

# CONNECTICUT RIVER ESTUARY REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY

## Thirty-fifth Annual Report

2002-2003

The Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency (CRERPA) is in its 35<sup>th</sup> 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. CRERPA has a staff of five full-time employees, including a director, three planners and a financial administrator. Three additional staff members work part-time. The service of other consultants is contracted independently. 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 and often do.

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.

As of July 1, 2003, CRERPA will serve as a Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning purposes.

### Regional Issues

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)*, formed in 1967, brings the chief elected officials of the region together monthly to discuss common interests. Some common interests have included elderly services, public transit, solid waste disposal and regional recycling facilities. On behalf of LCVSA, CRERPA has finalized preparations for constructing the region's household hazardous waste facility in member town Essex. Work on a Hazard Mitigation Plan for the nine Estuary towns is ongoing. During the fiscal year, former Association Chairman James McCusker of Clinton handed over the gavel to current Chairman Mike Pace of Old Saybrook.

*The Connecticut River Gateway Commission* was established in 1973 by State Statute to protect the scenic and environmental qualities of the Lower Connecticut River through a compact among the towns that border the River. Member towns have agreed to adopt specific zoning requirements for development near the River. The Gateway Commission also purchases and receives conservation land and conservation easements. Fred Vollono of Essex chairs the Gateway Commission. Drafting new zoning standards for development along the River has been a key focus of The Gateway Commission. The goal is the adoption of such standards into the zoning regulations of the eight Gateway towns. Such standards will address the continued

proliferation of large-scale development along the river. CRERPA and the Gateway Commission hosted a series of forums entitled “Charting the Course” with experts on lower river topics including the area’s economy, scenic and historic aspects, and the biological aspects of the lower river. Discussions continue concerning competing use of public trust resources.

*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 a independent office for the Estuary Transit District. This was done under the auspices of the present chairperson, Doris Sandstrom. Stan Greinman 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 Shoreline Shuttle operates from Old Saybrook through Westbrook and Clinton on its way to meet the New Haven bound Datteo bus in Madison. A new “by request” service entitled “The Bus” has been developed. With the addition of The Bus, the Estuary Transit District now serves all nine Estuary Region towns. Finding the task of administering the ETD very time consuming, CRERPA indicated that it would be unable to continue as administrator in the future. Effective July 1, 2003 CRERPA no longer administers the ETD, although transit planning services for the district will continue.~~

*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. The current chairman is Robert Mathis.

### **Local Technical Assistance**

A major component of CRERPA’s work program is technical assistance to individual towns on planning and zoning issues. Staff has helped several towns work on their Plans of Conservation & Development as well as provide zoning enforcement backup for Municipal Staff. CRERPA assisted several towns in developing new zoning regulation and has provided consultant planning services, reviewing projects independent of the Agency’s normal regional duties. CRERPA staff is always available to answer questions or conduct research on land use and planning matters for local officials.

New Staff Member Margot Burns was hired January 2003 and is working on a DEP grant obtained by the Gateway Commission entitled “Conservation Easements: Everything You Need to Know”. This project concerns the importance of conservation easement stewardship and Margot is creating a database of all conservation easements located within the Conservation Zone of the Connecticut River. Margot also serves as GIS Coordinator for the Estuary Region.

### **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 absorbing the additional responsibilities that come with the Agency’s new status as a Metropolitan Planning Organization **and has begun work** Jean is also working on upgrading CRERPA’s computer and network system. Amy Cabaniss serves as the Regional Recycling Coordinator and Environmental Educator. A groundbreaking ceremony was held on

May 14<sup>th</sup>, for the regional household waste permanent facility. The notice to proceed was given to G. Donovan Associates, the construction firm, on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. The anticipated completion date is October 15, 2003, with a first collection to be held on November 8<sup>th</sup>.

During the year, CRERPA assumed new responsibilities for Domestic Preparedness Planning. The State of Connecticut is channeling federal anti-terrorism funds through regional planning agencies such as CRERPA to update local Emergency Operations Plans by adding anti-terrorism and anti-bioterrorism components.

CRERPA has completed research on Phase I of a study of dock permitting criteria for the lower Connecticut River. Phase II includes mapping existing docks and projecting. Also completed were the canoe and kayak trail projects in Deep River, Old Lyme and Old Saybrook.

A Long Island Sound Study Grant was awarded to CRERPA to develop revised reprints of the Boaters' Wheel and the Connecticut Waterways video. These were completed and 2,500 copies of the Wheel were forwarded to the DEP for an inclusion in their Clean Boater packets, which go out to boaters throughout the State. For their participation in the Clean Boater and Clean Marina programs, Amy Cabaniss and CRERPA consultant Diane Rhodes received Green Circle Awards from the Connecticut DEP.

Compost bins were purchased by CRERPA and given to each of the nine towns at a significantly discounted rate for distribution at the discretion of the towns.

The Winter/Spring 2003 issue of *Estuary Forum* was distributed to an estimated 500 people in the Region. This marks our 15<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Estuary Forum*.

CRERPA Staff continues to assist member towns with local open space plans, which will serve as building blocks for a regional greenway plan.

### **CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS**

<b>CHESTER:</b>	Natalie Williams, Treasurer
<b>CLINTON:</b>	Edward Limoncelli
<b>DEEP RIVER:</b>	Bruce Edgerton, Chairman; Clifford Kelly
<b>ESSEX</b>	Ray Gastil, Carla Feroni
<b>KILLINGWORTH:</b>	Pat Smulders, Jere Adametz
<b>LYME:</b>	Frank Skwarek, Joan Rich
<b>OLD LYME:</b>	Jane Marsh, Alan Bayreuther
<b>OLD SAYBROOK:</b>	Stuart Fairbank, Vice Chairman; Karen Marcolini
<b>WESTBROOK:</b>	William Neale, Secretary; Doris Sanstrom

### **CRERPA STAFF (FY 2002-2003)**

**Linda Krause, Executive Director**  
**J. H. Torrance Downes, Senior Planner**  
**Winifred Olson, Regional Planner**  
**Jean Davies, Transportation Planner**

**Amy Cabaniss Recycling Coordinator**  
**Dorothy Papp, Finance Administrator**  
**Margot Burns, GIS Specialist**  
**Pat Anthony, Office Manager**