

**University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center/ Rhode Island Sea Grant
Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council**

**Woonasquatucket River Management Plan Workshop
(Area West of the Providence Place Mall)
February 9, 2007 from 2 – 5 p.m., Rm. 300
Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
235 Promenade St., Providence, RI**

Group 1 - Yellow

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Group Members:

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Priorities:

1. **Public Access-** The river is uninviting. There are few areas to get down to the river. The railing is a visual and physical barricade to pedestrians and people driving by. Mechanism for dealing with that needed. Promenade St. and Kinsley Aveue – opportunity to narrow, deal w/bikeway/dangers.
2. **Vegetation-** Increase the buffer. Failing floodwall, vegetation at floodwall – unsustainable location. Opportunity for regrading. Manage for low-growing vegetation to make river more inviting. Raide canopy in view to encourage view corridor. Invasives/problem vegetation include Japanese knotweed, bittersweet, poison ivy, Asiatic clams.
3. **Restoration potential-** Pleasant Valley St., Eagle Square riverbank. Geomorphological assessment of riverbank, widen pedestrian access, add appropriate vegetation, traffic calming management needed.
4. **Dredging-** Possible dredge basin adjacent to 95 or farther upstream.
5. **Classification-** Type 4 waters accommodate all types of activities, river too shallow for marinas.

Notes:

New Public Access

- To the river for canoes and kayaks

- Any new bridges constructed should accommodate kayak and canoe passage during high tide.
- Parking spaces needed to integrate with new access points
- New Pedestrian bridges
- Consider restricting heavy truck traffic on Harris Avenue.

Improvements

- River is uninviting
- Rail prevents access to river
- Low bridge at Eagle Square limits canoes
- Enhance existing public spaces
- Add pedestrian bridges
- New plan for failed walls and bioengineering of banks.

Acceptable Vegetation

Density

- Managed vegetation around public access points
- Maintain view sheds to the river
- Global eradication and management of Japanese knotweed
- Remove bittersweet, tree of heaven, Norway Maple, poison ivy, Asiatic clams

Restoration Policy

- Pleasant Valley Stream
- Eagle Square River Bank
- Riverbank failures- geomorphic assessment
- HEC-RAS model from Rising Sun upstream
- Methods to widen buffer and walkway along bikeway and promenade for traffic management

Dredging

- Dredge basin adjacent to 95 and Mall
- Perhaps a little farther upstream at Dean?
- Focus on prevention measures for the sedimentation measure upstream along with creating a catch basin in the lower Woonasquatucket.

Water Type Change

- Currently type 4- multipurpose

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Group 2

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Priorities:

1. **Pedestrian (lateral and cross-river) access-** Should be increased (especially in residential and mixed-use areas), and existing pedestrian areas should be made safer. Methods to achieve this goal may include widening areas between walkways and roads or altering traffic patterns to slow / reroute traffic adjacent to heavily-used public access points. (see Group 2 map for suggestions of new public access points)
2. **Visual access-** Visual access is as important and physical access. The river is the unifying theme for the neighborhood. Should be increased to promote public awareness and stewardship. Existing metal barriers should be replaced with more natural-looking (wooden?), safer, better designed barriers that allow views of river.
3. **Riverbank restoration-** Riverbanks should be restored to a more “natural” state where possible. This will be beneficial for several reasons including increased opportunities for recreation and public access points. Daylight the river.
4. **Existing native trees-** Should be preserved.
5. **Invasives removal-** Invasive species should be removed from the under story of vegetated riverbanks and replaced with low-maintenance native shrubs and groundcovers. “Natural design” techniques should be used to create an aesthetically pleasing and recreationally functional landscape that has wildlife habitat value. Keep mature trees.

6. **Stormwater infiltration-** An effort should be made to infiltrate stormwater where possible to control / reduce sediment loading and increase base flows.
7. **Maintenance-** The issue of maintenance is critical. We must determine who is responsible, how it will be funded, what needs to be done, etc.

Notes:

Public Access

- Create platform access points in front of Paul Cuffee School and at end of Holden St. (possible additional river crossing there).
- Safer pedestrian access to Providence Place from west side (currently very dangerous).
- Broaden sidewalks, create safer bikeways.
- Create wider riverbank / buffer zone in area in front of American Locomotive property.
- All undeveloped riverfront should be required to grant a dedicated easement for public access.
- Make the river more of a visual and physical focal point for the Promenade District

Vegetation

- Riverfront should appear “natural but accessible”
- The river itself should be viewed as the “anchor” for the entire area. If we improve the river, land uses will adapt.
- A comprehensive maintenance plan should be developed.
- CSOs have drastically altered hydrology of river. Need to infiltrate greater volumes of stormwater runoff (through vegetated practices) throughout watershed.
- Restore tree canopy by planting sycamores.

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Group 3

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Priorities:

1. **Visual Access-** Restore in a way that balances people and habitat with strong connections between all three.
2. **Vegetation-** On-going maintenance plan: sustainable, storm water enhancement, habitat potential, etc.
3. **Dredging and water quality-** Restore through low impact development and dredging standardizing regulations.

Notes:

Are there new points that can be dedicated for new public access?

- ALCO
 - Path
- Potential kayak site at Eagle Square
- Visual Access
 - Overlooks are overgrown (mall to Acom)
 - Need to balance with shade for wildlife habitat
 - Trim low-lying branches so as to retain shade. Needs an on-going maintenance plan that doesn't require permits/approval each year.
 - DOT/City of Providence MOV requires city to maintain and the city is not maintaining

- Bicycle Access
 - designated lanes
 - Don't have bicycle friendly gates
 - Broken glass
 - Litter creates obstacles
- Bridges
 - Use existing railroad bridge between Acom and Eagle for access.
 - Potential new bridge at ALCO
 - Pedestrian bridge between Dean and Mall- there are missing benches, metal bars, and safety hazards.
 - New vehicular bridge at 903/Hoblen Street
- Litter
 - Eagle Square is cleaned twice a day.
 - 99% floatable debris is trash thrown in river
 - No ready solution for litter problem and dumping. Eagle Square sends people out twice a day to pick up litter from the Paul Cuffee School. Others do regular cleanups.

What Should a list of acceptable vegetation species include?

- Are there species that are more flood resistant for banks that can get “feet wet”?
- Grassy bank or shrubs affect habitat, maintenance, decoration
- Should pick sustainable, native species

What should the vegetation density look like?

- More natural than Waterplace Park
 - Small under-story shrubs will help with view
- Many exotic trees existing that are holding the bank, but do not install new exotics, focus on natives
- Trees growing out of walls. Try to keep large natives but get rid of exotics. We need to keep the wall stable.
- Need to get more landscaping and shade on private property
- Most of corridor is public; Eagle Square and ALCO private
- Lots of nesting and foraging habitat
- Permeable pavement along sidewalks and streets
- Need balance between people and wildlife habitat
 - If all the vegetation is removed for visual access, there will be no wildlife
 - If all the vegetation is kept, there will be wildlife but people will not be able to see it
- Keep vegetation as dense as possible but open up specific places. Don't open up everything so there is visual access to the entire length.
- Consider both landscape at ground level and the view from above.
- A plan is needed for ongoing maintenance of plantings to replace exotics, permit infiltration, and keep habitat potential in mind

Are there areas that would be suitable for restoration?

- Mount Pleasant Stream- LaSalle Academy to River
 - Uncover
 - Create marsh
- History- stream reflects old farmlands

Water Quality Restoration

- Stormwater
 - Look at techniques to clean as much as possible
 - CSO will reduce most sewage overflow into the river
 - Sedimentation
- Green roofs
- How to balance with tax credit regulations
- Stormwater- reserve for irrigation
- How do you deal with upstream issues?
 - Standardize regulations
 - CRMC
 - DEM
 - Municipalities
- Low impact development
 - On-site infiltration

Which areas need dredging?

- Industry along river has discharged heavy metals into the sediment for the past 100 years
- Stagnant water in storm lines
- Dredge entire river
 - No one has proposed this in that past. Habitat impact would need to be considered
- Floods push sediment downstream
- Manage sediments before it gets to Mall
- Catch-basin management
- Lack of dredging can lead to fish kills
 - Mud ponds are left when the tide recedes
- Siltation pond west of mall and further upstream to deal with sedimentation from development upstream (DEM, Johnston, etc)
- Dredging can improve habitat by removing contaminants and stirring up nutrients which fosters marine growth.

Are there bio-remediation techniques that can be used instead of dredging?

- If some of the bulkhead could be removed, the flow of the river will increase silt removal.
- Old ponds in Greenville/Smithfield were released in July/Aug to increase flow during low flow times to ensure mill operation.
- Are dams still a concern due to toxic sediments built up behind them?

Water Type

- Currently type four
- Eugenia Marks- Amend to type 2 to allow new urban types. Can't be limited to low intensity use.

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Group 4

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Priorities:

1. **Maintenance-** A comprehensive maintenance plan is a must for development, LID, planting
2. **Visual Access-** Change the way people see the river – an attitude change is needed. Visual and physical access is important to the overall plan — maybe canoe/kayak access would be beneficial to residents and others. Visual and physical access are important to the overall plan. Maybe canoe/kayak access would be beneficial to residents and others.
3. **Water Type-** Zone 2 ½ = touchy subject when renegotiating what can go in these areas. The group was unclear on the implications of this question.

Notes:

Existing Public Access

- Pedestrian bridge east of Barron Street should be improved — art, landscaping, interpretive signage
- Issues where the benches are needed:
 - Better visual access
 - Low ground cover
 - Trash clean-up, need garbage cans
 - Maintenance
- Invasive plants need to be removed and the species that are already there remain
- Interpretation and historical signs to protect waterways and American heritage

- Bikers have problems seeing around the corners due to dense, high knotweed stands
- Maintain bike lane striping- different color statewide
- Sidewalk along river on Promenade Street from Mall to Bath is very narrow — user conflicts among bikers, pedestrians, and cars
- Traffic calming- people need to slow down
- Lane configuration changes to improve pedestrian/bike safety and slow traffic
- Lighting is frequently out
- Existing paths are hard to get to, sometimes necessary to jump over a fence
- Bridges lead nowhere and have ugly guard rails
- Unattractive guard rails line the entire corridor and prevent access

New Public Access

- New kayak launch
- Put in a traffic bridge 100 ft of new access
- New canoe site at the steelyard and Woon Council site
 - Concern with crossing the road
 - Traffic calming needed
- Eagle Square is a good place to park with no traffic
 - Prefer one each side
 - Future bridges should consider traffic passing under

Vegetation

- Low vegetation to enhance visual access
- Grow canopies
 - Shade on the water where there is less activity
 - Street trees
 - Better tree wells
- Maintain vegetation diversity for the birds and other wildlife
- ALCO will provide and keep canopy trees

Goal: Change the way neighbors/ residents view the river

Solutions:

- Care for it- there will be more eyes on it
- Street sweeping
- Adopt a river program- many groups interested
- Incentives for private landowners to manage their own stormwater and waste water
- People need to take ownership
- Quicker response to graffiti by the city
- Need to address litter/dumping problem

Public and Private Partnerships to secure federal and state funding

- Transportation funds
- NRCS needs to pool funds

- New account for UCG

Restoration needs to be in concert with redevelopment

- ALCO is a good example
- Pleasant Valley
 - WRWC has grant from RIDEM to figure out hydrology, land ownership, and other issues
 - Figure out what is going on
 - Daylighting stream
- Remove invasive species along entire stretch from coastal features

Dredging

- Contaminant concern
- Dredging/disposal should be coordinated not just at Waterplace Park
- Do street sweeping and other mechanisms to reduce sediments from entering

Water Type Designation

- See the river operation as a fish passage
- No parking on river's edge
- No direct discharge
- No marinas
- Access
- Low intensity recreation
- No autobody
- Fishing
- Pedestrian Bridge at Holden Street
- Mixed use