Year 3 Evaluation of Watershed Counts
May 2 and May 7, 2013

May 2, 2013 Attendees: Q Kellogg, Judith Swift (Coastal Institute), Meg Kerr, Lesley Lambert, Chris Deacutis (NBEP); Walter Berry, John Kiddon, Hal Walker, Marisa Mazzotta (EPA Narragansett Lab); Dennis Nixon (URI GSO); Elise Torello (Salt Ponds Coalition)

May 7, 2013 Attendees: Q Kellogg, Judith Swift (Coastal Institute); Meg Kerr (NBEP); Amie Parris and Sean McCormick (Dept of Health); Ames Colt (RI Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team); Peter Coffin (Blackstone River Coalition); Tom Kutcher (Save the Bay)

Year 3 Accomplishments: Based on feedback from the Year 2 evaluation, Watershed Counts implemented the following:

- Invited Long Island Sound Study and Buzzard Bay Coalition to a one day workshop on indicator development and communication (September 2012).
- Provided a briefing to the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources (January 2013)
- Completed development of freshwater quality indicators for all freshwater (rivers, streams, lakes and ponds) in the Narragansett Bay region.
- Completed analysis of RI land use data looking at land use change state wide, within 300 foot buffers of waterways and within the 100 and 500 year flood plain.
- Updated land use maps for all RI cities and towns. Will be on web site in 2013.
- Developed a water use metric.
- Updated and redesigned www.watershedcounts.org web site reflecting organization of indicators by resource areas (will go live in June 2013)
- Ongoing work on other metrics: updated the Beach Closure, Climate Change indicators. Reported on invasives in lakes and ponds as part of the freshwater report. Convened several meetings with URI Natural Resource Economics staff to explore economics metric.
- Revised the format of the report and created visually impactful posters with assistance from a graphic designer, Brian Jones.

Recommendations for Year 4 from Evaluation Workshops:

1. **Watershed Counts' target audience is decision makers at the state and local level. In order to create the most impactful message to legislators:**

Make the message local. Think about developing cover letters for legislatures that highlights a specific issue relevant to their area, then compare it with the rest of the

state/watershed. Highlight things their town is doing well as well as areas where they could improve, or improvements could be made, if we just had more data (push for more $ for monitoring)

Be specific and action oriented. Provide legislators with something specific they can do or bring to their constituents. The information must be locally important.
When preparing remarks, keep in mind the question "WHAT CAN THE LEGISLATURE DO ABOUT THIS ISSUE?" Watershed Counts will not lobby, but it can direct legislators to partners with specific requests.

2. **Recommendations for Maps:**

Consider adding some key landmarks such as Fields Point, Scituate Reservoir, Johnston landfill.

When the water quality posters were taken to the Bristol County Aggie Fair by Meg, there were many visitors who were confused by the color of individual watersheds. People wanted to know what the color meant.

3. **Recommendations for information sharing and website:**

Consider including a "My Town/watershed/county" feature in which folks can drill down to the areas they care about. Include all the relevant indicators. Link with Greg Bonynge and Lorraine Joubert who are developing interactive GIS maps for local use. Also connect with the EPA ORD lab. EPA, DEM and URI are working on data sharing and WC could serve as portal to these different data sources

Give more thought about how the website links to the sources as other websites change. This must be well vetted to the link takes you right to data you want them to see.

The 2013 report links do not work… Make sure they are active in all the reports!

EPA is developing mobile apps such as where to expect high levels of mercury in fish, and lake ecosystem services. These are potential areas of collaboration between WC and EPA.

Hold focus groups with libraries, town meetings, high school students, watershed organizations, etc to better vet the readability of the information and maps.
Be sure to dig deeper and provide specific information relating to the geographic area you are presenting to.

For Constant Contact emails: make information clear in subject line (date of meeting and which one); provide key information right up top; provide a calendar feature so folks can add it to theirs if they are interested

For Posters**:** Consider adding a section to Velcro arrows for each metric. Could also Velcro the data each year. Make the text bullet points rather than paragraphs on posters

Feedback on Watershed Counts metrics:

1. Land Use: Consider a more nuanced analysis of land use data. Convene a working group to help with directing analysis.
2. Water flow/water use: How will Watershed Counts include the MA portion of the watershed? The Coalition for Water Security used a graphic showing water use from the Scituate reservoir over time that highlighted when the demand exceeded the safe yield. Consider analysis of groundwater well data.
3. Freshwater Quality: Many unassessed areas are likely areas of high quality water quality. RIDEM directs monitoring resources to areas that are impaired. The report should reference this. The report should note that the large wastewater facilities in MA are moving ahead with upgrades. Plants in the Taunton watershed just received new permits.
4. Marine Water Quality: Consider showing changes in loadings from wastewater treatment plants in MA and RI.
5. Climate Change. Watershed Counts should continue to report on sea surface temperature. But be clear that this is only one station. Is there temperature data with the fish trawl surveys? Or at the Newport gage? The Kingston weather station could be used to show changes in total annual precipitation.

New Metrics for Watershed Counts to consider:

1. Fish. Look at changes in abundance, distribution, shifts from demersal to pelagic within Narragansett Bay. Mark Gibson would be a good lead contact. Fisheries could also have a strong economic component (NIMFS is already analyzing this in many places)

2. Shellfish. Look at closures/ acres days open, aquaculture, economics. This information should be developing in partnership with the Shellfish Management Plan under development. Bay scallops are coming back – should WC report on findings?

3. Boating. We could report on # of marinas, # boats, # pump out facilities. There is a strong economic component. Marisa Mazzotta mentioned that Massachusetts has recently completed a study that could be used as a model.

4. Seagrass. A recent study by STB and NBNERR has just been published. Candace Oviatt also has data.

5. Invasive Species focusing on the marine environment. Recent reports show that Quonset is the 7th largest port in the country for cars. Ballast water is a big concern; climate change is also a big factor in invasives establishment.

6. Seals. Also links to fisheries. STB has a seal watch program, and there are a few others out there as well.

7. Non-point source measurements – cesspool phase out #s. MA has a billion gallons goal for infiltration. Is it locally defined? Could we track progress in the NB watershed?

8. Are there other CHEMICAL parameters we should include in our Marine Waters assessment? The May 2 group thought not. On nutrients; WC is looking at the reduction in nutrient discharges and hopes to work with DEM to release the information in coming years. On other chemical parameters; heavy metals are more of a legacy issue so there is not much to report on. Other things such as Pharmaceuticals not well vetted or studied just yet, keep on back burner.

9. Phenology (changes in bird populations, timing of herring runs, tree blooming, leaf out, etc)