

WATER ALLOCATION PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT JOINT ADVOCACY/FUNDING SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Summary of Meeting Proceedings

Friday, October 18, 2002

Members Present:

Ken Payne
Robert Mendoza
Brian Riggs
Guy Lefebvre

Members Absent:

Sandra Whitehouse

Water Resources Board Staff:

Kathy Crawley
Connie McCreavy

MISSION

Members agreed the primary charge of the committee is to identify the critical water issues and suggest ways to pay for them. There was consensus that the group should begin to quantify the costs of all program components beginning first with registration.

DISCUSSION

Will water allocation program initiatives be part of the state budget or funded separately? As a starting point for the discussion, Ms. McCreavy distributed a list of potential sources/vehicles for funding as developed by a subcommittee of the Connecticut water allocation effort. Members discussed the need to relate public benefit to public fees and were sensitive to the current tax burden on Rhode Island residents. They discussed the need for information, data systems and collection noting that these types of activities are more nebulous and can be difficult to fund. The public expectation is that new public expenditures will relate directly to improved services.

In the short-term, legislative strategies might focus on addressing immediate concerns such as drought, conflict among water users, and/or improving governmental efficiencies, which provide legislative leadership opportunities. More importantly, the committee needs to figure out which agenda items are critical and how to pay for them. If the public perceives it as important, they will be willing to pay. Water protection has the right dynamics to be very important. The group continued to discuss what costs would be associated with the program. Will there be a need to expand the stream gaging program? Once committees define the elements of the program, they can establish costs and prioritize what those costs should be perhaps in two-phases. In the short-term, there may be a need to ask the General Assembly for funding in the beginning of next year for identified programs. In the longer term, there may be a different strategy.

In closing, there was agreement that recruiting more members is a priority. They agreed that their first charge could be to quantify the costs of the components of a registration effort. Joint grant writing and advocacy were carried forward to the next meeting as agenda items.