

June 3, 2005

The Honorable Donald L. Carcieri
Governor
State of Rhode Island
State House
Executive Chambers - Room 222
Providence, RI 02903

The Honorable William
Murphy
Speaker of the House
House of
Representatives
State House
Providence, RI 02903

The Honorable Joseph Montalbano
President of the Senate
Rhode Island Senate
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Governor Carcieri, Speaker Murphy, and President Montalbano:

As you know, the R.I. Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team has been implementing the scope of work for the development of the bays and watersheds systems-level plan as required by statute. As part of that work, the R.I. Environmental Monitoring Collaborative has produced a bay and watershed monitoring strategy. In order to meet critical need and take advantage of new or existing efforts, several of the elements of that monitoring strategy require the immediate attention of the Governor's Office and the General Assembly.

At the Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Team meeting on May 18, 2005, the Coordination Team members discussed elements of the strategy. Both the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative and the Team's Scientific Advisory Committee reported that, through their deliberations, they had identified a few key actions that could provide great benefit if they could be undertaken within the FY2006 budget cycle. The Team directed me, as Acting Chair, to draft a letter to you requesting that the following urgent actions be included in the FY2006 budget process.

First and foremost, the Coordination Team recommends that the Governor's proposed FY2006 budget request of \$983,000 to establish a water quality monitoring program within the DEM Office of Water Resources be funded in FY2006 as requested. This initiative will support critical baseline monitoring activities identified as priorities in the R.I. Water Monitoring Strategy, prepared by DEM in coordination with the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative. The Governor's baseline monitoring initiative is widely supported and regarded as the highest priority action and needs to be fully funded.

Secondly, through its process of working with both the Coordination Team's Scientific Advisory Committee and the RI Environmental Monitoring Collaborative, the Team has identified two priority monitoring program needs for which additional funding is needed to initiate implementation. While these are key actions, the Team identified these as the next tier of immediate priorities; funding allocated for these actions should be in addition to full funding for the DEM monitoring program referenced above.

- The Team recommends \$140,000 to install and operate an additional five water flow monitoring stations in key rivers. Added to an existing 20 station network with associated groundwater monitoring wells, this system is the State's primary means of assessing and projecting drought conditions that affect public safety and welfare. The additional stations will also provide data critical to watershed management and assessment of pollution sources to the State's waterbodies. The locations to be added will reflect priority actions from a plan jointly developed by the Water Resources Board, DEM and the federal USGS.
- The Team recommends \$96,000 to be used by the R.I. Natural History Survey who, in partnership with RIDEM and RI CRMC, will develop a bio-invasives monitoring strategy and response plan that encompasses marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems. This partnership will provide the expertise and experience to effectively address this problem. Initiating this effort in FY2006 would allow close coordination with CRMC's ongoing development of a marine invasive species management plan and provide Rhode Island with a fully integrated bio-invasives response strategy. This program will give the State a means to detect and prevent the establishment of invasive species that can rapidly cause severe economic and environmental damage.

The fact that the agencies that make up the R.I. Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team have examined these needs together and unanimously recommended the above actions is a clear sign that the Coordination Team framework is already providing value to our efforts to work together more effectively to protect and restore the Bay and watersheds.

The R.I. Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team asks that you take these recommendations under consideration for inclusion in the FY2006 budget.

Sincerely,



Richard C. Ribb
Acting Chair

cc: Daniel Varin, Chair, R.I. Water Resources Board
Paul Pinault, Executive Director, Narragansett Bay Commission
John O'Brien, Chief, R.I. Statewide Planning Program
Michael Sullivan, Acting Director, RI Department of Environmental Management
Michael McMahon, Director, R.I. Economic Development Corporation
Meg Kerr, Chair, R.I. Rivers Council
Michael Tikoian, Chair, R.I. Coastal Resources Management Council
Peter August, Chair, Environmental Monitoring Collaborative
Christopher Bergstrom, Executive Director, R.I. Economic Policy Council
Donald Pryor, Chair, Scientific Advisory Committee
Chip Young, Chair, Public Advisory Committee