

Norwalk River Watershed Initiative Advisory Committee
Regular Meeting of March 20th, 2013
Wilton Town Hall, Main Building Conference Room

Minutes

Members Present: Alexis Cherichetti (Co-chair, Norwalk), Casey Cordes (SNEW), Dick Harris (Harbor Watch), Kathleen Holland (New Canaan), Cindy Ingersoll (Coordinator), Mike Law (Co-chair, TU), Chris Malik (CT DEEP), Cathy Minter (Weston Conservation), Dick O'Neill (TU), David Pattee (Redding),

Welcome and Introductions

Mike Law called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and attendees introduced themselves. Note that the agenda items were discussed out of order to accommodate those that needed to leave early.

New Business

a. Approval of Minutes for September 20th, 2012 and November 15th, 2012

The Minutes for September 20th, 2012 and November 15th, 2012 were approved.

On-Going and Old Business

a. Coordinator's Update and Review

• **Rain Garden Workshop**

Cindy Ingersoll reported that the workshop has been scheduled for April 4th and 5th. Instruction will be held at the Old Wilton Town Hall and the installation of a demonstration rain garden will likely be at the Wilton Playshop on the 5th. We are working together with the NRWA on outreach and to secure the demo site.

Michael Dietz from UCONN - NEMO will conduct the workshop and supervise the installation. Ingersoll summarized outreach efforts for the workshop which included a mailing sent to over 80 landscape service providers in watershed towns, press releases in local papers and on-line news webs, community groups, local garden clubs, and municipal public works and parks and recreation departments. The flyer was also circulated through the SWCD and NRWA. The group discussed the possibility of reaching out to local nurseries through the State Nursery Association, Natureworks, and NOFA and whether noting the workshop as a means of obtaining educational credit for landscape architect license renewal was helpful.

Ingersoll is coordinating the purchase and supply of materials for the installation and lunch and refreshments for the participants. Louise Washer from the NRWA will help with setup on the 4th.

• **Wilton Go Green Festival**

The festival will be on May 5th and Ingersoll asked for ideas on an exhibit this year. A suggestion was made to use the rain garden display again, which was well received the prior year, with the addition of a digital display of photos from the Rain Garden Workshop installation. Kathleen Holland suggested the Enviroscape watershed model which she used recently for a children's group to demonstrate the effects of non-point source pollution. The NRWI had used this model at an earlier festival but Holland had added a different twist by assigning individual children to play the role of a community member as part of the demonstration.

- **Stream Walk Program**

Ingersoll reiterated from Todd Bobowick's presentation in January the importance of determining the purpose of a stream walk and the usefulness of the data to be obtained. Cherichetti noted that the original purpose had been to use it as a follow-up to the completion of our Watershed Based Plan to engage stakeholders in an implementation project. Chris Malik suggested a stream walk could be used to redefine our impairment inventory or be conducted on a more project oriented basis which may not require the entire NRCS protocol. The group agreed to revisit this topic in conjunction with a possible FCCF project.

- **Microbial Source Tracking**

Ingersoll updated the group on a company called Source Molecular that market themselves as a leader in MST (Molecular Source Tracking) as a method to identify the host of bacterial pollution in waterbodies. The company uses Real Time PCR and has culminated a library of markers including 4 human with over 90% confidence level and 10 other typical animal markers with an 80% confidence level. Their testing options include a positive/negative ID and a relative quantitative test. They provide shipping materials and instruction for collecting and submitting water samples to their lab in Miami, FL.

They have expressed interest in working with us on a project and are willing to provide free verification of markers specific to our project. Their pricing is on a per sample basis depending on number of samples starting at \$175/test or on a project basis. They will provide free consultation in project development if requested.

Ingersoll went on to explain how the company is working with clients to better understand the data provided by their quantitative testing which has been an issue with those accustomed to traditional E. coli/coliform test data. In summary, samples can be split and tested by both methods to look for correlations in trends of corresponding samples to provide confidence that the bacteria quantified by traditional methods is that which has been positively ID by PCR.

Some members felt that that cost was still prohibitive while others thought that if these methods could be used to keep beaches open, as demonstrated in a case study, it could save the city money. Chris Malik said that identifying a bacterial source in a waterbody like Long Island Sound would be complicated to model with its tides and flow dynamics but that this could be a good tool for use upstream. He also mentioned that the EPA has been very interested in PCR methods. Ingersoll added that possible reasons to fund this type of testing would be if it could prompt community action or help to determine, and therefore remediate, a bacterial source when traditional methods can't. Malik suggested we first talk to other groups in the area that have been actively pursuing grants for PCR studies including a harbor study with Geoff Steadman and Joe Schnierlein and the Westport-Weston Health District working with the New Haven Agricultural Experiment Station.

Member's Implementation Activities

a. Water Quality Report

Dick Harris gave an update on the Ridgefield Track Down Project which had narrowed the possible source of bacteria to Rowland Lane and Branchville Road. At a recent meeting with Ridgefield's First Selectman, Rudy Marconi and, Town Engineer, Charlie Fisher, it was agreed that the next step would be to obtain joint samples for pharmaceutical testing by Jim Bridges at the EPA. The presence of substances such as nicotine and acetaminophen would indicate a likely human source. Harris added that the pipes appear to be in good condition after viewing camera footage previously taken by the Town which could indicate that the problem may be more difficult to find. Ridgefield appears to be willing to go a step further with smoke testing, if

necessary. In response to a question by Mike Law, Harris said that Steep Brook is only moderately polluted since the construction of the new Boys and Girls Club which likely included repair of any leaking lines.

Harris presented a photo of a ruptured sewer line in a parking garage at 132 Water Street in Norwalk. The line appears to have been in that condition for some time though many people had been walking through it. Thanks to the whistle blower and Harris' immediate follow-up with the City, the pipe was repaired the next day.

This summer Harbor Watch will be looking again at Moody's Lane. Although a good portion of the storm drains in this area have been repaired, another appears to be receiving surface sewage and will be addressed with available funds.

Interestingly, Harris reported that Norwalk Public Works may be presenting a proposal for an aerial thermal imaging project to detect hot spots. Alexis Cherichetti will see if she could get more information on this.

b. Other Member Implementation Activities

Mike Law reported that Trout Unlimited had begun its spring planting program on March 16th.

Kathleen Holland announced New Canaan's Clean-A-Mile program is set for April 20th and 21st.

Public Comment

Jeff Yates introduced a new initiative from the Fairfield County Community Foundation. The goal of this long-term initiative is to achieve measurable improvement in the water quality of Long Island Sound. To this end the Foundation plans to focus their environmental grant work on improving the water quality of individual watersheds beginning with the Norwalk River Watershed. The FCCF brings their annual grant funding of approximately \$75,000, as well as interest and funding from corporations and local businesses.

A main component of this effort will be to coordinate and pool efforts and resources of existing regional environmental groups and partnerships. These will include NRWI, NRWA, NRV, as well as municipal, land trust groups, and state and regional groups including CT DEEP, SWRPA and NRCS.

The Norwalk River Watershed was selected to model this process, in part, for the availability of extensive and long term water quality data and the history of commitment and committee work from long-standing, functional partnerships.

Yates will escort FCCF Board members along with other environmental group representatives on a river walk through Norwalk to discuss the possibilities for incorporating the river into the city's private and public community.

Next Meeting – Agenda and Date

The group discussed reducing the number of meetings to either quarterly or biannually and settled on bi-annually. The next meeting will be scheduled for Wednesday, May 15th, 2013 in Wilton. Ingersoll will check the bylaws on changing the frequency and weekday of meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Ingersoll
Coordinator
Norwalk River Watershed Initiative