completed draft alternatives analysis developed by Milone & McBroom, Inc., which was delivered well behind schedule. We have commented on the report and “visualizations” of potential alternatives at the dam; a final draft was delivered in late November. Also in November, Tom Ardito met with the Warwick Conservation Commission to discuss the project. We’ve scheduled a stakeholders meeting for December and a public meeting for January in order to continue moving toward a preferred alternative for restoration.

Blackstone River Restoration



NBEP’s advocacy and planning of fish passage restoration on the lower Blackstone River is beginning to pay off with real progress on the project; NBEP continues to provide technical assistance to grassroots project proponents. Engineering design is about 30% complete at three of the four dams on the lower Blackstone, with funding and technical assistance provided by NRCS/WHIP. RIDEM is pursuing acquisition and possible removal of a fourth dam on the river, taking advantage of an opportunity identified by the NBEP. On November 28 we co-chaired a meeting at Slater Mill attended by stakeholders and agencies from both Rhode Island and Massachusetts, as well as R.I. Congressional staff. The group agreed to form two sub-groups which, beginning in January, will focus on developing marketing materials and fundraising non-federal dollars which will be needed to match NRCS construction funds. NRCS is seeking to begin construction in 2008 although 2009 is more likely. The project will restore fish passage that was lost on the Blackstone beginning in 1719 with construction of the first dam at Pawtucket Falls (now Main Street Dam in Pawtucket, R.I.).

Somerset MA Marsh Restoration



The NBEP is working with partners on restoring a tidally restricted salt marsh in Somerset, Mass., on a tributary of the lower Taunton River. The marsh is bifurcated by an old road; for many years, the Town of Somerset has been flooding the upper portion for use as a skating rink in winter. To restore tidal hydrology, the Mass. Wetlands Restoration Program has developed a plan to enlarge a culvert connecting the upper and lower portions of the marsh with an estimated cost of nearly \$200,000. The NBEP, in partnership with the WRP and Save The Bay, developed an application for funding for the project, submitted to the Association of National Estuary Programs for funding consideration under its new partnership with NOAA Restoration Center. A decision on the award will be made in early 2008.

Town Pond Project



The physical restoration of Town Pond is complete, and the tides of Mount Hope Bay are again flooding the pond after a hiatus of 60 years. We’re now looking at ancillary restoration that may be achievable at the site—for example, in October, NBEP met with Roger Williams University to explore the possibility of shellfish restoration in the former pond.

► **Communications**

Narragansett Bay Journal



After reviewing different options to reduce the cost of publishing the NBJ, the NBEP is working with our printer and the Post Office in order to bring down costs of publication, in order to maintain a broad distribution of the *Narragansett Bay Journal*. In November we met with the U.S. Post Office regarding non-profit mailing rates and believe we are on track to finalize a format for the publication that will minimize printing and mailing costs.



The NBEP website (www.nbep.org) has undergone major revisions and additions and the program plans on continually updating and adding value to the site. It will also serve as home for the web-based Bay & Watershed Status and Trends report. Draft elements of the S&T report will be posted on the site for review and comment.

Marketing Environmental Restoration



The NBEP is engaged in various workgroups and discussions regarding the message development and marketing of environmental protection and restoration. Initiatives discussing or planning message development and delivery include partners for fish passage/river restoration; the NRCS conservation partnership; RIDOT/URI Cooperative Extension stormwater information project; and the Coalition for Water Security. NBEP involvement will focus on coordination of messages and pooling of resources for message delivery.



NBEP staff attended the October 18 World Monitoring Day celebration on the Blackstone River where the Blackstone River Coalition was presented with an EPA grant and students from the Blackstone Academy Charter School demonstrated monitoring techniques (*see photo to left*).

Chinese Mitten Crab Alert, June 1 2007

Please Report Sightings of this Crab

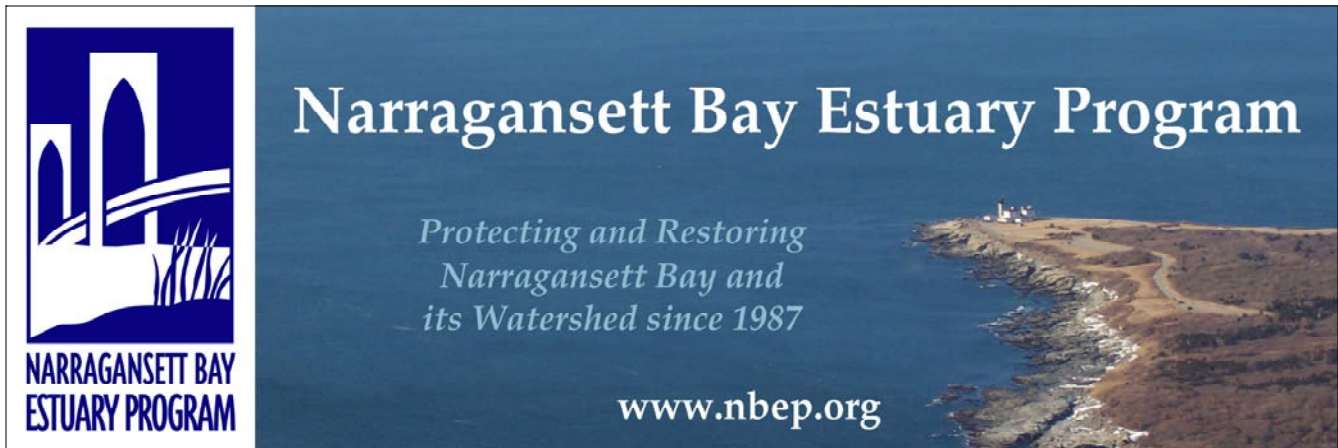


The NBEP has coordinated an invasive species outreach alert with RI CRMC; this effort was reported on by WJAR-TV for a "Watershed Report" segment on invasive species, with a special notice of the potential for the Chinese mitten crab (*see photo on left*) to show up in Narragansett Bay since it has recently been detected in Delaware and the Hudson River. Coordinated divers and collected invasive species examples for on-camera view. Dr. Deacutis is a contact point (along with Kevin and Dr. David Gregg of the RINHS) for any sightings of the Chinese Mitten crab.

► Communications (cont.)

New NBEP Banner for Outreach Events

With several outreach events on the horizon, NBEP staffer Lesley Lambert developed a new 6'x2' program banner (see below) and is working on a program display that will highlight NBEP projects.



► Massachusetts News

Targeted Watershed Grant News



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 project partners in Massachusetts were unable to proceed. Working with EPA, Massachusetts EOE on August 21 issued an RFR for substitute proposals targeted at restoring resources that affect the health of Narragansett Bay. Two new projects were selected through the RFR: the Blackstone River Coalition received \$50,000 for continued water quality monitoring on the river and targeted stormwater outreach, focusing on low impact development and technical assistance to communities; and the Taunton River Watershed Alliance received \$86,708 for a variety of activities to enhance coordination and capacity within the watershed, and to monitor successful restoration of fish passage on Taunton tributaries. All projects are expected to be completed by the end of 2009.

NBEP Management Committee Meeting

The last NBEP MC meeting of 2007 will take place on December 18, 2007, at 2:00 p.m. at the offices of Save The Bay in Providence, RI. In 2008, the meeting schedule will change from the third Tuesday of the months of March, June, September and December to the third Wednesday of those

The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program is one of the 28 programs in the National Estuary Program (NEP). The NEP is funded under Section 320 of the Clean Water Act and is administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. For more information on the NEP, visit www.nationalestuarines.org and www.epa.gov/owow/estuaries. All NBEP meetings are open to the public. To contact the NBEP, call (401) 874-6233 or visit www.nbep.org