

Nashua River Wild & Scenic Study Committee
Notes from the Study Committee Meeting
NRWA's River Resource Center, 592 Main Street, Groton, MA
November 17, 2016

INFORMAL NOTES

Members Present Leah Basbanes, Judy Larter (Dunstable); Lucy Wallace (Harvard); Bill Flynn (Lancaster); Paula Terrasi (Pepperell)

NRWA Staff: Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell, Al Futterman, Martha Morgan, Mark Archambault

NPS: Jamie Fosburgh

Ex Officio: Anne Gagnon (DFW)

Guests: Cindy Knox (Ayer); Mike Fleming (NRWA Board member)

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

Administrative

Paula Terrasi moved to accept the October 20, 2016 meeting notes as written, and Bill Flynn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ORRV Subcommittee

Lucy distributed the November 14th draft meeting notes for review. A discussion ensued regarding the proposed organization of the ORRVs (3 broad categories or themes: historical/cultural, recreation, and biodiversity).

General Comments

- Al Futterman, who is now focused on the case statement, asked if historic resources should be limited to those tied to the rivers or should include townwide resources. Consensus was to focus on river-related, understanding there may be exceptions and other resources may merit inclusion.
- Al asked if biological ORRVs had to be limited to the rivers or could it extend further into the watershed. For instance, should the resources of Mulpus Brook be included? Anne Gagnon supported taking a watershed approach where appropriate. Jamie Fosburgh reminded the Committee that the Management Plan can include more than the Study, so that Mulpus Brook could be considered in the former, but not necessarily in the latter. Mike Fleming noted that Mulpus Brook should be included, at the very least, in the Plan, as it is a headwaters of a designated river and activities upstream of a designated river were appropriate for monitoring.
- Jamie noted the Study is intentionally briefer than the Management Plan. The latter is intended to reflect community goals for the rivers and their resources. He also recommended that there be a section in the Study that would discuss the watershed in general (provide a context for the rivers); the Plan could provide greater detail if appropriate.
- Mike commented that the geology of the area has led to a unique or unusual configuration of tributaries' and the Nashua's direction of flow and location in the watershed. For instance, the Squannacook and Nissitissit have a basic southeasterly flow, while the main stem of the Nashua flows northwesterly. Martha Morgan added that most

of the tributaries of the Nashua are to the west of the river, with very few to the east. The Nashua is located unusually close to the southern and eastern boundaries of its watershed. She will contact the state geologist for additional information.

- Mike commented on the difference in elevation change and how that impacted development of mills along the river. For instance, there is a greater change in elevation on the North Nashua, the Nissitissit and Squannacook than on the main stem. This resulted in mills being built on those sections, rather than along much of the main stem (until it crosses into NH). The mills on the North Nashua led to pollution, which is part of the "Marion Story", the river's clean up and focus on protecting the greenway. Mike noted that there was much potentially relevant information in NRWA's 1970 plan for the Nashua River watershed.

Biodiversity

- Martha reported that Kath Nelson has reached out to Peter Hazelton regarding mussel populations that could be discussed in the Wild & Scenic River Study. She expects to get more detailed and specific information from NHESP.
- The underlying geology was mentioned as an element to raise, especially as it relates to the rivers' flow, species support, and biozones.
- Blandings turtles are found in several locations throughout the study area, including Oxbow NWR, Dunstable and Townsend. Bill Flynn added that they have been found on the Cook Conservation land in Lancaster (which is currently outside the Study area). Bill also mentioned a moth that has been found in Lancaster.
- While specific species need to be identified because they are a reason for designation, care should be taken regarding identifying specific locations.
- Mark Archambault noted that large forest tracts (those having a high perimeter to area ratio) are important for diversity of species and their protection. Al commented that some of these larger tracts are probably outside the Study area.
- Al and Mike will work on gathering state and federal wildlife management plans for information on significant species.
- Al noted the existence of several federal designations and actions to protect important resources within this area: the North American Flyway, the Forest Legacy program, and Devens. These should be included in the Study.

Recreation

- Al had contacted Diane Carson of Nashoba Paddler for recreational usage data. She reported that an estimated 8,000 unique people rented canoes or kayaks from her in 2016, adding that that number was probably the yearly average usage (in other words, 8,000 different people rented, not including repeat users). Renters are local, from elsewhere in the state, and out-of-state.
- Al is trying to get information on the number of people using the Nashua Rail Trail.
- It would be good to know the numbers of students from the Groton School that use the river for racing/training for racing.
- It would be good to include the annual canoe race that is held on the Squannacook River.
- Martha reported that Kath is trying to quantify bass fishermen's use of the river, including tournaments. It was noted that there is fly fishing for Small Mouth Bass.

- Lucy commented on the recreational value due to the rivers' proximity to 3 large metropolitan areas: Nashua, Worcester and Boston. She will try to get current census numbers.

Historical/Cultural

- Information can be gathered from local boards and committees as presentations are made by Al and Robert Pontbriand to the boards of selectmen.
- Paula Terrasi has reviewed the towns' reports and Freedom Way Heritage Association's inventory for information on historic resources. Al will provide that information to the Committee representatives on their respective towns.
- Judy Larter noted that Mass Historic Commission had requested a study of a potential development site in Dunstable as part of the approval process before the local permitting board. She will contact Jonathan Patton at Mass Historic for further information.

Outreach Subcommittee

Al gave a brief update on meetings with selectmen. All have been scheduled, except for a meeting with the Devens Enterprise Commission, and those that have occurred have gone well. He gave a brief presentation of the Power Point being shown to the selectmen, which he noted has taken about 15 minutes to present. The current version has been shortened since the full Study Committee last saw it, photographs have been labelled, and quite a few new photographs have been added. Many thanks to Cindy for the photos!

Cindy gave an overview of the website, showing the various pages and noting the information either already on them or what was still needed. She has included many photographs of the rivers with the aim of visually enhancing the site. She still hopes to have the site go live in December.

Comments on the site were as follows:

- Add the photograph of the "red" river of the 1960's juxtaposed to the river today.
- ORRVs will need a page with text for each theme or category.
- The events page should include meeting dates with selectmen so interested parties could review minutes from those meetings.
- The documents page should include the NPS Reconnaissance Study, the Study legislation, the Power Point given to the towns, and the W&S Committee meeting notes.
- Press releases should be posted.
- Mike suggested adding the meaning of the rivers' names, if there is consensus among the Native Americans as to the meaning.

Management Plan

Jamie stated that there is some urgency to get the Management Plan underway and that we should have a draft within the next 9 months. He wondered if the ORRV Subcommittee would be interested in leading a community workshop on Plan elements. He also noted that there are many plans that could be used as an organizational template for our Plan.

He then reviewed the components of the Management Plan:

- Goal statement
- Review of existing protection of resources
- Potential threats to resources
- Strategies for managing these resources, such as monitoring, advocacy, regulatory protection such as zoning, aquifer protection, flood plain zoning, wetlands protection bylaws. Mark is looking at the regulatory aspect.

Jamie plans to have Liz Lacy attend the December 9th tri-rivers workshop. The NPS is responsible for writing the eligibility chapter of the Plan and will have it reviewed by staff in DC before the rest of the Plan is completed.

The meeting adjourned at 9 PM.

Next Steps

- Al will send out the 2017 calendar.
- Al will draft the ORRV section before our next meeting.
- Mike will complete his review of the 1970 NRWA strategic plan.
- Jamie will prepare an agenda for the December 9th workshop.

New Business

- Lucy reminded members of the NRWA quilt raffle.
- Lucy reported on the upcoming NRWA on-line holiday auction.

Elizabeth asked if other Study Committee members had similar announcements. None did.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM. Next regular W&S Committee meeting December 15th at 7 PM.