

**RI Environmental Monitoring Collaborative  
Report to the Bays, Rivers, and Watersheds Coordination Team<sup>1</sup>  
28 September 2005**

**Submitted by  
Peter V. August, Chair**

**Read by  
Tom Uva, RIEMC Member**

The Monitoring Collaborative had an extremely busy summer. The following is a brief review of our activities and current status.

- In early summer, the Coordination Team advanced a special request to the Governor and General Assembly from the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative for immediate (last legislative session) funding of the DEM water monitoring framework, invasive species monitoring, and monitoring of major rivers by the USGS. To our knowledge the Governor, and House and Senate leadership did not reply to the Coordination Team's request. DEM monitoring funding was dropped from the state budget and no funds were made available to support invasive species or river monitoring. This was a disappointing result. The Environmental Monitoring Collaborative, Science Advisory Committee, and Coordination Team followed a complex process of review and discussion to ensure our requests were of the utmost importance. Our requests to fund urgent monitoring activities were unproductive. We need to establish a better rapport and clear lines of communication with the State's leadership.
- RI's leaders in land use and land cover mapping met over the summer to review what initiatives are underway with respect to image (air photo, orthophoto, satellite) acquisition for the State, to define technical specifications of future image acquisitions, and develop a plan to reduce redundancy and increase quality of future imagery for RI. These image datasets are used by every environmental organization in the state, every community, and are the basis of land use and habitat mapping for RI. A report from this group is on the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative web site.
- Many of RI's leading plant and animal ecologists gathered to review major initiatives in monitoring biodiversity and natural habitats. We identified major baseline data that must be obtained as soon as possible; for example, remapping the State's wetland habitats is the basis for considerable work in biodiversity monitoring. A report from this group is on the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative web site.

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<sup>1</sup> *In the spirit of supporting a paper-free workplace, a copy of this report is on the RIEMC web site under the "[on-line resources](#)" tab*

- The Science Advisory Committee provided thorough and thoughtful review of our January 2005 monitoring report. We are in the process of studying their recommendations and incorporating them into a monitoring framework.
- We sent a letter on 17 August 2005 to the Coordination Team urging it to aggressively involve itself in the State budget process and ensure that funding needs of the Collaboratives and Advisory Committees are carried forward. Furthermore, we requested that the Coordination Team establish a clear and effective communication process so we can inform, and be informed by the Governor's Office and General Assembly.
- Work of the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative is severely hampered by the lack of staff support. Our members have full-time commitments to their other positions and cannot afford to drop important work to take on the significant challenges facing the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative. We, like the other support units of the Coordination Team (SAC, PAC, Economic Monitoring Collaborative), need professional staff (not clerical support) whose "day job" is to advance our work on behalf of the Coordination Team.

We urge the Governor's office and legislature promptly work together to identify and commit funds to support the Coordination Team, Advisory Committees, and Collaboratives. Furthermore, it is important that a permanent chair of the Coordination Team be established with Senate confirmation so that the goals, objectives, and deadlines of this important legislation can be achieved. We must ensure that the important work to evaluate, protect, and restore the health of Narragansett Bay and watersheds is not delayed.