

**Waterplace Park and Providence River Dredging Project  
Public Meeting, South Street Landing  
October 2, 2019, 5:30 – 7:00 pm**

**Project Overview**

Wendy Nilsson, City of Providence Parks Department

- Welcome and Introductions

Sheila Dormody, The Nature Conservancy in Rhode Island

- RI voters approved the Clean Water and Green Economy Bond in 2018 by 79%-21% margin
- Environmental advocates and the Providence Foundation, representing the business community, worked together to see the Providence dredging project included in the bond.
- Downtown rivers important to the ongoing revitalization of Providence (economic development, recreation, etc.)

John O'Brien, The Nature Conservancy in Rhode Island

- TNC has an agreement with CRMC to provide additional capacity for managing the Providence dredging project, due to its unique spatial challenges and very short timeline. TNC responsible for providing contract management services (engineering, survey, design, permitting, and executing contracts necessary for dredging). Also outreach and communication.
- DEM permitting process required sediment sampling to determine particle size and chemical analysis of the substrate material; no issues found.
- DEM also required a shellfish survey to determine potential impacts to the river's ecology. TNC hired a commercial quahog harvester, who sampled from Waterplace Park to the pedestrian bridge. No shellfish found.
- Dredging will take place during the winter to avoid spawning winter flounder and river herring migration into Woonasquatucket River.

Dan Goulet, RI Coastal Resources Management Council

- Scope of the project extends from the Amtrak bridge under the Providence Place mall to the Crawford Street Bridge piers. This is a maintenance dredging project, removing 4-5 feet of sediment, which is mostly road sand that washed into the river over the past 25 years.
- Contractor plans to begin mobilizing equipment to Rhode Island in early November (4 aluminum workboats, trailer and 3 shipping containers, 10,500 feet of dredge pipe, etc).
- Target start date is November 15. Project will run 24-7, barring mechanical breakdowns. Estimate 25-28 days of actual dredging. Our goal is to complete the project by the end of the year.
- Dredged material will be pumped through the hurricane barrier to the Quay on the East Providence waterfront. Will be aided by a booster pump at the Crawford Street Bridge; noise will be muffled by a sound wall. Dredge pipe will be anchored to the bottom of the upper bay, ensuring it doesn't interfere with shipping traffic.

- At the Quay, the sand will be separated from water and stored there. A separate permitting process will determine whether the material can be used at the Quay or trucked offsite.
- Dredge will be equipped with specialized adaptations to work under and around the downtown bridges. The contractor has experience working near people. The river will be open for navigation during the project and the areas of park space that are currently open will remain open.
- CRMC and contractor will mitigate the noise as much as possible. Dredge may be loud in the immediate area where it's working, but it will not stay in any one location for long.
- The project will cost about \$5 million, paid for by the Clean Water and Green Economy bond.
- Unfortunately, the shape of the project area, especially Waterplace Park, is inherently good at trapping sediment. Likely will require additional dredging in 15-18 years, possibly sooner in high priority areas.

### **Questions and Answers:**

*Will the City be required to do better maintenance of stormdrains, use less road sand, etc? Or will the river just fill up again?*

The City of Providence and RIDOT are operating under consent agreements with DEM and the EPA, respectively, which covers catch basin maintenance. This work is funded by the City's capital improvement program.

*Why doesn't the project extend to the pedestrian bridge (and beyond)?*

1) That section of the river was not dredged during the river relocation project, meaning it would be a new project instead of maintenance dredging, triggering a different permitting process. 2) The sediment south of the Crawford Street bridge is a very different – not suitable for beneficial re-use, very silty and not appropriate for a hydraulic dredge. Removing it will require different equipment, like a clamshell bucket, and it would have to be disposed of in the CAD cells. This section will be considered. This will be considered as a potential for Phase II.

*What is the water quality like in the basin at Waterplace Park?*

In the spring, the dissolved oxygen is 7 parts per million, which can sustain aquatic life. In summer, DO falls to about 4 parts per million, which stresses fish. Bacteria counts get very high in summer. Nitrogen and phosphorous are above average but improving. The Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council is installing a number of stormwater control projects, particularly in Olneyville, which will help.

*The "makeshift" booms in the river are clogged with trash. Are they part of this project?*

The booms are part of a test to find effective methods of capturing floatables, like plastic bottles. They illustrate how much trash is getting into the river, but they are not related to the dredging project.

*Should Waterplace Park be redesigned?*

Any time you have a non-natural channel, it's going to fill with sediment and require maintenance. Constructing a settling basin in the river, at an easily accessible site upstream of the mall, would be useful and make maintenance cheaper and easier. Meanwhile, we have to do a better job of preventing

sand from entering the river. DOT is incorporating that goal into the replacement of the Route 6/Route 10 connector.

*Will the dredging project solve the flooding at high tide?*

Unfortunately, it won't. The flooding is a function of sea level rise, rather than the depth of the basin. However, the City has raised the lighting in Waterplace Park.

*Why didn't the bond include enough money for Phase 2 (south of Crawford Street)?*

The bond was broadly written based on our best cost estimate at the time. We didn't have enough data to justify a bigger request. Sediment testing and design clarified how much we can actually accomplish through this project. As noted earlier, working in Waterplace Park and downtown requires specialized equipment, which wouldn't work farther south. Based on the current proposed work and costs, there is the potential for a \$2 million balance to explore what can be done at the settling basin.

*There used to be a fountain in the Waterplace Park basin. Can the City put it back?*

The Parks Department can look into it. However, bacteria levels in the river pose a challenge (a fountain could spread bacteria through the air.)