

**Nashua River Wild & Scenic Study Committee**  
**Notes from the Study Committee Meeting**  
NRWA's River Resource Center, 592 Main Street, Groton, MA  
September 15, 2016

**INFORMAL NOTES**

*Members Present:* Beth Suedmeyer & Robert Pontbriand(Ayer); Leah Basbanes & Judy Larter (Dunstable); Nadia Madden (Groton); Lucy Wallace (Harvard); Ryan McNutt (Lancaster); Paula Terrasi (Pepperell); Karen Chapman (Townsend)

*NRWA Staff:* Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell, Al Futterman

*NPS:* Jamie Fosburgh

*Ex Officio:* Tim Purinton (DER); Anne Gagnon (DFW); Jeff Barbaro (USGS)

*Guests:* Jordan Bailey (Brookline Conservation Commission)

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by the chair, Lucy Wallace.

Administrative

The July 21, 2016 meeting notes were accepted as amended.

Wild & Scenic River Designation Study & Management Plan – Jamie Fosburgh

Jamie had previously provided committee members copies of the Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Study and Eightmile River Watershed Management Plan which we can use, along with other studies and plans available on-line, as guides in drafting our study and plan. He highlighted some common elements for us to keep in mind.

The study, which is the NPS's report to Congress justifying the designation, is basically a summary of the key points of the management plan. As Jamie noted, much of it is boilerplate language and text, modified to suit our particular rivers. The W&S Study Committee will provide the ORRVs and other elements of the study for Jamie's consideration, but it is an NPS document.

The management plan, on the other hand, is the "meat" of our work on this project. It is the document which is approved by the communities and which, even if designation is denied, could be used to guide future decisions regarding the rivers and their resources. In fact, Jamie suggested it should be written so as *not* to be dependent on designation and it should not look like an NPS document, but rather the plan to be enacted by a future stewardship committee.

The following questions were raised and discussed:

1. What percentage of studies for New England rivers have been accepted by Congress? To date all have been, although some have been subject to delay of final action by Congress (for example, the Lower Farmington's designation is still pending).
2. Is there one preferred document (study or management plan) for including the letters of support and certificates of town meeting votes? No, but they all should be together in one of the two documents.
3. Eightmile River's management plan is watershed-wide, covering both the main stem and its many tributaries. Would that be appropriate for the Nashua, Squannacook and Nissitissit?

The three ACEC designations would suggest a watershed approach, although, as Al noted, the nomination paper for the Central Nashua River Valley ACEC focused mostly on the riparian buffer's resources. Jamie encouraged us to use whatever approach makes the most sense; possibly doing a combination of watershed-wide and corridor on different rivers or segments. The decision should be driven by the ORRVs and themes.

4. Given that the NPS is primarily responsible for the study and W&S Committee is primarily responsible for the management plan, we should be putting most of our attention and effort on the plan. Jamie noted that the NPS could print the study or, using funds from the cooperative agreement, we could have it printed locally.
5. When should we reach out to the towns to garner their input and, subsequently, their support for the plan? Jamie suggested several avenues:
  - Once we have a draft, go to the towns' committees and organizations to present and get feedback;
  - Host a workshop and invite towns to provide feedback on ORRVs and goals of plan;
  - Make sure to get key constituents engaged and involved so they are ready to support when going to town meetings in 2018 for vote.
6. Each town meeting should vote on the same article for approving the filing for designation and adopting the management plan. Jamie noted the NPS could provide sample language for the motion, but it was agreed it would be best for one of the town's counsels (possibly Kopelman and Paige which serves several of the W&S towns) to review. The vote can be held at a special or annual town meeting and does not have to be at the same time. It might make sense to have one or two towns known to support designation to vote earlier thus building momentum and reassurance for the other towns.
7. Do all of the towns have to vote in favor of the designation and plan in order for it to go forward? It depends. If the town that does not vote in favor of the article is in the middle of a significant river segment, the designation may be hard to justify. On the other hand, if the exclusion of that town's river segment does not impact the remainder of the proposed designation, then it could go forward.
8. The plan should probably err on including too much information on resources as opposed to too little as the more inclusive it is the better, perhaps, for advocacy and grant funding for recommendations. Jamie suggested the plan prioritize our recommendations and that we think about strategies to accomplish them.
9. The current schedule for work, as drafted when we first began meeting, is to begin drafting the plan in the spring of 2017, to have a final draft by the end of 2017 and to go to town meetings for approval in the spring of 2018. Elizabeth offered to circulate the draft schedule again to committee members.
10. We need to reach out to the towns' selectmen as soon as possible so that we can reach out to other committees and boards in gathering more information and data on the ORRVs. The Outreach Committee is preparing for fall meetings, including the two NH towns when appropriate. Jordan noted we would have to move slowly with Brookline and Hollis, but believes they may be willing to be included.

At the next Study Committee meeting on October 20<sup>th</sup> Jamie's mini-topic presentation will be on Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and may include drafting our own.

ORRV Subcommittee

The W&S Committee reviewed the September 7<sup>th</sup> notes of the ORRV Subcommittee meeting. Lucy explained that it was important to develop and track a list of documents/reports and individual/groups that could provide supporting information for our ORRVs. Al distributed his proposed matrices that had been reviewed by the subcommittee and explained how they could be used to help him in writing the study and plan. As he does not have time to review every document, the intent is for committee members to take specific documents or reports, review them and then highlight for Al the sections relevant to our ORRVs. Similarly, committee members could interview specific individuals or groups to glean local knowledge of ORRVs. In addition, he would like committee members to add documents or groups to the list that should be considered. Meetings with town boards will be held *after* meeting with the boards of selectmen to update them on our work. (See update on Outreach Subcommittee below.)

To the extent possible, Al is looking for electronic copies of reports as it would be a more effective way to send highlighted sections to him. If the reports are in a PDF format, he can convert them to Word so reviewers can highlight the relevant sections for Al's review. He noted the Mike Fleming has reviewed 7 of the 8 towns' Open Space and Recreation Plans. While often these plans are too general in their description of resources, they do have good resource materials that could provide more detailed information.

Tim wondered how significant gaps in information or data would be captured and if, to that end, studies should be done or consultants hired. Elizabeth noted that the Reconnaissance Survey had highlighted gaps in information, but that the ORRV subcommittee, at this point, did not think they warranted additional study beyond what staff could do. For instance, the NRWA circuit rider, Mark Archambault, can do a review of the towns' bylaws and land use regulations. Tim also encouraged us to highlight why and what is special about these rivers that warrant the designation. Jeff suggested there is a difference in major stories between the Nashua and its main tributaries. In the case of the former, the degradation and clean-up is a significant theme, while in the case of the latter the Nissitissit and Squannacook have major ecological values within their subwatersheds and are the eastern-most cold water fisheries. Other potentially relevant studies are: one done in Dunstable on a significant parcel along the Nashua, and studies for the Pepperell and Turner dams.

The question arose of the need for uniformity of ORRVs for the Nashua and the 2 main tributaries. Or can we define/highlight different ORRVs? Jamie suggested we present the ORRVs in the way that makes the most sense, but make sure to demonstrate the common elements as well. It also would be allowable to mention other smaller tributaries, particularly in the management plan. It is important to keep in mind that the plan is future oriented.

#### Outreach Subcommittee

Robert provided an update on the Subcommittee's work.

*Meeting with local boards of selectmen:* In preparation for meetings this fall with the towns' boards of selectmen, the Outreach Subcommittee is updating the PowerPoint presentation made to them in 2010. Robert will send out the revised PowerPoint for comment. He also is willing to attend each meeting, either to make the presentation or accompany the committee member who would like to make it. After the meeting with the selectmen, he would ask the town administrators to send a memo or letter to their town's boards requesting their assistance in the work of the W&S Committee, for example by allowing us to attend a meeting to gather

information. The goal is to have met with all of the selectmen by Thanksgiving. Ryan, who is the Lancaster Town Administrator, offered to handle the meeting with his board of selectmen. Given the value of having one person hear the responses and questions of all the towns' selectmen, Robert will attend all of the meetings, even if he is not one of the presenters. He also will be working with Jordan to arrange meeting with the two NH towns' boards of selectmen or to take other steps as recommended by Jordan and Drew to reach out to those communities.

*Website:* The Subcommittee intends to bring a mock up of the website to our October meeting, gather input and have the site go live before meeting with the various boards of selectmen. Robert distributed a list of possible URLs and asked for additional suggestions by the end of this month. A URL will be selected at our October meeting.

*Additional Outreach:* Robert will make additional copies and bring the flyers developed for the Bill Ashe Visitor Station dedication to the upcoming Tsongas River Day event. Flyers will also be available for Grotonfest. Beth asked about a list of FAQs to have for future meetings and outreach activities. Robert will send a draft along with the revised PowerPoint for committee review and to finalize at our October meeting.

#### New Business

*Tsongas River Day:* Elizabeth explained that every year Congresswoman Tsongas holds a series of events on rivers in different locations in her district. This year one of the events will be at the Bill Ashe Visitor Station on Devens. The schedule includes a short paddle on the river, beginning at 10, followed by speakers from 10:30 to 11:15. Elizabeth, as one of the speakers, will provide an overview of our work. She encouraged committee members to attend, reminding them that Congresswoman Tsongas had led the effort to pass the legislation authorizing this study.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM. Next meeting: October 20<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM.