

Norwalk River Watershed Initiative Advisory Committee
Regular Meeting of July 20th 2016
Wilton Town Hall, Main Building Conference Room

Minutes

Members Present: Alexis Cherichetti (Norwalk), Casey Cordes (SNEW), Sara Crosby(Harbor Watch), Kathleen Holland(New Canaan), Cindy Ingersoll (Coordinator), Mike Law (TU-Mianus), Chris Malik (CT DEEP), Catherine Minter (Weston), Geoff Steadman (Norwalk Harbor Commission), Mike Towle (WestCOG)

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 2:30 PM and attendees introduced themselves.

Coordinator's Report

Cindy Ingersoll reported that the Norwalk Library Display was well received and helped to generate more traffic with the NRWI website. Ingersoll will be contacting Wilton Library and the Aquarium to see if they would be interested in having the display. Kathleen Holland suggested we also contact the New Canaan Library. The display will be modified slightly for upstream watershed libraries to make it more local and applicable to their section of the watershed.

Jill Siskind from Food & Water Watch has been informing CT towns that fracking waste may be finding its way into our waterways unknowingly through road brine or salts. She indicated that the CT DEEP regulations do not currently adequately protect against use of fracking waste in Connecticut. Ingersoll will find out more at member's request.

Dick Harris said that the presence of *Prorocentrum* minimum in the Sound is not new and current levels in the Harbor are not a cause for concern but will continue to be monitored. Crosby added that Long Island is having bigger issues with algal blooms and that work is being done on a model to help predict what harbors may be impacted next based on circulation patterns.

Other Coordinator topics covered under Member's Activities and Reporting.

Member's Activities and Reporting

a. Water Quality Report

Sara Crosby distributed a data sheet on mid-season results through mid-July on the Norwalk River mainstem. Over all levels of E. coli bacteria have improved. There were some high counts on 5/24 at NR21, NR20, and NR15 just below the Ridgefield WWTP and what appears to be an outlier at NR15 on 7/8. All values below NR15 were below the single sample maximum. Previous septic problems at NR9.5 (Mill Road in Wilton) appear to have been resolved. These improved numbers may be due in part to the dry weather. HW is not currently testing for nutrients but have some capacity to do so to get an overall picture of levels. They have applied for funding for additional equipment next year to expand their capacity to test for nutrients. HW is working on Water Quality 1-page reports for each watershed town which will be available soon.

b. Other Member Implementation Activities

Mike Towle gave an overview of the new MS4 permit requirements to become effective July 2017 and the role WestCOG is looking to play in aiding the region to comply. WESTCOG is currently gathering information that may be helpful in this effort from towns that have been active in addressing these new requirements, such as the City of Stamford. New permit requirements will require mapping stormwater infrastructure, inventorying all outfalls to impaired waters, identifying and monitoring pollutant levels at outfalls, tracking sources and tailoring outreach programs to address the issue. Towns will have a period of 5 years to meet these requirements. WEST COG will be hosting TAG (technical advisory group and sub transportation technical advisory group) meetings to assist towns in this effort. Towle reminded members of the GIS services that WestCOG offers for their mapping needs.

Chris Malik reported that the contract for the Silvermine Residential Raingarden project is in the works. Ridgefield's 319 application for a rain garden at the Ridgefield Playhouse has passed first review but may be passed over for larger implementation projects. Wilton Merwin Meadow LID project is stalled with the town awaiting Master Design Plan for the park and for the new First Selectman to be brought up to speed. Alexis will try to contact the town to see if there is still the intent to pursue this project. Grant funding for this and for the Silvermine Residential Rain Gardens would need to be spent by the end of summer 2017. Final Phosphorous report from DEEP has not yet been released. A bigger priority now is estuary nitrogen according to the EPA which the state is currently concentrating on. Malik did mention one new idea being studied which uses wood chips to treat effluent from septic systems to help uptake excess nitrogen.

Geoff Steadman, from the Norwalk Harbor Management Commission, gave an update on the CT Department of Transportation bridge projects. The preferred design for the Walk Bridge will be to construct a replacement off site and then raise and replace the old structure, rather than build a temporary bridge. Response to public request on the impact on the environment will be two phase. The CT DEEP environmental assessment, which will require an environmental impact statement, is to be completed this year and will address some of the impact. The remainder will be addressed during the permitting process next year when the majority of design work will be completed. Steadman hopes to get more public involvement during the permitting phase with the Norwalk Harbor Commission review process. Current CT DOT plans for the Yankee Doodle Bridge replace the bridge drains and refurbish the roadway but do not include measures to address the stormwater run-off from the bridge deck. The Harbor Commission is working on an analysis based on a previous study on highway pollution to try and model the amount of highway pollution generated on the bridge based on square footage of impervious surface and volume of traffic (150,000 vehicles per day) to present to CT DOT. The Harbor Commission is requesting a letter of support from the NRWI.

Mike Law reported on a meeting at the Wilton Library with a representative from Senator Chris Murphy's office on his Long Island Investment Plan to improve water quality. The office is gathering information on what local areas see as threats to water quality in the Sound. Trout Unlimited just completed a 2-day clean up along the School Road River segment.

Mike Towle reported on an Army Corps Flood Resiliency Study to begin for coastal Fairfield County and FEMA's plans to update the 100-yr flood and flood maps. FEMA is currently in the data gathering stage from towns and has met with New Canaan, per Kathleen Holland, on flooding and flood prone areas. More information on this flood map update can be found at FEMA.gov/riskmapping. Mike will circulate related links for more information on these topics.

Sara Crosby will be presenting the Harbor Watch findings from a study they call "Bacteria Bonanza" done last summer which varied sampling days, time of day, and intervals at selected sites to determine whether these sampling variations have an impact on bacteria levels.

Casey Cordes has begun the door-to-door sanitary survey for South Norwalk Electric & Water (SNEW). 200 homes have been surveyed so far with an estimated 600 homes within the reservoir watershed are to be

completed this year. Septic systems are checked and information is collected from homeowners on such things as pesticide use or other factors that may impact the drinking water source.

Next Meeting

Next meeting is currently scheduled for Wednesday, September 21st, 2016, at 2:30PM in Wilton. The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Ingersoll – Coordinator Norwalk River Watershed Initiative