



NARRAGANSETT BAY
ESTUARY PROGRAM

NBEP Quarterly Report December 2008

Report from the Director

In mid-November, representatives of the 28 National Estuary Programs (NEPs) and EPA staff met in New York City for the Fall NEP national meeting. Meeting topics included ecosystem-based management, urban habitat restoration, low impact development/ stormwater management and new online communications methods. Outside presenters included representatives of the Packard Foundation, UNH Stormwater Center, EPA's Narragansett Lab and NOAA's National Estuarine Research Reserve Program. PowerPoint presentations and materials are available at (<http://anep-outreach.wikispaces.com>).

We were also joined by Ben Webster, head staffer to the U.S. House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure – Subcommittee on Water Resources & Environment, who led a discussion on reauthorization of the NEP legislation, perhaps within a new legislative umbrella which would include larger aquatic ecosystem programs such as Gulf of Mexico and Puget Sound. The Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP) had provided Mr. Webster with a list of estuary implementation projects totaling over \$72 million which may be included in Congress' proposed economic stimulus package next year.



We also discussed the 2008 NEP Implementation Review process. NBEP will be one of the programs in the 2009 review and staff are currently developing the review materials for submission to EPA HQ in February, 2009. EPA HQ staff will visit in late spring or early summer to view NBEP projects and interact with Management Committee members and other key stakeholders. The NBEP will also be participating in a Coastal Zone 2009 session on coastal ecosystem program evaluation this coming July in Boston, MA.

Development of our Status & Trends forum, planned for April 2009, is underway. We have been incorporating responses to comments on the S&T and have created a forum planning wiki at (<http://narrabayforum.wikispaces.com>). The site is intended to be used by all partners and participants in forum planning. Document drafts, links, graphics, planning group notes, announcements and comments can all be posted and the wiki format will allow those interested to check online to view progress on forum development.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency maintains an ocean-going research vessel, the OSV Bold (see www.epa.gov/bold), for use in U.S. coastal waters. The NBEP and the University of R.I., Graduate School of Oceanography just developed and submitted a request to EPA to bring the Bold to R.I. Sound for work supporting the development of the Ocean Special Area Management Plan (SAMP). Proposed tasks include seafloor mapping and water quality sampling. URI's Office of Marine Programs has also expressed interest in placing a teacher from their Teacher-At-Sea program on board to work with and assist scientists. Teachers who participate in this program then use their on board experiences to explain scientific concepts to their students.

-Richard Ribb, Director

Science

Chris Deacutis

Dissolved Oxygen Surveys

NBEP, collaborating with Brown University, Save the Bay, URI and DEM, completed seven surveys of the upper half of Narragansett Bay for dissolved oxygen for summer 2008. Results indicated exhibited poor oxygen levels especially in the bottom waters of the Seekonk and Providence Rivers and western Greenwich Bay, but no severe events enveloped large areas of the Bay when compared with summer 2006.

Dissolved Oxygen Paper

The journal *Estuaries and Coasts* accepted our manuscript on Narragansett Bay hypoxic events by Daniel L. Codiga, Heather E. Stoffel, Christopher F. Deacutis, Susan Kiernan, and Candace A. Oviatt. We are now responding to reviewers comments and revising the manuscript.

Macroalgae Surveys

The NBEP collaborated with Dr. Giancarlo Cicchetti of EPA to complete four helicopter surveys of macroalgae distribution on the western shore of Narragansett Bay. Each survey generates hundreds of photos requiring interpretation and density characterization, a significant task. Intern Jessica Morgan had completed analysis of the first 2 surveys before leaving in early October to become Low Impact Development coordinator for the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. A new photo analyst intern, Nikki Heidt, is on board with NOAA "Bay Window" funds to complete analyses of the remaining surveys as well as GIS maps for all 2008 data. A preliminary map and poster of the technique was presented at the New England Estuarine Research Society meeting in October 2008.

Power Plant Permit Coordination

RIDEM has requested that NBEP coordinate and review biological impacts associated with reissuing the permit for the Manchester Street Power Station. We are reviewing a 600 page document, working with RIDEM engineers, and will participate in a new science advisory committee on the power station.

Scientific Meetings

NBEP participated in the "Biological Condition Gradient" Workshop at the EPA lab in Narragansett. About 25 scientists from federal agencies and other NEPs attended. The goal was to consider how to apply the "Biological Condition Gradient" concept, successfully used in freshwater streams, to estuarine habitats. There was agreement that this approach will have utility in developing estuarine biological indices that will allow more effective assessments of ecological condition.

Workshop Planning

NBEP continues to work with Dr. Warren Prell of Brown University on development of a Nutrient Cycling / Nitrogen Isotope Workshop to be held in January. Dr. Prell has contacted potential speakers, and coordinated researchers at Brown University, who have responded positively. Brown is providing the majority of funding for the workshop.

Indicator Development for Gulf of Maine

NBEP continues to support the development of ecosystem indicators for the Gulf of Maine, working with the Gulf of Main Council on the Marine Environment. More information on this regional effort is available at <http://www.gulfofmaine.org/ESIPPlanning>.

Watershed and Community Outreach

Meg Kerr

Coalition for Water Security

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

The Coalition recently received funding from the Rhode Island Foundation and Prince Charitable Trusts. NBEP receives a portion of these to cover staff time dedicated to this work.

The CWS co-hosted the Water Forum in Washington County on November 12 with the Washington County Regional Planning Council. The forum highlighted water management issues from the local perspective, looking at supply and demand in an area of the state served primarily by groundwater resources.

The Coalition is considering legislation for 2009 and will meet with the Providence Water Supply Board on December 1 to explore shared priorities.

Rhode Island Land & Water Partnership

<http://www.landandwaterpartnership.org>

Donor/Member services: The Salesforce template developed by the Land and Water Partnership is being adopted by a number of local organizations, and is under consideration by others.

Volunteer management: The LWP continues to gather volunteer job descriptions for grassroots organizations, post them on the LWP web site and share them with Save the Bay's volunteer coordinator. We are organizing a workshop on volunteer management for the Land & Water Summit.

Workshops/Conferences

- **October 7, 2008 – Membership software for Watershed Councils and Land Trusts** – workshop attracted approximately 20 attendees to learn about Donor Perfect and Salesforce.
- **March 21, 2009 – Land and Water Conservation Summit.** Planning is well under way for the 6th annual Land & Water Summit jointly sponsored by the RI Land Trust Council, the RI Association of Conservation Commissions and NBEP. Tom Wessels (author of "Reading the Forested Landscape") will be the keynote. About half of the 30 workshops have been organized and letters have gone out requesting vendors and ads.
- **Spring 2009** – we are planning a workshop on trail development in partnership with the National Park Service Rivers and Trails program.

Rhode Island Blueways Alliance

- **Funding:** The Blueways Alliance recently received funding from REI to create and celebrate the Roger Williams Paddle Trail.
- **RI Blueways Alliance:** The Alliance incorporated with the State of RI in January 2008. We adopted bylaws and have been building our board. We plan to begin building membership in early 2009.
- **ExploreRI.org:** Over 200 access sites are now available on ExploreRI.org. The website is being expanded up the Blackstone and Taunton Rivers.
- **Taunton River Mapping:** NBEP is working with the Taunton River Watershed Alliance on updating and expanding their collection of paddling maps.
- **Partnering with CRMC:** The Blueways Alliance met with CRMC to identify where access for paddling boats can be improved. We plan to begin in the Providence area. We will also provide CRMC with guidance on designing paddle boat access in urban areas and are researching models from other regions.
- **Partnering with RIDEM:** The Blueways Alliance is working with RIDEM and the Governor's Office on events for Governor's Bay Day (July 2009) and the Great Outdoors Pursuit.

- **Tourism Roundtable, November 18, 2008:** Working with the Economic Development Corporation, the Alliance hosted a roundtable with RI's outfitters and representatives from the tourism sector to discuss future projects and collaboration.

Supporting Watershed Organizations

Aquidneck Island Watershed Council: NBEP is assisting Friends of Eastons Pond, who are creating a new watershed council on Aquidneck Island. In August, NBEP organized a panel to discuss the challenges and benefits of a watershed organization. In December, we will present at a roundtable in Newport to discuss watershed protection and water supply on Aquidneck Island.

In November we participated in a workshop on municipal strategies for public stormwater involvement.

Restoration

Tom Ardito and Lesley Lambert

Pawtuxet River

NBEP continues to facilitate the lower Pawtuxet River Restoration Project, a multi-partner effort with the goal of removing a portion of Pawtuxet Falls Dam in Warwick and Cranston, R.I. This fall we facilitated selection of a contractor, EA Engineering of Warwick, R.I., to assist with final permitting and design, with the goal of completing the restoration next year. Meanwhile NBEP has continued fundraising for the project, submitting requests to RIDEM's Watershed Restoration Bond Fund as well as CRMC's Habitat Trust Fund Grants Program.

Technical Support

NBEP continues to provide technical support for watershed groups and others interested in pursuing restoration projects. We are helping Buckeye Brook Coalition develop a restoration plan for controlling Phragmites in the Mill Cove (Warwick) area. In November, NBEP participated in a fundraising event for the Blackstone River Fisheries Restoration Project in Pawtucket. We have met with the managers of Mount Hope Farm in Bristol regarding a potential restoration project there.

RAE Conference

NBEP staff served on the RAE national program committee which developed the technical sessions, maintained a program exhibit throughout the conference, and gave two technical presentations: one on the Pawtuxet River restoration, another on the Town Pond restoration.



Communication

Tom Ardito and Lesley Lambert

Narragansett Bay Journal

In September, NBEP published *Narragansett Bay Journal* #13. We printed and distributed nearly 200,000 copies using direct mail as well as inserts in regional weeklies throughout Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts. We are continuing to build our email list, and intend to publish the next several issues electronically. We are now in the process of acquiring software and developing layout and content for the electronic edition of *NBJ*.

Status and Trends Website

The website has been updated with a new interface which is more user-friendly. It is now easier to navigate through the sections, search for relevant information, print, email and share each page, and post comments directly to specific pages. We encourage everyone to visit the site and provide comments, suggestions and links to important information that may be missing in this document.

Since publicizing the site in the *Narragansett Bay Journal*, unique site visits has increased by more than 300% (326 unique visits in November compared to 75 unique visits in August). We hope that the interactive use of the site will provide a sense of ownership of the Status and Trends among stakeholders while reducing our carbon footprint. We have also updated nbep.org to provide PDFs of individual Status and Trends chapters for those who wish to print out the document.

