

## COORDINATION TEAM PLANNING EFFORT TAKES SHAPE

The R.I. Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team's work towards the creation of a strategic systems-level plan (SLP) to guide the work of key state agencies is moving ahead steadily. This effort includes the implementation of two new fees that will generate funds for the group's activities, particularly ambient environmental monitoring and assessments of Rhode Island's "water cluster."

The SLP, required by the Coordination Team's establishing statute, is the first step in an interagency strategic planning process designed to align, integrate, and streamline the programs and actions of the member agencies, who are most directly responsible for the state's fresh, coastal, and marine waters and watersheds: the Coastal Resources Management Council, Department of Environmental Management, Division of Statewide Planning, Economic Development Corporation, Narragansett Bay Commission, Rivers Council, and Water Resources Board. The group is complemented by an Economic Monitoring Collaborative, Environmental Monitoring Collaborative, Public Advisory Committee, and Science Advisory Committee, which consist of a wide range of experts in diverse and relevant fields, members of nongovernmental organizations and business groups, and members of the general public.

To spearhead SLP development, the Coordination Team has established an ad hoc planning work group consisting of officials from the seven member agencies, the chairs of the monitoring collaboratives and advisory committees, the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program director, and other state and federal officials. The SLP development and implementation will pursue a systems-management approach, termed "ecosystem-based management," to fulfill the mission of the Coordination Team and goals of the SLP initiative.

The Coordination Team is scheduled to assess and approve for public review a SLP draft by March 2008. Public review and comment proceeds through April and May, with a final draft of the first version to be approved by the Coordination Team in late June

2008. The group will then turn to SLP implementation via development of an annual work plan for FY2010 that will have to be completed by early fall 2008 to synchronize with agency FY2010 budget development processes. Recommendations for FY2009 will also be developed.

In addition to its work on the SLP, the team's Economic Monitoring Collaborative has been very active, creating an economic scorecard for 2007, which employs economic, activity, capacity, and conflict indicators. It also examined which industries are most reliant on Rhode Island's water resources, looking at the "water cluster" in terms of three broad categories: the water-dependent sector (e.g., marinas), the water-related sector (e.g., tourism), and the watershed sector (e.g., bio-manufacturing).

Current economic monitoring work includes a study of peak season coastal tourism and value chain analyses of commercial fishing and seafood processing, recreational boating, competitive sailboat racing, boat building, and marine trades. One of the goals of the collaborative will be to make a direct link between economic monitoring and environmental monitoring, which could have immediate impacts on economic development initiatives in upper Narragansett Bay (the "Metro Bay" region) and in Newport.

The Environmental Monitoring Collaborative reconvened in October 2007 for a strategic review of its initial priorities, to do a check on their current status, and verify that they still warranted the collaborative's primary focus. The priority issues for focus and funding remained:

- Fixed-site monitoring in Narragansett Bay
- Streamflow monitoring
- Large river monitoring
- Rotating assessments of coastal waters
- Rotating assessments of rivers and streams
- Freshwater fish contamination monitoring
- Invasive species monitoring
- Unassessed lakes and ponds monitoring
- Upper Narragansett Bay dissolved oxygen surveys
- Freshwater beach water-quality monitoring
- Emergency response date review
- Monitoring development grants



Photo by Adam Zitello.

The Coordination Team expects to continue contributing funding to the collaboratives' efforts using \$25,000 allocated from Rhode Island's Oil Spill Prevention, Administration and Response Fund, and upwards of \$600,000 to be generated annually from two new fees established by the General Assembly under Budget Article 30 of the FY2008 state budget (a septage disposal fee of \$1 per 100 gallons and an annual fee on transatlantic submarine cables that utilize Rhode Island submerged lands). These funds help leverage other monies from federal and local sources to support the overall monitoring effort.

The Public Advisory Committee (PAC) of the Coordination Team also met at the end of 2007 for an update on the strategic plan and presentations by Kip Bergstrom, chair of the Economic Monitoring Collaborative, and Sue Kiernan, cochair of the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative. The PAC will play an important role in the review of the strategic plan, both in its current draft stage, and in the formal 60-day public input period. Final input would come after the public comments are incorporated and prior to Coordination Team approval.

"The Coordination Team represents an ambitious effort to enhance the quality of Rhode Island's waters and watersheds through the integration of environmental and economic priorities via a systems-management approach," said Ames Colt, Coordination Team chair. "We will continue to work to develop the data and knowledge that ecosystem-based management requires; we will be underscoring in the SLP the importance of the state improving technical assistance and training for

local governments; and we will, over time, enhance the cost-effectiveness and strategic capacities of marine, coastal, and water resource governance and economic development.”

“The Coordination Team and its partners offer plenty of compelling vision, but we have a long way to go,” Colt added. “Nevertheless, it was particularly encouraging to have the General Assembly endorse and support our efforts through passage

of Budget Article 30 last summer, despite an enormously challenging state budget situation that we all must cope with and help to resolve.”

—Chip Young

## KNAUSS FELLOWS WORKING IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ON OCEAN, COASTAL ISSUES

This year, Rhode Island Sea Grant has sent four graduate students to Washington, D.C., for one-year, \$41,500, National Sea Grant College Program Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowships. **Marselle Alexander-Ozinskas, Karen Hyun, Jennifer Mehaffey, and Christine Patrick** are among 48 Knauss Fellows who began working in the federal government on marine and coastal issues in February.

**Alexander-Ozinskas**, who recently received her master’s of science from the Brown University-Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory Program, has studied climate change in Alaska and received honors and awards for her scientific research, but a semester studying coastal ecology in Tanzania, where her work was constrained by cultural, political, and economic issues, taught her some of the limitations of science. Even in the United States, she says, society and technology “make it possible for most individuals to overlook the fact that we exist in a fragile living system that we affect and are affected by.” Through her Knauss Fellowship, she wants to bridge the gap between science and public knowledge and policy. Alexander-Ozinskas is working in the office of Guam delegate Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo. Bordallo is a member of the House Committee on Natural Resources and serves as chair of the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans.

**Hyun**, a doctoral candidate in marine affairs at URI, earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Earth systems, what she calls “science with a socially responsible conscience,” from Stanford University and received a Fulbright Scholarship to study fisheries management in South Korea. Her graduate work involves ecosystem-based management in the Colorado River Delta, and her interest is in reconciling jurisdictional boundaries with the ecosystems that cross those boundaries. Hyun is working for the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans in the House Committee on Natural Resources.

**Mehaffey** recently graduated from the joint-degree program that offers a master’s in marine affairs from URI and a law degree from Roger Williams University. Her experience ranges from volunteer work with prison inmates in New York to researching and drafting a municipal harbor management plan for the city of Warwick on behalf of the R.I. Coastal Resources Management Council. She is currently working with the Northeast Aquatic Nuisance Species Panel on a regional ballast water management plan to control invasive species. Mehaffey had dropped out of high school at 16, but went on to become a member of the Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society and graduate magna cum laude from Mount Holyoke College. She also received the 2006 National Association of Women Judges Award for Access to Justice. Mehaffey calls her work with city decision makers inspiring: “I had read numerous reports, legal opinions, and policy rationales, but nothing was more instructive than learning from these people whose lives are impacted on a daily basis by these concerns.” Mehaffey is working as an assistant to the Committee on the Marine Transportation System (a Cabinet-level interagency partnership).



Rhode Island Sea Grant’s 2008 Knauss Fellows are (from left): Christine Patrick, Jennifer Mehaffey, Marselle Alexander-Ozinskas, and Karen Hyun.

**Patrick**, who is pursuing her master’s in marine affairs from URI, worked for the American Fisheries Society in Bethesda, Md., where she saw conscientious scientists “shy away from questions about how their research informs policy” to the frustration of policymakers and environmental activists. Volunteering with the Washington, D.C., chapter of the Surfrider Foundation revealed another struggle: that of citizens unsure of how to use research to help improve their local environments. She says she “knew then that I wanted to serve as a translator of scientific information” for the benefit of scientists, policymakers, and users. Patrick is working as the Government and Public Affairs Fellow in the office of Ocean Exploration and Research, and is helping with the Smithsonian Ocean Hall, which opens September 25, 2008.

The Knauss Fellowship, established in 1979, matches highly qualified graduate students interested in ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources and in the national policy decisions affecting those resources with hosts in the federal, legislative, or executive branches of government.

—Monica Allard Cox