

**Governor's Narragansett Bay and
Watershed Planning Commission**

Economic Development Panel Report

March 3, 2004

Executive Summary

Membership

Michael McMahon, RIEDC – Panel Chair	Geoff Grout, RIEDC
David Farmer, URI GSO	Charles Kingdon, Brown University
Keith Stokes, Newport County Chamber	Jeanne Boyle, City of East Providence
Donald Eversley, Providence Economic Develop.	Curt Spaulding, Save the Bay
Jeff Willis, CRMC	David DePetrillo, RIEDC
Ken Kubic, RIMTA	

Progress

The panel convened to discuss its' purpose and set Short-term Charges. The Panel limited consideration of Short-term Charges to those that can provide an environmentally compatible high value add economic development utilization of the resources of the bay.

The Panel identified four Short-term Charges to pursue:

1. *Coastal Revitalization.* This Charge calls for outlining specific goals for the redevelopment of selected waterfront parcels in Providence, East Providence, the West Side of Aquidneck Island, and Quonset. Commercial and industrial waterfront is a valuable, yet a limited commodity in Narragansett Bay. There exists an opportunity to redefine the highest and best use of these shore-side assets.
2. *Marine Bio-Sciences Research Park.* Specifically, the Panel will outline a plan to develop a marine bio-sciences research and business facility on Narragansett Bay to stimulate the commercialization of marine biopharma and aquaculture related science and technology.
3. *Marine Trades.* The Panel recognized the importance of the marine trades on the State's economy and the environmental vitality of the Bay. The Panel will develop a plan to increase the level of marine trades' activity significantly within 4 years.
4. *Marine Tourism.* The Panel will outline a plan to implement the "Jewels of the Bay". The first aspect of this program features an in-Bay ferry system that connects various embarkation and disembarkation points. The second component of the "Jewels of the Bay" features an ecotourism program.

Economic Development Panel Report

Membership

The Economic Development Panel is comprised of the following individuals:

Michael McMahon, RIEDC – Panel Chair
David Farmer, URI GSO
Keith Stokes, Newport County Chamber of Commerce
Donald Eversley, Providence Economic Development Partnership, Inc.
Jeff Willis, CRMC
Ken Kubic, RIMTA
Geoff Grout, RIEDC
Charles Kingdon, Brown University
Jeanne Boyle, City of East Providence
Curt Spaulding, Save the Bay
David DePetrillo, RIEDC

Charge

The Economic Development Panel’s purpose is to “Define strategies for fostering environmentally sound economic development opportunities relating to the Bay and its watershed”.

Analysis

Panel members were selected for the diversity of their experiences and the skills that each brought to the Panel. In order to bring members to some common ground, reports and documents pertaining to past economic development initiatives and data analyses of the Bay were distributed for members to review. A listing of the documents is contained in the Appendix.

The panel convened to discuss its’ purpose and set Short-term Charges. The Panel limited consideration of Short-term Charges to those that can provide a maximum economic development impact while at the same time being compatible with the goals and objectives of the other panels.

The first Short-term Charge developed was *Coastal Revitalization*. This Charge calls for outlining specific goals for the redevelopment of waterfront parcels in Providence, East Providence, the West Side of Aquidneck Island, and Quonset. Commercial and industrial waterfront is a valuable, yet a limited commodity along Narragansett Bay. There exists an opportunity to redefine the highest and best use of these shore-side assets.

The Providence and East Providence waterfronts are changing from solely industrial uses to various mixed-use developments. Both communities have promulgated their visions for the future. Additionally, the relocation of Interstate 195 will reshape the waterfront landscape within the next 10 years. The Panel feels that both communities’ waterfront, the ‘Top of the Bay’, should be viewed as one redevelopment initiative. The “Top of the Bay” concept recognizes the need to continue industrial activities already operating, which are vital to our regional economy (namely fuel oil storage and distribution, marine repair, and public wastewater treatment), while stimulating the knowledge-based sector of the economy to locate and grow in proximity to the educational institutions and research expertise that supports these endeavors.

The West Side of Aquidneck Island component of the charge looks to optimize the redevelopment of available, both now and in the future, land. Tantamount to this redevelopment is recognizing that the competing demands, which include but are not limited to the marine trades and defense-related industries, are vital to the state's economy. The Navy continuously reviews its land holdings and assesses if the property is needed to meet its current and future mission requirements. Occasionally, the Navy identifies surplus property. The Panel believes it is incumbent on the state to be proactive and ensure well-thought redevelopment actions take place, which provide the greatest long-term economic return to the state.

Redevelopment of Quonset Davisville pertains to implementation of the Master Plan and educating the public on the economic benefits associated with support of the upcoming bond referendum.

The second Short-term Charge is to develop a *Marine Bio-Sciences Research Park*. Specifically, the Panel will outline a plan to develop a marine biosciences research and business facility on Narragansett Bay to stimulate the commercialization of marine biopharma and aquaculture related science and technology. The facility is designed to provide to marine bioscience researchers, aquaculture entrepreneurs and established companies a fully permitted, environmentally sensitive turnkey facility. The facility provides state-of-the art aquatic animal lifecycle development, marine life laboratories, diagnostics and evaluation capabilities with pricing models that make "outsourcing" the facility requirements a sensible economic decision for ideas and research that are at one of three stages: basic science, applied research, proof-of-concept.

The next Charge adopted centered on the *Marine Trades*. The Panel recognized the importance of the Marine Trades on the State's economy and the environmental vitality of the Bay. The Panel identified its' charge to be to outline a plan to increase the level of marine trades activity significantly within 4 years.

The final charge pertains to *Marine Tourism*. The Panel will outline a plan to implement the "Jewels of the Bay". The first aspect of this program is comprised of an in-Bay ferry system that connects various embarkation and disembarkation points. The second component of the "Jewels of the Bay" features an ecotourism program. The ecotourism program will utilize the Bay Island Parks as well other distinct locations that facilitate ecotourism attractions and activities that will attract both residents and tourists alike.

Recommendations

The Charges presented and discussed were broken into two groups: 1st Tier and 2nd Tier with the 1st Tier having the highest probability for economic success and the 2nd Tier being the remainder that still provides a maximum benefit for the investment required.

The Economic Development Panel recommends vigorously pursuing *Coastal Revitalization* as a 1st Tier Charge. The Panel views this Charge as having the highest probability for long-term success and overall economic benefit to the Narragansett Bay. The Economic Development Corporation, in conjunction with complimentary efforts being undertaken by other organizations represented on the Economic Development Panel, will continue to work with the communities comprising the 'Top of the Bay', the West Side of Aquidneck Island, and Quonset to identify, attract and site entities that advance the objectives of the respective redevelopment plans.

The remaining Short-term Charges were grouped into the 2nd Tier insomuch as they are all important to pursue, but no one is more important than the other is. A local consortium is investigating the *Marine Bio-Sciences Research Park* concept. The Economic Development Panel recommends continuing the work of the Consortium and positioning the state to advance the project if deemed financially feasible.

The *Marine Trades* element of the Panel's work focused on undertaking a concerted marketing effort to promote Rhode Island's boat building capability to the industry, highlighting the state's tax structure relative to boats. The RIEDC will work with the Rhode Island Marine Trades Association to identify targets of opportunity to get the maximum exposure and commit limited resources to promote the industry. The Panel did not look at the impact of the fisheries and aquaculture industries when it considered actions to support the Marine Trades because of the overlap with the work of other panels. Recommendations from the Fisheries and Aquaculture Panel that have been promulgated through their report to the Commission will be considered as the Economic Development Panel continues with its work.

Finally, *Marine Tourism* activities will be pursued in a coordinated approach that considers infrastructure, transportation links and destinations within the Bay and its watersheds. The panel awaits the findings and recommendations of the Public Access and Recreation Panel's report on the developing a Bay Islands Park transportation system. Utilizing the aforementioned transportation system as a component of a network that traverses the Bay, the Panel will work to identify, develop, and promote the tourism products in the medium and long term needed for sustainability.

Appendix

Ciminero, G.L. 2002. *New England Economic Prospects & RI's Ebbing Bay-Related Economy*. A presentation to: The Propeller Club of Narragansett Bay.

Colgan, C.S., and Kite-Powell, H. 2001. *The Ocean Economy of Rhode Island*. Prepared for the Rhode Island House Policy Office.

Colt, A.B., Tyrrell, T., and Lee, V. 2000. *Marine Recreation and Tourism in Narragansett Bay: Critical Values and Concerns*, Narragansett Bay Summit 2000, White Paper, Final Draft

Ninigret Partners. 2004. *Marine BioScience Research and Technology Park- February, 2004*. Preliminary Draft.

Pacheco, A.I., and Tyrrell, T.J. 2003. *The Economic Value of Narragansett Bay; A Review of Economic Studies*.

Rhode Island Senate Policy Office. 2002. *The Marine Cluster; An Investment Agenda for Rhode Island's Marine Related Economy*. Draft. (Payne and Goddard).