

Norwalk River Watershed Initiative Advisory Committee
Regular Meeting of July 18th, 2013
Wilton Town Hall, Main Building Conference Room

Minutes

Members Present: Alexis Cherichetti (Co-chair, Norwalk), Case Cordes (SNEW), Dick Harris (Harbor Watch), Cindy Ingersoll (Coordinator), Mike Law (Co-chair, TU), Chris Malik (CT DEEP), Catherine Minter (Weston Conservation), Dick O'Neill (TU), Robert Sachnim (SWRPA), Geoff Steadman (Norwalk Harbor Mgt Com.), Pat Sesto (Wilton)

Welcome and Introductions

Mike Law called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and attendees introduced themselves.

On-Going and Old Business

a. Approval of Minutes for March 20th, 2013, and May 15th, 2013

Minutes for March 20th, 2013 and May 15th, 2013 were approved.

b. Coordinator's Report

Ingersoll presented a sample of the proposed signage for the Rain Garden installation at the Wilton Playshop. Members suggested that logos of the organizations contributing to the workshop and demo installation be included on the sign. It was agreed that it be on a pedestal placed in a location just off the patio as you're looking at the garden. The rain garden itself is functioning well but could use some weeding. The plantings show some signs of insect infestation which may be due to the limited amount of sunshine. Ingersoll will speak to the Wilton Garden Club about the weeding.

Ingersoll will be completing a 4-part webinar on the Social Indicator Planning and Evaluation System (SIPES) and the Social Indicators Data Management and Analysis (SIDMA) on-line tool. The tool was developed by Purdue University and the University of Wisconsin from EPA Region 5 to help design, implement and evaluate social surveys specifically for nonpoint source watershed management. The SIPES/SIDMA can be adapted for our urban watershed and may be useful as a means to raise awareness or assist in project implementation. Ingersoll suggested initiating the Residential Rain Garden grant project with a SIDMA survey.

Ingersoll distributed and described a series of graphs displaying historical data for the Norwalk River from 2004 and for the Silvermine River from 2009. The charts are based on data from Harbor Watch reports for E. coli geomean and maximum values and show reference to the CT State standards. Some of the graphs have been prepared to accompany a water quality report to be presented to the Town of Ridgefield in conclusion of the Ridgefield Storm Drain Project conducted by Harbor Watch. The group discussed the trends pointing out improvements and areas of concern. Ingersoll will obtain earlier data for the Silvermine River from Dick Harris to include on the Silvermine charts and will continue to update the charts as new data comes in. At the end of the year a complete packet will be distributed including 2013 summer data and additional Silvermine data.

Pat Sesto suggested the NRWI submit an article on the topic for local publications. Chris Malik can offer some assistance on this as the DEEP will be reporting on their successes with the Old Mill and Stonehenge sites. Ingersoll will also meet with Cherichetti on a press release.

Ingersoll circulated the Committee Member Directory for members to update their contact information.

New Business

a. Silvermine Residential Rain Garden Grant

Alexis Cherichetti gave a timeline for the project to begin this winter with outreach. By the spring, 2014, we should have services contracted and garden designs completed. Excavation and installations should be completed by September. Ingersoll suggested we pilot the SIDMA survey tool as an initial step of the outreach part of the project.

b. FY 2014 319 (to be discussed at a separate meeting)

Member's Implementation Activities

a. Water Quality Report

Dick Harris reported that summer testing is going well and that nothing significant or unusual has cropped on the Norwalk or Silvermine Rivers. Harris is in the process of writing the final report for the Ridgefield Storm Drain project. There are several areas of concern which include Branchville Rd, Rowland Lane, north of the Boys & Girls Club and a storm drain on Bailey Ave where there appears to be some dumping of solids. Although the Town is aware of the pollution in Steep Brook, they continue to be hesitant in pursuing any dye testing of the sewer lines or laterals and have mentioned that they thought, perhaps, that wild animals in the pipes may be the source. Sequestration has restricted previously available help from the EPA on pharmaceutical testing which would be helpful in moving forward on this.

Malik said going forward, after Dick Harris has issued his final report to be reviewed by the EPA; the DEEP will meet with the town to discuss remedies before taking any additional action.

Moody's Lane storm drain system is back on the list with elevated bacteria levels and has been monitored over the past 2 months with repeated testing on Lockwood Lane above the previously installed pipe. Extremely elevated bacteria levels suggest a major pollution source which has been isolated by the Harbor watch team but not yet identified.

Although we had started this season with a large influx of juvenile Flounder, counts have deteriorated with bottom temperatures already reaching 23°C on the bottom of the harbor. Maximum last year was 24°C towards the end of the summer with higher fish counts than currently observed this year.

b. Other Member Implementation Activities

Pat Sesto reported that a commercial establishment on Route 7, #991 Danbury Rd., had been pumping out their septic sewage into a storm drain at night to avoid detection. The Town has contacted the owner and is addressing the problem together with state authorities. Wilton is also working on the removal and replacement of two pedestrian bridges.

Mike Law said that TU has increased its contribution to Harbor Watch and would like to request that watershed towns do the same or, at least, maintain their current donation level.

Alexis Cherichetti reported that the City of Norwalk, as part of phase 2 for the Norwalk River Valley Trail, is seeking a preliminary design for a multi-purpose trail along a section of the Norwalk River and Route 7 between Union Park and New Canaan Ave.

The City is moving along with plans to remove the Floch Process Dam. They have been waiting on a pre-application review from the DEEP on the preliminary engineering. Cherichetti also reported that additional federal funding for the Floch Dam removal may be available through the Department of Interior Super Storm Sandy Repair Fund. It has survived some preliminary cuts for this funding.

Goeff Steadman gave an update on a study sponsored by the Harbor Management Commission to analyze historical data on bacteria levels in the river and the harbor. The study will test the hypothesis that the elevated levels of bacteria in the river is an indicator of the elevated levels in the harbor by attempting to correlate historical water quality data on the Norwalk River to that data collected by the Bureau of Aquaculture at 5 specific sites across the mouth of the Norwalk Harbor. The study will also take into account rainfall and stream flow. Results are expected next month.

Steadman also reported that the Microbial Source Tracking project by the Westport-Weston Health District was turned down last year by LISFF but has received positive feedback. The Health District has submitted a second application under the Department of Agriculture Viability Grant.

Chris Malik announced this year's 319 RFP is due on September 30th. Priority continues to be implementation projects that will achieve load reductions. Malik added that a study by the Charles River in Virginia concluded that the most cost effective way to reduce pathogens in rivers is through control of pet waste.

CT DEEP is in the process of updating their nonpoint source plan. Public meeting and a draft plan is currently scheduled for August and September but will likely be delayed. Malik also reported that the DEEP web site on Surface Water Quality has been updated to include harmful algal blooms which are a growing concern.

Ingersoll asked the group if they would like to submit a 319 application this year. Malik indicated that if we had not yet heard anything regarding last year's application on the Silvermine Residential Audit that it was most likely not accepted. The group discussed the possibility of a pet waste management project, other funding sources and the Five Mile River Watershed Plan as a resource for evaluating the quantitative effectiveness for this practice. Cherichetti said that she believed the residential audit project would be highly effective though may not meet the implementation guideline requirements of a 319 and also questioned whether a pet waste management project would be considered an implementation or education program in light of the Charles River study.

Cherichetti and Ingersoll will get together to discuss 319 Implementation project ideas and let the group know.

Next Meeting – Agenda and Date

The next meeting will be Thursday, September 19th, 2013 at 3PM in Wilton.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Ingersoll – Coordinator Norwalk River Watershed Initiative