



**Geographic Response Plans for Blackstone and Pawtuxet – Rhode Island Project**

**November 16, 2017 – 1:00 - 3:00 PM**

**RI DEM Office  
235 Promenade Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02908**

**Initial Work Group Meeting Summary**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 1 is developing 10 Geographic Response Plans or GRPs, for the Blackstone and Pawtuxet Rivers in Rhode Island. GRPs are map-based plans tailored to protect specific sensitive areas from oil spill impacts. They show first responders where sensitive areas are located and where to place oil spill protection resources to protect those areas. GRPs can save time during the critical first few hours of an oil spill response.

A Blackstone and Pawtuxet GRP Work Group consisting of Federal, State, and local environmental emergency response partners will identify the candidate area(s) for development of these GRPs. Members of the Work Group will represent state and federal agencies, local governments and organizations, stakeholder groups, the oil industry, and spill response professionals.

This was the first meeting of the Blackstone and Pawtuxet GRP Work Group. During this meeting, the project was introduced to all participants, the work group was asked for additional participation in all phases of the project, and the preliminary site selection information was disseminated for review and input from Work Group members and their constituents.

**Participants**

- US EPA
- RI DEM
- USCG
- USGS
- Coast Line Services
- Moran Environmental Recovery
- University of Rhode Island
- Providence Fire
- North Smithfield
- Providence Emergency Management Agency
- Providence Water
- Save the Bay
- Newton B Washburn Environmental
- Pawtucket Central Falls Emergency Management Agency
- Nuka Research

For a complete list of participants, contact Alyssa Hall at [alyssa@nukaresearch.com](mailto:alyssa@nukaresearch.com) or Mike Popovich at [Popovich@nukaresearch.com](mailto:Popovich@nukaresearch.com).



## Agenda

**Introduction and Opening Comments:** Mike Popovich (Nuka Research) opened the meeting by introducing the work group to the general process of creating Geographic Response Plan, discussing how the project is funded, and introducing the key stakeholders to the project (US EPA, RI DEM). He emphasized the importance of collaboration in the development of the GRPs, and asked the stakeholders to add their thoughts and concerns to the process to make sure that the GRPs accurately reflect the priorities of the towns. He informed the workgroup that at the next meeting of the workgroup, they would decide the locations of the ten geographic response plans that will be produced for the Blackstone and Pawtuxet rivers.

**Role of RI DEM Office of Emergency Management:** Jim Ball (RI DEM) gave an overview to the workgroup of the role that RI DEM plays in oil spill response and other emergency response instances. RI DEM plays a role in response actions such as mercury, biological white powders, and now fentanyl. He discussed the impacts of the 2010 floods and emphasized that geographic response plans would have played an important role in the response and would have made the response much more efficient. He is hoping to implement more GRPs in the Pawcatuck river in the future, because DEM responds to a lot of spill issues in that area.

**Role of GRPs Within the Regional Contingency Plan:** John McKeown (US EPA) then discussed the role that GRPs play in the National Contingency Planning hierarchy as well as the federal regulations that influence the contingency planning system.

**Establishing Oil Spill Protection Priorities:** Mike Popovich shared an example site selection matrix with the group to illustrate what it looks like, how it would be used and how the group could help to fill it out with the most updated information possible on areas that are environmentally, culturally and economically sensitive in addition to areas where there are human use concerns such as water treatment facilities and other important facilities are located.

**GRP Development Process & Project Timeline:** Mike Popovich (Nuka Research) then provided further details on the GRP Development process including a recommended timeline of project-related events as well as ways that workgroup members can participate and provide input. Projected project timeline:

- February/March 2018: Site Selection Meeting to prioritize and select sites for GRP development.
- April/May 2018: Site surveys to gather information on the selected sites.
- May 2018: Tactics Sub Group Meeting to develop tactics for specific sites.
- July/August 2018: GRP Review Meeting to finalize submission to EPA.

The next step of the project will be selecting the sites along the rivers using the site selection matrix to guide the decision of the workgroup. He asked the workgroup to provide information (either quantitative or qualitative) on the rivers that will influence where the GRPs will be developed. The information that the workgroup provides will be included in the site selection matrix, which Nuka Research will be putting together.

### Next Steps:

Nuka Research will:



- a. Post meeting summary on project website and accept feedback within set comment period.
- b. Post a draft Site Selection Matrix for the Work Group to provide input.
- c. Post documents and presentations used in this meeting on the project website.
- d. Begin populating the site selection matrix with additional data provided by the workgroup.
- e. Schedule the site selection meeting with input and availability from the workgroup.

**Project Website:** [www.inlandgrpne.com](http://www.inlandgrpne.com)

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