



NBEP Quarterly Report

June 19, 2007

Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, PO Box 27, Narragansett RI 02882

Report from the Director

The NBEP has been benefiting from the guidance and direction provided by the NBEP Management Committee which was re-constituted late last year. MC members have been very engaged in the program's work and operations, providing some excellent ideas on workplan projects and strategic partnerships and directions. MC members are also part of the NBEP initiative to develop a collaborative watershed ecosystem status & trends report that will inform the public and policy makers and serve the varied needs of Bay stakeholders.

Meg Kerr, who joined the NBEP staff in November 2006, has helped the program make stronger connections with local watershed councils and other groups. She represents the NBEP in various collaborative initiatives and has brought into the NBEP workplan some valuable projects that she began working on while Chair of the R.I. Rivers Council. RWU environmental science graduate Lesley Lambert has been working on various grant-funded projects and has been a great addition to staff. We have also recently added a DEM-funded intern, Linnae Rondeau, to assist with Bay monitoring work.


The program has initiated a strategic planning project, using the services of the consulting firm, Cause & Effect, Inc. This work is intended to help the NBEP see how it is perceived, what its strengths and areas of concentration should be, who are the strategic partners the program should be engaging, and what operational strategies will improve the program. Currently, the consultant and staff are scheduling interviews with key informants as the initial phase of this project. The MC will be kept informed of how the work is progressing.


The NBEP Narragansett Bay and Watershed Status & Trends Project has gotten off to a good start with the May 31 S&T meeting held at Save The Bay's offices in Providence. A diverse group of Bay stakeholders gathered to discuss both the need to better understand the Bay ecosystem and the strategies that can help us achieve that goal. Breakout groups worked to identify key data needed, note major issues and trends, and provide suggestions on needed actions. A meeting summary has been developed and provided to those who attended as well as a larger group of stakeholders, with an invitation for all interested parties to participate.

NBEP Management Committee Schedule 2007: The remaining MC meetings in calendar year 2007 will take place on September 18 and December 18.

Program Management



Richard Ribb and Margherita Pryor

National Estuary Program Funding	<p>Cut in FY2007 NBEP funding: Strong Congressional support resulted in a significant boost to the NEP in 2001; since then, the National Estuary Program has been receiving approximately \$500,000 per year for each of the 28 NEPs. In FY2007, Congress did not complete spending bills, allowing the federal government to operate for the 2007 fiscal year at the same level as FY2006 funding. However, any special appropriations language directing how agency funds were to be spent (such as the \$500K per NEP) were removed from consideration, allowing EPA to spend the funds without those restrictions. This resulted in an initial 22% cut to the NEPs (to \$388K each); however, Congressional supporters contacted EPA and managed to reduce the cut to 15% (\$418K per NEP). In terms of the NBEP FY2007 program budget, this cut results in very tight funding for personnel and little additional funding for specific projects. Much of the proposed FY2007 workplan projects predominantly involve staff time and will not be as affected by the cut; however, other program projects, such as monitoring, outreach and grants to partners will be limited or cut.</p>
20th Anniversary of the National Estuary Program 	<p>Capitol Hill Event: 2007 marks the 20th anniversary of the NEP, created under the Clean Water Act Amendments of 1987. As part of the recognition of that milestone, the Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP) held a celebration luncheon in the Rayburn House Office Building. R.I. Senators Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse attended and spoke of the accomplishments of the NBEP and the national network of which it is a part, EPA Administrator Steve Johnson also spoke and the Blackstone River Watershed Council's Frank Geary gave an inspiring talk about the work to restore fisheries on the Blackstone River being done in partnership with the NBEP and other groups (see photo of Frank with Craig Hooks, Chief of EPA' Office of Wetlands, Oceans & Watersheds). NBEP Director Richard Ribb is the current ANEP Chair and was involved in producing this event. For more on ANEP, see www.nationalestuaries.org.</p>
NBEP FY2007 Workplan	<p>The NBEP has completed a draft FY2007 workplan that covers the time period September 2007 to August 2008. It builds upon ongoing themes and incorporates specific directions identified by the NBEP Management Committee. The Management Committee will review/approve the workplan at its June 2007 meeting. The NBEP will then submit the workplan to EPA for review; this year's allocation from EPA totals \$418,000.</p>
NBEP Strategic Planning	<p>The NBEP received a \$5,000 EPA grant to do strategic planning for the program. We have hired consulting firm Cause & Effect, Inc. to work with us to interview key informants to develop information that will guide program organizational development. The consultant and staff are currently conducting interviews with key informants to learn how the program is perceived, what is the most effective role for the program, and what strategic partnerships will most benefit the work of the NBEP.</p>

Blackstone River Nutrient Limits	<p>The Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District (UBWPAD) serves Worcester and portions of Auburn, West Boylston, Holden, Rutland, Oxford and Millbury. As documented in various studies, UBWPAD is the dominant source of nitrogen loadings to the Blackstone River, representing approximately 60 to 75 % of the nitrogen load discharged to the Blackstone River from municipal wastewater treatment facilities. In addition, the Blackstone River discharges into the headwaters of the Seekonk River, where the greatest impairments in the Narragansett Bay Basin have been measured. In response, EPA issued a draft permit for UBWPAD this March that requires a seasonal reduction of nitrogen to no more than 5.0 mg/l. NBEP commented at the public hearing on the proposed permit that was held in Worcester on May 9.</p>
Targeted Watershed Grant 	<p>EPA has been working with Massachusetts EOE, Mass Riverways, and Save the Bay to develop projects in Rehoboth (Shad Factory Pond) and Taunton (Mill River) to substitute for those initially funded under the 2004 grant. Both projects involve construction of fish passage structures, and are expected to be completed next year. The Rhode Island side of the grant included development of eelgrass mariculture system, construction of BMPs on the Narrow River, and fish passage on the Pawtuxet and Kickemuit Rivers.</p>

Science

Dr. Christopher Deacutis

 <p>Chinese Mitten Crab</p> 	<p>Invasive Species Monitoring and Outreach: The NBEP has received new information on a number of marine invasive threats and has attended conferences to learn about management responses in other countries. We have been coordinating with Save the Bay on invasive monitoring and reviewed CRMC's RI Aquatic Invasive Species management Plan.</p> <p>The Chinese mitten crab is an emerging species of concern. Specimens have been found in the Delaware River, and on June 3, near the Tappan Zee bridge in the Hudson River. We are coordinating with CRMC (lead agency on marine invasives) on a public notice and hotline contact system for sightings in RI. The first sightings would likely be (blue) crabbers since this species moves up to brackish and eventually fresh waters. Greg Ruiz of the Smithsonian is coordinating an Atlantic coast hotline for this species that we will also use. We are also working with CRMC and the Coastal Institute's Chip Young on a Channel 10 watershed report that would focus on marine invasives and highlight the mitten crab (probable mid-summer airing). For more info, see the mitten crab alert at Save The Bay's website http://www.savebay.org/habitat_mittencrabs.asp</p> <p>Dissolved Oxygen Surveys: We have prepared field equipment for summer surveys of dissolved oxygen, including a quality assurance check</p>
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with Brown and URI at the MERL facility at URI. We began monthly neap tide surveys on 6/7/07 with Brown University covering about 75 stations. The next survey is scheduled for June 26.

Macroalgae Surveys: The NBEP began monthly helicopter macroalgae surveys on May 14, 2007. The next helicopter survey is scheduled for June 14, 2007. Ground truthing the data is slow due to limited time (pictures need to be reviewed and areas listed for ground truthing). However, we have just hired intern Linnae Rondeau (through RIDEM Office of Water Resources), and she is now being trained by Lesley Lambert on the helicopter photography analysis techniques.

Watershed and Community Outreach


Meg Kerr



<p>For information on the Coalition and to view coalition products, go to:</p> <p>http://www.coalitionforwatersecurity.org/</p>	<p>Coalition for Water Security: NBEP is a member of the CWS, a group of seventeen economic and environmental organizations formed in 2005 to address urgent water supply and use issues in Rhode Island, and to serve as the foundation for collaboration in solving environmental problems in the future. During the past year and a half, the CWS has succeeded in putting the issue of freshwater management on the policy agenda. Today, the need for water management solutions is a top priority for both the Governor and the Legislature. Governor Carcieri talked about water management in his State of the State address, the Senate convened joint hearings by the Senate Committee on Government Oversight and the Senate Committee on Environment and Agriculture and recently introduced a major bill to restructure the way RI manages fresh waters (S1089.) The House has formed the Special House Commission to study water use and distribution in Rhode Island and is expected to introduce legislation before the end of the session.</p>
<p>For information on the Land & Water Partnership's projects go to:</p> <p>http://www.landandwaterpartnership.org/index.htm</p>	<p>Land and Water Partnership: NBEP, the RI Land Trust Council and watershed councils and land trusts work together on several projects:</p> <p><u>Infrastructure Collaborative:</u> Developing shared back-office support services for conservation nonprofits in RI and the Narragansett Bay watershed. Together with the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association, Barrington Land Conservation Trust and The Westerly Land Trust we are exploring donor/member services and volunteer management. During the past quarter, we have researched and tested the non-profit Salesforce software product for tracking donors and members. We are also sharing information on volunteer projects with a list of over 100 potential volunteers through an e-newsletter and have developed and posted volunteer management information and tools on our web site.</p> <p><u>Capacity Workshops for Grassroots Conservation Organizations:</u> We are planning a stewardship series for fall07 and will start with training on designing and building trails. John Monroe with the National Park Service</p>

	<p>Rivers and Trails program is assisting us.</p> <p><u>Land and Water Summit:</u> We are working through the evaluations for the March 24, 2007 Summit and have already reserved the Memorial Union for March 15, 2008.</p>
	<p>Blueway: NBEP is working with the National Park Service River and Trails program and the RI Rivers Council on developing a statewide system of river trails. During the past quarter, we collaborated with the Greenway Alliance of RI (GARI) on their spring Trail Mix newsletter that is almost entirely devoted to Blueways. The Rivers Council is completing work on the construction of the web site for the Blueway system (http://exploreri.org/) and we will be helping to identify and train volunteers to collect data on river access sites. The Blueway project hosted a planning charrette on April 28 at Slater Mill, which included a mini-boat show hosted by local outfitters.</p> <p>←Preparing for the September 2007 Long Trail Paddle</p>

Restoration and Communication

Tom Ardito

<p>Pawtuxet River Restoration</p> 	<p>NBEP is leading a partnership among federal, state and non-governmental organizations to restore fish passage and ecosystem functions to the lower Pawtuxet River in Warwick and Cranston, R.I., focusing initially on Pawtuxet Falls in Pawtuxet Village. Earlier this year we developed and finalized a contract with Milone & McBroom, Inc. (MMI) of Cheshire, CT to complete hydrologic modeling and develop landscape renderings in order to present potential alternatives to the public and select a preferred alternative for the site. At present I am overseeing completion of that contract and coordinating the project management team; we last met with the consultant in May and will meet again in late June. Funding for the work is from the EPA Targeted Watershed Grant which we developed several years ago as well as R.I. Habitat Restoration Trust Fund and Corporate Wetlands Program, each of which we have been closely involved in.</p>
<p>Upper Pawcatuck River Restoration</p>	<p>NBEP and partners have been instrumental in developing and advising a project to restore fish passage and river ecosystem functions to the Upper Pawcatuck River in Richmond, Charlestown and South Kingstown, R.I. Last year we undertook site surveys and helped develop scope and funding for a feasibility study that was recently completed by MMI on contract to the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Assn. The project is targeting two dam removals and one fish ladder and, when completed, will constitute one of the more significant restoration accomplishments to date.</p>
<p>Blackstone River Restoration</p>	<p>In 2001, the NBEP began working with Blackstone River stakeholders including hydroelectric dam owners to develop the first collaborative fisheries restoration plan for the river. Passage over the first 4 dams on the</p>

	<p>river was designated as Phase 1 of the plan and has been the focus of the restoration planning to date. The NBEP continues to play a lead role in efforts to restore fish passage on the lower Blackstone River. Over the past several months, we have worked closely with NRCS and have met with hydroelectric operators and other stakeholders to promote WHIP agreements for restoration; these are now in place. We provide technical assistance to advocates of the project and have developed an agreement to provide staff support to the Blackstone River Watershed Council through Lesley Lambert.</p>
<p>Ten Mile River Restoration</p>	<p>NBEP has led efforts to restore fish passage to the Ten Mile River in East Providence, working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), Save The Bay, DEM and other partners. At present, the Corps is completing engineering drawings; our efforts have focused on advising final design decisions and in assisting the state in efforts to secure non-federal funding.</p>
<p>Kickemuit River Restoration</p> 	<p>An NBEP-secured EPA Targeted Watershed Initiative grant partially funded construction of a fish ladder on the Kickemuit Reservoir in Warren, R.I., which was completed this spring. In May, Tom Ardito spoke at a dedication ceremony for the ladder.</p>
<p>Town Pond Restoration</p> 	<p>NBEP led development of a restoration plan for Town Pond in Portsmouth, R.I., a historic salt pond, which was filled in the 1950's as a disposal site for dredged material from Mount Hope Bay. We helped secure much of the funding for the project and participated in project design, engineering, community relations, and permitting. At present, the project is under construction and nearing completion. ACOE and DEM are overseeing construction but NBEP will continue to coordinate with the community.</p>
<p>Restoration program and policy development</p>	<p>Tom Ardito has been working with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Region 5 headquarters managers who are seeking to develop a new federal fisheries restoration program in Rhode Island. In May, he organized a site visit of the Wood/Pawcatuck River system and will organize a site visit for congressional staff this month.</p>
<p>Narragansett Bay Journal</p>	<p>We have been working on a Summer issue of the Narragansett Bay Journal, which will be published in July.</p>
<p>NBEP Web site</p>	<p>In May, we selected a contractor to assist in developing a new program website for NBEP (www.nbep.org). The site features a more contemporary look and expanded information on the program, including project updates, workplans and other programmatic information, as well as information on the Bay and watershed. It will include a subscription link and archives of the <i>Narragansett Bay Journal</i>. The site will include a comprehensive list of downloadable NBEP publications, now available as PDF files.</p>