



Upper Narragansett Bay/Providence River Geographic Response Plan (GRP) Project

March 28, 2008, 1:00 p.m.

RIDEM

235 Promenade Street
Providence, RI 02908

Attendees

Peter August – Coastal Institute
James Ball – RI DEM/Emergency Response
Elise DeCola – Nuka Research
Janet Freedman – RI CRMC
Josh Hill – Promet Marine Services Corp
Lori Gibson – RI DEM/Fish & Wildlife
Scott Metzger – Clean Harbors
Glenn Hogan – City of Prov – Police Dept
Ash Kinzel – Sprague
Elizabeth Hernberg - Sprague

Steve Lehmann – NOAA SSC (Boston)
Michael Mulhare – RI DEM/Emerg Resp
Ron Pigeon – USCG Sector Providence
Mike Popovich – USCG District 1 Boston
Michael Sullivan – Motiva Enterprises
John Torgan – Save the Bay
Todd Turcotte – Capital Terminals
John Whyte – Clean Harbors
Kate Wright – Nuka Research

Welcome & Introduction

Michael Mulhare of the RIDEM gave opening remarks, introducing himself and welcoming meeting participants. He explained that the RIDEM will direct the Geographic Response Plan (GRP) project, with funding provided by Motiva Enterprises. He explained that Nuka Research and Planning has been contracted to facilitate the Planning Group and the GRP development process and introduced Elise DeCola of Nuka Research. He noted that this project would focus on Upper Narragansett Bay and the Providence River, and that the State of Rhode Island hoped to use the process and format developed through this initial project to develop additional GRPs for other coastal areas of the state.

Project Overview

Elise DeCola gave an overview of GRPs, explaining that they are map-based response strategies and that they are not performance standards or mandates, but are response tools. She stated that standardization is valuable in terms of communicating effectively and minimally. GRPs also help set expectations, as information becomes available to the public in terms of response limitations.

DeCola explained that the study area for this project would include the Upper Narragansett Bay. DeCola stated that this project is seeking expertise on areas of sensitivity, especially from the knowledgeable stakeholders present at the meeting. She also noted that the collective response experience and on-water operations experience of the work group participants would benefit the project greatly.

DeCola thanked Motiva Enterprises for its generous funding, which not only supports the creation of GRPs, but also the testing of them. DeCola highlighted the key steps in the current GRP development process:

- Form workgroup



- Select sites
- Survey sites
- Develop GRP
- Test/modify GRP
- Publish GRP

DeCola showed examples of Massachusetts and Alaska GRPs and asked for feedback in site selection matrix.

Ash Kinzel of Sprague Energy explained that his company had recently completed a project to develop GRPs for the study area, as part of a larger corporate project to develop booming strategies for multiple terminals in other states. He brought along aerial photographs and an overview map and offered to share them in contribution to this project. He explained that his GRP included booming strategies with pictures as well as an emergency action plan that describes the response process. DeCola thanked Sprague for sharing this information and noted that she would work with DEM and Sprague to incorporate their existing work and minimize duplication of efforts.

Establishing Oil Spill Protection Priorities

Steve Lehmann, Scientific Support Coordinator from NOAA, discussed establishing oil spill protection priorities for GRPs and for spill response. He emphasized that priority differs from sensitivity – sensitivity is objective and science-based, whereas priority is stakeholder-based. He shared several examples of oil spill scenarios where priorities differed, depending on stakeholders. He noted that in most cases, resource managers (local, state federal) determine priorities. He suggested that initial considerations should include – what is protectable? To whom is it important? How long does injured take to recover?

Lehmann showed several examples of a decision-making tool that had been developed for the State of Maine to help them identify their spill protection priorities, and explained various components of this tool.

Implementing GRP During a Spill Response

Ron Pigeon, from the USCG Sector Southeastern New England, thanked Motiva and DEM for initiating this project, and expressed appreciation at the high level of industry, state, and local involvement. He explained that the Coast Guard has been an active participant in the ongoing Massachusetts GRP project in Cape Cod and the Islands, and that they looked forward to continuing the good work in Rhode Island. He noted that the project has value in that prioritization issues are worked through ahead of time, and he emphasized that continuous reassessment is necessary.

Site Selection Process & Standardized Tactics

DeCola spoke about the process that would be used to select sites for the Providence GRP. She showed a map of potential GRP locations and noted that due to the small size of the study area, it was likely that most or even all of the inlets or sensitive areas where GRP are needed would be included in the project. She showed how in past projects, they have used a site selection matrix to list out the resource sensitivity information for each potential site, and that based on that information and on other prioritization input from stakeholders and resource agencies, DEM would select a list of sites for GRP development. She asked for input from the group and particularly from resource agencies regarding the protection priorities at each site, and several work group participants offered to provide additional information and review.



DeCola then spoke briefly about the importance of standardizing terminology when discussing oil spill response tactics, and noted that Nuka Research had developed standardized oil spill response tactics guides to assist with GRP development in Massachusetts and Alaska, and hoped to use a similar reference during this project. She showed an example of how the tactics guide would describe one type of tactics (diversion booming), and noted that having a standard definition of how a tactic may be deployed provides a common language and helps with identifying resource needs during implementation.

The group then moved on to discuss field testing of these GRPs. DeCola reiterated her excitement that the project included such a strong testing component, and noted that since the group had just found out about the existence of the Sprague GRP booming strategies, they may be able to utilize some of those strategies and focus instead on testing more sites.

Field Deployment of GRPs

Scott Metzger of Clean Harbors explained that he has had significant experience developing and testing GRPs. He noted that all plans seem to need modification once deployment has been attempted. He reminded the group that it is important to be realistic about what resources are actually available, versus what should be available, and to make it clear in the GRP and to responders that improvisation will occur. He agreed with the value in using the process here to pare down protection priorities so that the highest priority sites can be protected first. He proposed that the group should consider not waiting until the end of the project to test the GRPs, but instead testing up front, as the GRPs are being written. He volunteered that his equipment would be in the water the end of April/early May and proposed that the group take advantage of this situation to test one or more booming strategies. All agreed.

Lehmann interjected that in California, where he recently worked on the *Cosco Busan* spill response, they have a policy where eight GRPs are tested each year. He noted that, though costly, this program is extremely valuable in keeping the GRPs fresh. He explained that the tests are paid for by the industry and/or response organizations, who in turn may receive USCG drill credits.

Local Involvement and Input

John Torgan, Narragansett Baykeeper, from Save the Bay, offered many practical resources, in support of this project, such as meeting space at their Fox Point offices and use of their boat ramps and possibly their vessels. He also explained that Save the Bay provides a number of important roles in the event of an oil spill, including information dissemination, volunteer coordination, and even offering their office space, staff, parking, and boat ramp to support aspects of the response if needed. He explained that Save the Bay would communicate back to their constituents about this project and help to solicit public feedback on the site prioritization process.

DeCola interjected that RIDEM was also seeking the input and collaboration of local harbormasters and fire departments into this project. DeCola said that she had spoken to the RI Harbormasters' Association the previous day at their annual meeting and had added a number of local contacts to the work group list.

Comments and Suggestions

Mike Mulhare stated that having a GRP helps with the "Monday morning quarterback" syndrome. GRPs help defend decisions made during a response, and ensuring that the public understand the deliberation and work that goes into GRP development can go a long way in diffusing some of the criticism that may arise during an actual spill. He noted that



Rhode Island has typically experienced a significant marine oil spill every 8-10 years, and that it is only a matter of time before another spill occurs. The GRP will provide a tool to assist in responding to future spills, if needed.

DeCola thanked the group for their time and noted that the strong participation would benefit the project. She emphasized that she was still developing a contact list for this project and welcomed any suggestions for additional participants.

Timeline and Next Meeting

DeCola stated that the next meeting would be held in a month or so to finalize selection of sites in anticipation of field surveys to be conducted in May/June. She stated that they hoped to have all the fieldwork done before the summer season and to work on developing the content over the summer, then testing the GRPs in the fall. Once the GRPs have been tested and finalized, the document would be forwarded to the Area Committee for review and incorporation into the Area Contingency Plan.

Meeting information will be posted to the project website.

Action Items

- DeCola will send out site selection matrix and ask for help completing information for each site.
- Nuka Research will work with RIDEM to set up meetings with harbormasters and fire departments to towns & cities in the study area to incorporate their priorities and expertise.
- DeCola will coordinate with Clean Harbors regarding a possible April/May deployment.
- DeCola and Mulhare will meet with Sprague Energy to review their GRP and consider how best to mesh the two projects.
- DeCola will update the project website at <http://rigrp.nukaresearch.com/> with meeting materials and information about future meetings.