

## Nutrient and Bacteria Pollution Panel

Thomas Brueckner, NBC  
Russ Chateaufneuf, RI DEM  
Barry Costa-Pierce, RI Sea Grant  
Chris Deacutis, NBEP  
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Cynthia Giles, MA DEP  
Art Gold, URI  
Steve Hamburg, Brown  
Ernest Julian, RI DOH  
Ken Kubic, RIMTA

Virginia Lee, CRC  
Angelo Liberti, RI DEM  
Richard Pastore, RP Eng.  
Don Pryor (Chair), Brown  
Cathleen Wigand, EPA

### Panel Charges

*Short-term Charges:* By March 2004, as part of the Commission's Phase I Strategic Plan, develop an initial nutrient and bacteria reduction strategy, addressing all major sources, that identifies the initial steps necessary to meet the following long-term goals:

- By 2010, reopen 25 percent of areas now closed to swimming
- By 2010, reduce the number and frequency of beach closures by 50 percent
- By 2010, reduce the number of days shellfish areas are closed by 50 percent, and reopen 2,000 acres
- By 2015, restore Greenwich Bay and the Blackstone, Woonasquatucket, [and Wood-Pawcatuck] Rivers to fishable and swimmable condition
- By 2020, restore the Seekonk, Moshassuck, Providence, and Pawtuxet Rivers, Upper Bay, and Mount Hope Bay to fishable and swimmable condition

### NUTRIENT POLLUTION—Recommendations

- Provide Best Practicable Treatment to remove 40–50 percent of nitrogen from RI Waste Water Treatment Facilities (WWTFs) that discharge to the Upper Bay or its tributaries; Complete planned upgrades at MA WWTFs in watershed and conduct analyses on need for additional reductions
- Complete sewerage work in Warwick, East Greenwich, and Warren; Mandate tie-ins
- Improve stormwater management—Implement infiltration measures and other techniques that have proven more effective than end-of-pipe treatment
- Reduce atmospheric deposition
- Reduce nutrient flux from septic systems—Require denitrification in watersheds where septic-derived nitrogen is a major water quality impairment; maintain septic systems; preserve and restore riparian buffers
- Improve public understanding of nutrient pollution and good practices—Clean up after pets; manage fertilizer and manure properly
- Monitor changes in loads and impacts

### BACTERIA POLLUTION—Recommendations

- Complete CSO projects (Fall River, NBC, Worcester, Newport) and assess effectiveness
- Complete sewerage work in Warwick, East Greenwich, and Warren; Mandate tie-ins
- Strengthen beach licensing—require beaches to eliminate food sources for waterfowl
- Improve stormwater management—implement municipal and state stormwater management plans; implement measures prioritized in TMDLs for Greenwich Bay, the Palmer, Barrington, and Narrow Rivers, and Green Hill Pond, and plans to be done for Blackstone, Woonasquatucket, and Kickamuit
- Maintain septic systems—phase out high-risk cesspools; establish municipal onsite management programs
- Encourage “no discharge” by boaters
- Investigate and eliminate sources at beach areas—Scarborough Beach, Bristol Town Beach, and Easton's Beach
- Complete and implement restoration plans for the Blackstone River, Woonasquatucket River, Tidal Pawcatuck and Little Narragansett Bay, the Seekonk, Moshassuck, and Providence Rivers, and Mount Hope Bay

## Habitat and Resource Panel

### Panel Membership:

Laura Ernst, ESS Group, Inc., Chair  
Tom Ardito, NBEP  
Chris Powell, RIDEM  
Tom Halavik, USFWS  
Wenley Ferguson, STB  
Julie Lundgren, TNC  
Andy Lipsky, NRCS

Megan Higgins, RI CRMC  
Fred Presley, RIDEM  
Phil Edwards, RIDEM  
Hunt Durey, MACZM  
Jim Turek, NOAA  
Chris Hatfield, USACE

### Panel Charges:

- By 2008, restore 100 acres of coastal wetlands, plus an additional 100 acres by 2015
- By 2008, restore 400 acres of anadromous fish habitat, plus an additional 1,140 acres by 2015
- By 2008, protect 100 acres of eelgrass habitat and restore 50 acres, restore an additional 100 acres by 2015
- By 2008, restore 25 miles of riparian buffer, plus an additional 50 miles by 2015; by 2008, restore 100 acres of coastal buffer, plus an additional 250 acres by 2015
- By 2010, protect an additional 5,000 acres of sensitive coastal and riparian resource areas, including wetlands
- By 2010, protect and restore those areas around the Bay identified as critical fish habitats.

### Key Recommendations:

- Establish a Habitat Restoration Program with dedicated staff at RIDEM and CRMC, which will allow for enhanced statewide planning, coordination, and support of restoration projects
- Fund CRMC Coastal and Estuary Habitat Restoration Trust Fund established by the legislature in 2002, which will allow the state to leverage over \$1 million of available matching federal funds
- Use 2004 bond measure for additional capital funding for restoration in the amount of \$2 million, which will allow the state to better meet the above long-term restoration goals and provide critical non-federal match
- Establish a state status and trends for coastal habitats program, which will allow the state and other entities to assess habitat changes, impacts, and protection/restoration progress over time, and to effectively direct funding programs addressing habitat protection and restoration
- Update coast-wide wetland and seagrass mapping, which will allow improved restoration and conservation planning and enhanced wetland enforcement
- Improve rivers protection regulations, which will benefit riverine vegetated buffers, coastal water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat
- Improve management of dams for fish passage, which will increase river herring populations
- Fund coastal and riparian buffer restoration site identification projects, which is a crucial first step in restoring riverine habitats, improving riverine and coastal water quality, and is a requirement for federal funding
- Develop incentives for private property owners to participate in habitat restoration projects
- Assist and encourage communities to adopt and implement conservation development, which will protect sensitive habitats
- Fund additional Greenspace Protection projects, which will identify and map critical areas for protection.

### Recommended Short-term Actions: Key Projects

- Salt Marsh Restoration: Town Pond-Portsmouth, Allin's Cove-Barrington, Walker's Farm-Barrington, and Gooseneck Cove-Newport
- Anadromous Fish Restoration: Ten Mile River, Pawtuxet River, Woonasquatucket River, Kickamuit River, and Wood-Pawcatuck River
- Seagrass Restoration: Narragansett Bay and Salt Ponds
- Sensitive Coastal and Riparian Resource Protection: Fund Greenspace Protection studies, support ongoing prioritization efforts, and land acquisition
- Riparian and Coastal Buffer Restoration: Fund riparian restoration and wetland site identification plan on Blackstone River
- Critical Fish Habitats: Fund the development and implementation of a critical fish habitat identification and mapping program

## Fisheries and Aquaculture Panel

**Members:** Dave Bengtson (Chair), Dave Alves, Dave Borden, Priscilla Brooks, Kathy Castro, Al Conti, Ron Gagnon, Art Ganz, Mark Gibson, Ken Ketchum, Mike Marchetti, Mike McGiveney, Steve Medeiros, Bob Rheault, Tim Scott, Bill Silkes, John Torgan

**Short-term Charges:** By March 2004, as part of the Commission's Phase I Strategic Plan, develop a report on priority needs for the State's fishing and aquaculture industries. The report should address water quality, monitoring, and habitat (e.g., fish passage) issues that relate directly to the health of the stocks, as well as other issues deemed important to the panel. Particular attention should be given to the establishment of a formalized Cooperative Fisheries Research Program with participation by state agencies, the fishing industry, and academic institutions.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Reduce the nutrient and bacteria inputs to the Bay, so that the commercial shellfishing and aquaculture industries will have more of the Bay open for harvesting or culturing of their products.
2. Establish a first-class monitoring system for both environmental parameters and living resources in Rhode Island waters. This will allow the state to determine whether environmental quality is actually having a detrimental effect on important fish populations like winter flounder, as well as indicate whether the clean-up efforts of the Bay are having the desired effect.
3. Investigate the use of increased shellfish production and harvest, through some combination of public and private aquaculture, to reduce nutrient levels in the Bay. This could reduce the cost to taxpayers for nutrient reduction by allowing the shellfish to filter the waters of the Bay.
4. Calculate the current economic value due to fishing and aquaculture activities in the state and project increased economic value if the Bay is cleaned up. This could help to convince the public and legislators that a clear economic impact will be obtained by the clean-up effort.
5. Preserve the working waterfront for commercial fishers and aquaculturists, as well as shoreline access for recreational fishers. This will allow us to have affordable dock space and seafood processing capacity to handle the increased shellfish and finfish harvests that will be appearing, and will enable continuation of economically important recreational fishing activity.
6. Continue the cooperation and dialogue that can lead to increased aquaculture production in the state, so that Rhode Island can benefit economically from this fast-growing industry.
7. Increase support for natural resource management of recreationally and commercially harvested species of finfish, shellfish and crustaceans. This will allow the state to better manage the populations of living organisms in Rhode Island waters, so that both residents and tourists can continue to enjoy catching and eating the products for which Rhode Island is so well known.
8. Establish the Cooperative Fisheries Research Program with a signed memorandum of understanding by the end of March. This will increase cooperation in research among industry, government and academia, increasing both efficiency and quality of the research.

## **Monitoring, Assessment, Data Management, and Environmental Response Panel**

**Members:** Peter August (Chair) - URI, James Boyd - URI/CI, Ernest Julian - RIDOH, Dave Burnett – RIDOH, Candace Oviatt - URI, Ted Smayda - URI, John King - URI, Charles LaBash - URI EDC, Norman Rubinstein - EPA, Linda Green - URI, Sue Kiernan - RIDEM, Lisa Gould - RINHS, Tom Collins - RI CIO, Christopher Deacutis - NBEP, Roger Greene - RIDEM/NOAA, Michael Mulhare - RIDEM, Terry Gray - RIDEM, Tom Uva - NBC, John Torgan - STB, Harold Ward - Brown, Jon Witman - Brown, Chris D'Ovidio - CLF, Warren Angell - DEM, and John Stachelhaus - RIGIS / Statewide Planning

After two full panel meetings, numerous sub-panel meetings, and voluminous electronic discussion, the Monitoring, Assessment, Data Management, and Environmental Response Panel has determined that the state has made significant progress in developing monitoring and assessment programs to meet specific legal mandates, resource management requirements, or scientific pursuits. Some of these programs have been systematically gathering high-quality data and disseminating important information for some time; examples include nutrient monitoring by the Narragansett Bay Commission, beach monitoring by the RI Department of Health, water quality monitoring by the URI Watershed Watch program, and fisheries monitoring by RI Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and the URI Graduate School of Oceanography. The DEM is currently completing the design for a comprehensive freshwater monitoring program for Rhode Island. Although there are many monitoring initiatives in the Bay and watersheds, they are disconnected, under funded, and do not complement each other. In sum, they provide an incomplete assessment of the environmental condition of the Bay and watersheds. Furthermore, the data that are collected are frequently not analyzed, and the resulting information not made available to decisionmakers, resource managers, and citizens. There is currently no mechanism in Rhode Island to develop a coordinated, efficient, and effective monitoring network that unifies the work of state and federal agencies, and ensures that the information collected is readily available to decisionmakers.

**Charge 1:** *Establish one or more Strategic Assessment Teams to identify and assess, in a proactive way, conditions that can lead to such Bay and watershed problems as large-scale fish kills and beach closures.*

**Recommendations:**

- Through Executive Order establish a Bay Assessment and Response Team (BART).
- Identify scientific and technical personnel and agency resources available to assist with BART. This task is underway.

**Charge 2 and 3:** *Determine what would constitute the optimal data management system for the Bay and watershed, to be implemented by January 2005. And, in coordination with DEM's efforts to establish a Comprehensive Statewide Monitoring Strategy for Rhode Island, develop a framework for a Bay and watershed-wide water quality and biological monitoring program.*

**Recommendations:**

- Immediately form a Rhode Island Monitoring Council (RIMC) that will:
  1. Develop a comprehensive monitoring plan for the Bay and watersheds that integrates existing activities and fills in the gaps with a proposal for new monitoring, and
  2. Develop an integrated and reliable system of data consolidation, synthesis, documentation, and dissemination to citizens, scientists, resource managers, and decision-makers.
- The Governor's Commission Monitoring Panel will serve as the basis for the RIMC. If initiated immediately, the RIMC will provide the Commission a budget for a comprehensive monitoring and data system for the Bay and watersheds by October 2004 and a comprehensive monitoring plan by the end of 2004. The panel requires 1 FTE of staff support to carry out this recommendation.

**Conclusion:** Without a reliable and comprehensive monitoring network, it is impossible to know whether the Bay and watersheds are getting better or worse, and if any of the programs designed to protect or enhance the condition of the Bay and watersheds are effective. Data collection, synthesis, analysis, and information dissemination are a continuum of activities that comprise the monitoring framework. All must be implemented together. A break in the continuum renders the system ineffective. This is why the RIMC must consider all elements simultaneously.

**Intergovernmental Coordination Panel**  
**Status Report**  
**March 1, 2004**  
**Panel Members**

Jeff Grybowski, Chair, Governor's  
Policy Director  
Sen. Paiva-Weed  
Sen. Lenihan  
Sen. Gibbs  
Rep. Long  
Karl Honkonen, Mass. Executive Office  
of Environmental Affairs

Ken Payne, Senate Policy Office  
Bob Ballou, DEM  
Townsend Goddard, EDC  
Grover Fugate, CRMC  
Dan Geagan, Warwick City Planner  
Keith Stokes, Newport Chamber of  
Commerce

*Purpose:* Track, advise, and facilitate coordination among various branches and levels of government, particularly with regard to funding and budgetary issues, legislative issues, and governance issues.

*Short-term charges:* Coordinate legislative, policy and budgetary issues pertaining to the Bay and watershed with the RI General Assembly; also, in coordination with the Bay Planning Panel, coordinate interstate activities relating to watershed planning and management with Massachusetts.

*Status:* On February 23, the Panel had its first meeting. Massachusetts gave a presentation about its environmental priorities, one of which being an Ocean Management Initiative that will have a Water Policy Task Force. Coordination on that Task Force as well as the possibility of increasing coordination on federal grants is being pursued. In addition, the possibility of some level of joint response to the U.S. Commission on Oceans Policy was discussed and will be further reviewed once the report has been received. Understanding the short timeframe for review, it is also the intent that the Panel will seek to make recommendations to the Commission for the Governor's response to the report.

The Panel also discussed the Tri-State Agreement as drafted by the Partnership for Narragansett Bay. The Panel seeks Commission review of this language for approval in order to determine the best means to negotiate with Massachusetts and Connecticut. A sub-Panel consisting of Ken Payne, Sandra Whitehouse, Virginia Lee, Bob Ballou and Mark Adelman will be meeting to consider the composition of a negotiating team and a timetable to make a recommendation to the Commission. Senator Lenihan also raised the possibility of legislative approval as well.

The Panel also agreed that Connecticut should at some future time participate in the Commission.

A next meeting for the Panel has not yet been determined.

## Public Access and Recreation Panel

The Public Access and Recreation Panel was chaired by James R. Capaldi – RIDOT Director and consisting of Steve Medeiros - RI Saltwater Anglers Association, Larry Mouradjian – RIDEM Parks & Recreation, Mark Therrien - RIPTA, Kevin Cute - CRMC, Roger Greene - RIDEM Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Jane Sherman - Woonasquatucket River Watershed, Betsy deLeris, Jim Lappert - Save The Bay, and Charlotte Johnson - Rose Island Lighthouse

### Statement of the Problem

The Public Access and Recreation Panel was given the responsibility for reporting to the Commission its findings and recommendations for actions enhancing public access to and enjoyment of the recreational opportunities on the coast and on the islands within Narragansett Bay. This includes improving opportunities to reach Hope, Prudence, and Patience Islands with a state transportation system that accommodates the needs of the underserved population in the urban areas, while also addressing public access and recreation needs on the mainland shoreline of Narragansett Bay. The Public Access and Recreation Panel identified the nature of the problem, as the Bay encompasses 2,300 acres of island land stretching 12 miles from Prudence and Patience Islands in the north to Beavertail and Brenton Point in the south. Each of the Narragansett Bay islands has a distinct personality, the product of its natural features and cultural legacy. The basic problems associated with bay access are:

- 1) Cost associated with boat ownership and access to the islands
- 2) Lack of public transportation to the shoreline public parks and rights-of-way access points
- 3) Lack of knowledge of the location of the many suitable rights-of-way along the shore

### Short Term Recommendations

The Public Access and Recreation Panel recommends the following actions:

**1) Re-evaluate the Reinstatement of the Bay Island Park System** - Using a Citizen's Advisory Committee under the direction of the RIDEM, study the feasibility of reestablishing an island park system operated by the state or a public/private partnership.

The "*The Bay Islands Park: A Marine Recreation Plan For The State Of Rhode Island*" report is a comprehensive document that studied the creation of a Bay Island Park system in the late 1970s and early 1980s and could serve as the basis for evaluating the re-instatement of the Bay Island Park system. RIDOT Enhancement Program funding could be considered as a means of funding to update the report and establish a pilot program of the Bay Island Park system.

**2) Improved Public Transportation to Existing State Parks** – Work with RIPTA and other public and/or private agencies to improve or increase public transportation opportunities such as:

- RIPTA, working with Save the Bay, could investigate bus access to Save the Bay's planned Fields Point facility
- Applying to the RIDOT Enhancement Program for funding a shuttle bus service within a State Park and promoting linkage between the park shuttles and existing bus routes
- Developing a single publication (e.g. map) that would display RIPTA routes and proximity to locations for fishing, boat ramps, ferry service, state parks, etc.

**3) Improve Shoreline Public Access** – CRMC jointly with the Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association and local municipalities should submit a RIDOT Enhancement Program application for areas of public rights-of-way that need minor improvements to enhance access. These sites should include a combination of the identified prime fishing locations and Adopt-a-Site locations.

Also develop a video of the "before vs. after" condition as a means of promoting the site with media exposure and placement of the video on their website.

## Finance Panel

### Panel Members

Michael M. Tikoian, Chair	Coastal Resources Management Council
Anthony B. Simeone	Clean Water Finance Agency
Bob Byrne	US Army Corps of Engineers
Fred Vincent	Department of Environmental Management
Gary Schuler	SENESCO
George Welly	Department of Administration
Judy Doerner	Natural Resource Conservation Service
Karen Giebink	Narragansett Bay Commission
Margherita Pryor	US Environmental Protection Agency
Mike Walker	Economic Development Corporation
Rick Reed	Economic Development Corporation
Jeff Willis	Coastal Resources Management Council

### Executive Summary

The Finance Panel of the Governor's Narragansett Bay and Watershed Planning Commission was created to address the financial implications of managing Narragansett Bay and the watersheds of the state.

The stated purpose of the Panel is to develop a comprehensive funding strategy for priority activities relating to the Bay and the State's watersheds, while also addressing its short-term charges to review and analyze the proposed Clean Water 2004 bond to ensure that the proposed initiative reflects the necessary requirements for abating water quality issues.

The Panel met six times over seven weeks and developed a clear and concise path to follow for meeting its intended purpose:

*Provide the Governor with a comprehensive financial plan for the restoration, management and protection of Narragansett Bay and the State's watersheds that optimizes their environmental and economic health by:*

- *Identifying opportunities to maximize funding for projects and programs by improving and better leveraging the use of existing financial resources;*
- *Providing realistic estimates of capital and non-capital funding needs;*
- *Seeking and recommending new and innovative financing strategies and techniques; and*
- *Safeguarding funding opportunities to satisfy and sustain the environmental and economic health of the Bay and the State's watersheds*

The Panel is in the process of compiling financial needs to implement projects that address water quality improvement. This need will address brick and mortar projects, as well as planning, monitoring and land acquisition projects. It will also include the operational oversight for these projects, and, the additional financial needs that may be recommended by the various Commission panels.

The Panel also found that, based on preliminary review:

- A long term bond program would be required to satisfy the financial needs
- State matching funds are critical to securing additional federal funds. The Panel may recommend to the Commission the re-institution of restricted receipts accounts to keep funding sources for priority issues
- A requirement for mandatory sewer hook-ups will contribute to water quality improvements and create a revenue stream
- A need to recognize corporate/private sector assistance in the financing of projects

## Economic Development Panel

### Panel Members

Mike McMahon (Chair), RIEDC	Geoff Grout, RIEDC
David Farmer, URI GSO	Charles Kingdon, Brown University
Keith Stokes, Newport County Chamber of Commerce	Jeanne Boyle, City of East Providence
Donald Eversley, City of Providence	Curt Spalding, 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 a maximum impact to Narragansett Bay, given limited resources to accomplish them and an overarching mission focused on success.

The Panel identified four Short-term Charges to pursue:

1. *Coastal Revitalization*. This calls for outlining specific goals for the redevelopment of target waterfront parcels in Providence, East Providence, the West Side of Aquidneck Island, and Quonset. Commercial and industrial waterfront is a valuable—yet limited—commodity in Narragansett Bay. There exists an opportunity to redefine the highest and best use of these shoreside 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 significantly increase the level of marine trades activity 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.

## **Initial Report: Bay & Watershed Planning Panel**

Members: Michael Rauh, Chair, The Washington Trust Company  
Richard Ribb, Staff, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program

Jan Reitsma	Stephen Smith, SRPEDD
Jenn McCann, CRC	Topher Hamblett, STB
Steve Olsen, CRC	Grover Fugate, CRMC
Margherita Pryor, USEPA	Ken Payne, RI Senate Policy Office
John O'Brien, RIDOA	Scott Millar, RIDEM
Doug Foy, MA Gov's Office	Dan Varin, RIWRB
Meg Kerr, RI Rivers Council	Paul Pinault, NBC
Townsend Goddard, RIEDC	Mike Keyworth, RIMTA

The charge to the panel is (a) to compile and integrate the short term recommendations of the Commission panels into a strategic first year Commission workplan that targets priority issues, and (b) to address the need for a long-term comprehensive Bay and Watershed Plan and implementation mechanism that incorporates goals, actions, indicators (environmental, economic, and social), and, developed in coordination with the Intergovernmental Relations Panel, an interstate agreement with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that defines a common vision and watershed goals.

The panel held its first meeting on February 23<sup>rd</sup> and established some guiding principles for the plan:

- Construct the long term plan under a few key unifying concepts with a consistent watershed focus
- Incorporate specific, actionable, and measurable goals
- Include an action plan that delineates specific responsibilities and funding sources
- Incorporate priorities for all Bay watersheds, including Massachusetts
- Incorporate appropriate elements of work done on previous plans
- Include recommendations for organizational structure to manage the plan and its implementation/revision over time
- Use adaptive management techniques to continually update the plan
- Ensure that the plan integrates into federal, regional, watershed and municipal plans and is sufficiently connected to community-based efforts

The Panel will review a draft outline of the plan at its March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. When the outline is complete, it will be forwarded to the Steering Committee. When finalized, it will be sent to all of the other panels to aid in the development of their relevant sections. The goal is to draft the first year workplan by the end of March, 2004, and to have the final draft of the long term plan completed for the Commission's consideration by November, 2004.

In addition to the above, the panel recommends that the Commission consider adding a Land Use Panel that would ensure that issues like development and growth that have an impact on Bay and watershed resources are adequately addressed in the Plan.

## Communication and Education Panel

### Members

Chip Young (Chair), CRC	Sheri Mulhearn, RIRRC
Tom Ardito, NBEP	Janis Nepshinsky, USFWS
Terri Bisson, DEM	Dave Prescott, Save the Bay
Sara Hickox, URI	Delia Rodriguez
Linda Jzyk, RI Dept. of Ed.	Jamie Samons, NBC
Denise Leone, Audubon	Lee Schisler, Audubon
Bob Leyden	Gail Scowcroft, URI
John Martin, Save the Bay	Judith Swift, URI
Gail Mastrati, DEM	Juliana Wyman, USFWS
Christina Zarcadoolas, Brown	

The purpose of the Communications and Education Panel is to address strategies to effectively communicate with and educate the public on Bay and watershed issues. Building a constituency for the protection, balanced uses and restoration of Narragansett Bay is critical to the Commission's success. The panel will help develop short and long-term communications strategies; craft clear, concise and consistent messages for varied audiences; suggest actions based on the input and needs of the various panels; and work with other partners in a variety of fields to widely disseminate information on the commission's work. The panel will also serve as a coordinator for all panels to integrate their work and develop consensus on major themes, share information and avoid duplication of effort.

The Communications Panel's work will be broken into short and long-term elements. In the short term, the focus will be on public/media relations and outreach to build public awareness about the Governor's Commission, its goals, current challenges and recommended solutions, and the need for public involvement. The long-term focus is on integrating information on bay watershed issues into informal and formal education programs, including school curriculum. This is designed to extend the reach of the commission's work among a new generation to increase its ongoing future impact.

The Panel's activities to date have included:

- Creation of a short and long-term communications strategy framework that will be used to publicly disseminate the commission's recommendations.
- Forming an education subcommittee to address long-term strategies for incorporating Bay-oriented education into informal programs and school curriculum.
- Doing an inventory of short-term public outreach vehicles to utilize for raising public awareness about Bay issues, the challenges they present and the way the commission is finding solutions to those problems.
- Serving as liaisons to other panels, attending their meetings and centralizing the information so it can be integrated and shared among the panels.