

CONNECTICUT RIVER ESTUARY REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY
Thirty-sixth Annual Report
2003-2004

The Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency (CRERPA) is in its 36th year of planning for the nine-town Estuary region. CRERPA consists of two representatives from each member town, one representing the Board of Selectmen and the other representing the Planning Commission. Our current Chairman is Bruce Edgerton of Deep River. The CRERPA Board meets on the first Monday of each month at 7:30pm at the Agency office in the Saybrook Junction Marketplace, next to the train station. Visitors are always welcome to stop by during regular work hours, from 9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday.

CRERPA has a staff of seven full-time employees, including a director, three planners, a GIS specialist and a financial administrator. Three additional staff members work part-time. The service of other consultants is contracted independently. CRERPA is supported financially from a variety of federal, state and local sources. The largest portion of the CRERPA budget continues to be the annual contribution of its nine member towns, with other major support coming from the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the State Office of Policy and Management, and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

Regional Organizations

CRERPA helps its member towns work together voluntarily to solve common problems affecting the Estuary Region. During the year, CRERPA provided staff support and meeting space for several area organizations including the following:

The Lower Connecticut Valley Selectman's Association (LCVSA), brings the chief elected officials of the region together monthly to discuss common interests, including transportation, elderly services, solid waste disposal and recycling. On behalf of LCVSA, CRERPA completed construction of a long-planned regional household hazardous waste facility in May. The LCVSA also serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning purposes for the Estuary Region. First Selectman Michael Pace of Old Saybrook is the LCVSA Chair.

The Connecticut River Gateway Commission, which meets monthly at the CRERPA office, was established in 1973 by State Statute to protect the scenic and environmental qualities of the Lower Connecticut River through a compact among the eight towns that border the River estuary. The Commission actively participates in the acquisition of land and easements for conservation purposes. Gateway member towns have agreed to adopt common zoning standards for development in the area near the River. Recent revisions to the Gateway standards address the proliferation of large-scale development along the river.

Tidewater Institute was created in 2003 through the hard work of Judy Preston of Old Saybrook, as a new initiative designed to address key threats to the significant natural resources of the Connecticut River Estuary. A portion of Ms. Preston's time and office space for the new organization was initially funded through CRERPA, with assistance from the Gateway Commission. Additional grants and donations have been received to continue the work during the coming year.

The Estuary Transit District (ETD) was established in 1981, with the help of CRERPA, to provide public transportation in the Region. In July, 2003, CRERPA successfully transferred administration of the program to an independent office for the Estuary Transit District. Stan Greimann was hired as interim director until Jim Rode took over the administration of the public transit service in November, 2003. CRERPA continues to provide comprehensive planning services for the district. This is a critical function as the district, under the capable direction of Jim Rode continues to expand programs, hours and routes

The Cable TV Advisory Council (CATV) was established in 1984 to give cable customers a voice in expressing their needs and desires in cable programming. Estuary towns in the Council include Chester, Clinton, Deep River, Durham, Essex, Haddam, Killingworth, Old Saybrook and Westbrook with representatives from selectmen, boards of education and libraries.

Local Technical Assistance

A major component of CRERPA's work program is technical assistance to individual member towns. Staff has helped several towns work on their Plans of Conservation & Development as well as provide zoning enforcement backup for municipal staff. During the year, CRERPA Planner Jean Davies helped Essex complete a comprehensive update of their municipal plan. CRERPA assisted several towns in developing new zoning regulations and has provided consultant planning services, reviewing projects independent of the Agency's normal regional duties. CRERPA staff is available to answer questions or conduct research on land use and planning matters for local officials.

With a grant through the Long Island Sound license plate fund and supplemental funding from the Gateway Commission, GIS Specialist Margot Burns has prepared educational materials on the basics of acquiring and stewarding conservation easements, as well as a preliminary GIS database of conservation easements located within the towns of the Connecticut River Gateway Conservation Zone. Through Ms. Burns' efforts, the Agency continues to upgrade its GIS capabilities to provide better services to its towns, while renewing its efforts to bring a coordinated regional approach to GIS.

Other Activities

The Agency provides information and education on regional planning issues intended to carry out the recommendations of the Regional Plan of Development. Jean Davies serves as regional transportation planner and has begun work on the required revision of the Regional Transportation Plan. Dorothy Papp, the Agency's financial administrator, is developing a new CRERPA Webpage at crerpa.org.

Amy Cabaniss serves as the CRERPA Regional Recycling Coordinator and Environmental Educator. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on June 24th, for the regional household waste permanent facility in Essex. Ralph Eno of Lyme was hired as the Household Hazardous Waste Coordinator for the facility and arranges for HHW collections for the Estuary towns. Sixteen on-site collections and five satellite collections will be held from May through October.

Clean Harbors Environmental Services is the chemical waste handler for the facility.

Upon request from the CT DEP, the CRERPA publication "*Boaters' Wheel: A Guide to Keeping Connecticut Waters Clean*" was reprinted with DEP and EPA sponsorship. These circular slide

charts, created by Ms. Cabaniss for CRERPA, are being distributed throughout the state to boaters via DEP spill kits.

Planner Jean Davies is nearing completion of nine individual town Natural Hazard Mitigation plans. These plans include mitigation of natural hazards including hurricanes, flooding, tornadoes, drought, wildfire, and winter storms, As part of this effort, the Agency hired local engineer Ken Kells to review repetitive loss properties as an addendum to each plan. Mr. Kells completed those studies and issued a report in February 2004. Once these plans are adopted by the nine member towns, funding for mitigation efforts will be available to the communities.

Under the direction of the State Office of Emergency Management, the State's fifteen regional planning organizations, including CRERPA, were assigned responsibility for coordination of domestic preparedness planning within their regions. Federal FEMA funds are being channeled through regional agencies such as CRERPA to update local Emergency Operations Plans by adding anti-terrorism and anti-bioterrorism components.

During the fiscal year, Planner Torrance Downes completed a comprehensive study of private residential docks within the lower Connecticut River. Phase 1, funded by the LIS License Plate Program, inventoried current docks and dock standards and projected a future buildout scenario. Phase 2, funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), established a model program for developing standards and criteria for private residential docks

CRERPA completed the fourth of a series of canoe and kayak trail maps, this time for Old Saybrook's North and South Coves. Previous projects mapped trails for the waterfronts of Deep River, Old Lyme and Essex. Free laminated trail guides can be found in local libraries, town halls, the DEP Marine Headquarters, North Cove Outfitters and at CRERPA.

CRERPA staff continues to assist member towns with local open space plans, which will serve as building blocks for a regional greenway plan. The regional greenway plan will be part of the background work for a new regional Plan of Conservation and Development to be completed in 2005.

Board Members as of June 30, 2004:

CHESTER:	Natalie Williams, Treasurer, Christine Nelson
CLINTON:	Elizabeth Isaacson, P.J. McCracken
DEEP RIVER:	Bruce Edgerton, Chairman; Clifford Kelly
ESSEX	Ray Gastil, Carla Feroni
KILLINGWORTH:	Pat Smulders, Jere Adametz
LYME:	Frank Skwarek, Joan Rich
OLD LYME:	Jane Marsh, Alan Bayreuther
OLD SAYBROOK:	Stuart Fairbank, Vice Chairman; Karen Marcolini
WESTBROOK:	William Neale, Secretary; Doris Sanstrom

CRERPA STAFF: Linda Krause, Executive Director; Planners Torrance Downes, Jean Davies, Wini Olson and Judy Preston; Recycling Coordinator Amy Cabaniss; HHW Coordinator Ralph Eno; GIS Specialist Margot Burns; Financial Administrator Dorothy Papp; Office Manager Pat Anthony