



Rhode Island Rivers Council

c/o RI Water Resources Board
One Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908
www.ririvers.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (please attached photo file to email):

On Wednesday January 13, 2016 the Rhode Island Rivers Council (RIRC) celebrated 25 years of coordinating state policies to protect rivers and watersheds and strengthening local watershed councils as partners in river and watershed protection with its 2016 Annual Meeting at the RI State House and a resolution passed by both houses of the General Assembly. There also were displays by the RIRC and all ten of the state-designated Watershed Councils set up around the Rotunda.

At the Annual Meeting, Senator Susan Sosnowski spoke on legislation recently passed in the General Assembly that is of interest to the RI Rivers Council and its member Watershed Councils such as on cesspool phase out, dam removal, climate change, clean energy, and other topics. This was followed by brief reports from each Watershed Council about events and activities in their watershed. The meeting took a short recess so RIRC members could attend the House and Senate legislative sessions.

Representative Eileen Naughton crafted a resolution (see <http://ririvers.org/pdf/Resolution-25thAnniversary.pdf>) and introduced it in the House of Representatives honoring the RIRC for its 25 years of work and “devotion to improving Rhode Island’s most treasured asset”. Several RIRC members were also introduced to the House and they are seen in the attached photo: left to right: Michael Zarum, President of the Buckeye Brook Coalition which is in Rep. Naughton’s home district; Treasurer Lisa McGreavy; Meg Kerr, Chair 2000-2007; Vice-Chair Rachel Calabro; Guy Lefebvre, Chair 2008-2013; Rep. Naughton; and Chair Dr. Veronica Berounsky. The resolution was introduced in the Senate by Senators Susan Sosnowski, Michael McCaffrey, M. Teresa Paiva Weed, and William Walaska.

The Rhode Island Rivers Council was established by the RI General Assembly by RI General Law 46-28-5 in 1991, making 2016 its 25th year. As is stated on the RIRC website (<http://www.ririvers.org>), this quasi-governmental organization was created by RI statute to coordinate, oversee, and review efforts to improve and preserve the quality of the state's rivers and other water bodies by. The council consists of fifteen members. Nine voting public volunteer members are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate and have backgrounds in conservation organization experience, science, environmental law, or planning experience; or communication, public outreach or education experience; or is a member of a chamber of commerce. The six institutional members are from RI Department of Administration; RI Department of Environmental Management; Water Resources Board; Coastal Resources Management Council; RI Commerce Corporation; and RI League of Cities and Towns.

The RIRC also presently has ten Watershed Councils that have gone through the process to become the state-designated watershed council for a river and its watershed. These councils have legal standing and are eligible to submit proposals for grants funded by the annual RI legislative grant to the RIRC. They are: Blackstone River Watershed Council / Friends of the Blackstone; Buckeye Brook Coalition; Kickemuit River Council; Friends of the Moshassuck; Narrow River Preservation Association; Pawtuxet River Authority and Watershed Council; Salt Ponds Coalition; Ten Mile River Watershed Council; Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association; and Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council. The RIRC and the Watershed Councils can provide local contacts, advice, and expert testimony about issues in these watersheds.

For more information please contact: Veronica M. Berounsky, Ph.D., Rhode Island Rivers Council Chair at vmberounsky@uri.edu or 401-932-5141. Also annotated screenshots of the House introductions are on <http://ririvers.org/pdf/RIRC-HouseRes-25thAnniv.pdf>.