

**WATER ALLOCATION PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
STREAMFLOW STANDARDS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING**

MINUTES OF MEETING

November 19, 2002

Present: Alicia Good, Jim Marvel, Jim Campbell, Steve Donohue, Harold Ward, Eugene Pepper, Katherine Fisher, Ralph Abele, Christine Lipsky, Kathy Crawley, Rich Blodgett, Al Bettencourt, Katherine Wallace Brown, Elizabeth Scott, Carlene Newman

Handouts:

by DEM: 2A Review of Instream Flow Assessment Methodologies – PowerPoint presentation
2 Establishing a Streamflow Standard for Rhode Island – PowerPoint presentation
2 Ecological responses to alterations of components of flow – table
2 Proposed Rhode Island Instream Flow Standard – table and graph

by WRB: 2 RIWWA Flow Allocation Policy Position
2 Regulated Riparianism Model Code - part of chapter 1
2 CT Water Planning Council Water Resources Management Committee Report of Subcommittee A(Water Allocation) Issues 3,4 and 6 – page 10
2 CT Technical Subcommittee B of the Water Planning Council – Issue 7
2 USGS Gaging Stations and minimum streamflows in the Pawcatuck River Basin, RI – table and associated percent exceedance

1. Introductions:

Ms. Good initiated the meeting at 1:00 PM. by welcoming all present and beginning introductions. All present introduced themselves. Ms Good asked those present to let her know if there was anyone they thought should be added to the subcommittee. She then explained DEM's flow standards in existing regulations, specifically the Water Quality Regulations and the Freshwater Wetlands Regulations, are very general narrative standards. The Director has challenged the OWR to better define the standard in the regulations. The OWR has merged the Director's challenge with the Water Resources Board's Water Allocation Program Development efforts.

2. Define Purpose and Objectives of the Streamflow Standards Subcommittee:

Ms. Good started the discussion with a suggestion from DEM as to the goal of the subcommittee as follows:

To develop and implement a flow standard that allows for optimum use and encourages sound management practices while being protective of a healthy aquatic ecosystem

There were discussions on the purpose and objectives covering a range of perspectives. Mr. Donohue stated that he thought that basin specific flow standards were necessary and that the subcommittee's goal ought to be to find the money to support the necessary research. Concern was voiced that it may be very difficult to secure the necessary funds and to apply a "one size fits all"

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standard in the interim. Some were concerned that such an interim standard would be overly protective of the resource and negatively impact those businesses dependent upon water. It was decided that Ralph Abele would give a presentation on how other New England states are addressing the flow standard issue. The Subcommittee agreed to re-visit the question at a later meeting.

3. Brief Overview of Standard Setting Methodologies:

Ms. Scott gave a brief PowerPoint presentation of some of the different methodologies used throughout the US to determine instream flow standards. A copy of the presentation and handout were distributed. After the presentation discussion centered on the fact that the different methodologies produce instream flow values that vary when applied to the same riverine system.

4. Proposed Instream Flow Standard for RI –presentation and discussion

Ms. Scott gave a brief PowerPoint presentation on DEM's effort, to date, to develop an instream flow standard for RI. A copy of the presentation and handout were distributed. Comments and questions regarding the Proposed Instream Flow methodology are summarized below:

- A. Apply proposed standard to the Blackstone and Pawcatuck watersheds and express flows as percent exceedance.
- B. Explain selection of RI gages i.e. what is meant by "flow healthy" streams and how was status determined?
- C. Physiographic regions appear crude. What is the geology? Can it be applied on a watershed basis? Provide a copy of the cite.
- D. How was average stratified drift calculated?
- E. Provide additional information on 4B3 and 4B2 flow. Depict curves and monthly statistics, including percent exceedance, for both.

Following the presentations, discussion centered on how the standard is currently applied and how any future standard would be applied. Ms. Good explained that because the existing standard is a narrative statement it has been applied project by project depending upon the amount of information available and the conditions present. The proposed revision to the existing narrative standard is not intended to be immediately applied to existing users. However, it will be useful to give new withdrawal applicants better direction and for planning purposes, specifically the WRB's allocation program development. The proposed standard is considered a "prescriptive standard" which will allow for more site-specific evaluations. One concern voiced was how any new standard would be applied during below normal streamflow conditions. Ms Scott explained that she and others present attended a symposium at the Coastal Institute where a presentation was given on water management programs in Texas. Of importance to this discussion is how Texas ratchets down the required instream flows as the water availability decreases. Mr. Abele explained that some of the other NE states are building water optimization

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into their standards. Mr. Marvel expressed his concern that modeling is imperfect and site-specific studies are expensive and often inconclusive. Mr. Blodgett and Mr. Donohue both voiced questions on whether the standard was too focused on “fish” and fish habitats. They proposed that the committee look at Rhode Island uses and needs including agriculture and water supply. There was discussion of cycles of natural stress and recovery and their role in determining a standard as well as a desire to find out more about 4B2 flow. It was acknowledged that the methodologies are intended to be protective of the aquatic ecosystem consistent with existing laws and regulations and that other subcommittees will be addressing water allocation and priority uses. It was suggested that further discussion on how the flow standard would be applied was necessary.

6. Agenda items for upcoming meetings:

- A. Ralph Abele will give a presentation of how other NE states are addressing the instream flow standard.
- B. DEM will provide additional information in response to questions raised regarding the proposed Instream Flow Standard presented today.
- C. Discussion on how a standard will be applied.

7. Next meeting:

The next meeting was set for Tuesday, December 10, 2002 at 9:30A.M. DEM will develop an agenda and send out notice of the next meeting.

8. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:00p.m.

Note: For more information on Water Allocation or to view the handouts, visit <http://www.seagrant.gso.uri.edu/scc/wrb/index.html>