

**N-S-N Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council Meeting**  
NRWA's River Resource Center, 592 Main Street, Groton, MA  
January 16, 2020

**DRAFT INFORMAL NOTES**

*Members Present:* Beth Suedmeyer (Ayer); Rona Balco and Rebecca Longvall (Bolton); Michele Girard and Lucy Wallace (Harvard); LeeAnn Wolff (Hollis); Alix Turner (Lancaster); Ken Hartlage and Paula Terrasi (Pepperell); Hans Onsager and Heidi Ricci (Shirley); Joan Wotkowicz (Townsend)

*NRWA Staff:* Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell and Al Futterman

*NPS:* Jamie Fosburgh and Emma Lord

*Guests:* Linh Phu (USFWS); Anne Gagnon (MA Division of Fish & Wildlife); Warren Kimball (NRWA Board member; former MA DEP); Neil Angus (DEC)

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by the Interim Chair, Lucy Wallace. Lucy introduced Emma Lord who has recently moved from her previous NPS Fellowship position to full time NPS staff based in the Boston office. As such, she will be available to assist the Council.

Administrative

The minutes of the December 19, 2019 meeting were approved as amended.

NPS Update

Jamie Fosburgh provided financial and staff updates.

- In the NPS portion of the current fiscal year's federal budget recently approved by Congress and signed by the President, all Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers, including the newly designated Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers, will each be receiving \$150,000. He advised that we have a budget and our first year work plan drafted by the end of February to submit to NPS in order to negotiate the Cooperative Agreement by which we will receive our \$150,000. He noted the budget could show expected expenses in "broad-stroked" categories, much as we had done with the current Cooperative Agreement. Lucy asked if the funds had to be expended by the end of the fiscal year (September 30, 2020). Jamie replied that funds could carry over into the next fiscal year as could activities and expense categories described in the work plan. The only requirement is that funds be expended and work completed within five years. Rona Balco asked if we should send a thank you letter to our US Representatives and Senators. Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell noted that Fred Akers, Co-Chair of the Partnership W&S Rivers group had organized sending letters from the Councils to their respective legislators. Lucy had signed letters to our appropriate legislators as Interim Chair of the Council.
- Emma Lord has returned to the New England NPS office. She will be our NPS liaison, although Jamie will continue to be available to us. She will be working with the SuAsCo Council part-time and could be available to us part-time as well. One item of note pointed out by Jamie is that NPS staff time provided to us (as coordinator or other administrative position) would be paid for by NPS funds, and not out of our new Cooperative Agreement. On the other hand, should we elect to retain our own coordinator or other staff person (for instance having Al continue as coordinator) this position would be paid for out of our Cooperative Agreement. Lucy noted this is a matter a small working group will need to investigate and come back to the full Council in February with a recommendation. She added the Council must also decide on whom to designate as Fiscal Agent.

The sense of those present (although no vote was taken) was to continue with NRWA as our Fiscal Agent.

### Bylaw/Policies & Procedures Subcommittee

*Bylaws:* Lucy reminded those present that the Bylaws had been approved at our December 19, 2019 meeting, subject to some minor corrections. She added that a clean copy of the approved Bylaws was included in this meeting's packet of materials.

*Policies and Procedures:* Lucy reported that the subcommittee had not met since December 19<sup>th</sup> and, therefore, did not have initial draft policies to review. She noted the packet contained the draft outline as updated at the December 19<sup>th</sup> meeting and asked if there were additional items to add, please let her know. The subcommittee will be meeting in the next week or so.

*Conflict of Interest Form:* Elizabeth reported that nearly all of the Council members (Representatives and Alternates) had signed the form. A few members that had not signed a form and were present offered to sign one and turn it in at the end of the meeting.

### Interim Projects

Al Futterman provided a brief update on the two projects.

*Canoe Access Assessments:* Al noted that canoe access points on the main stem of the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers had been assessed and reported on at the December 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. Since then the working group has evaluated canoe access sites on the Nissitissit River. He first reported on a site in West Hollis near a trail onto Beaver Brook Association land and owned by Beaver Brook that is quite good (in terms of parking and proximity to a road), but suffering from severe erosion. He shared that in an email communication he was told the landowners have one professional quote that it would cost approximately \$15,000 to do the necessary engineering to "restore the banking" at the site. The subcommittee considers this a high priority site. A second site that previously had not been assessed and merits further evaluation is on property owned by Shattuck Oil in Pepperell. Paula Terrasi reported that the owner is open to the public using his property to access the river, noting it is often used by anglers and, occasionally, kids swimming. This would also be a good site to improve for boat access as it is the beginning of a nice run (approximately one mile) to the confluence of the Nissitissit River with the Nashua River.

Al reported that the kiosk had been installed at Brookline's Bohanon Bridge access site. The poster, which the subcommittee decided not to have laminated but rather print on heavy-duty paper, will be installed in the spring. There is a plan by the town to install a new canoe access on the east side of the river, while the rail trail and existing access site, which is primarily used by anglers, runs along the west side.

As with the Squannacook River, the Nissitissit River is essentially a seasonal river; that is best paddled in the spring – in good years up to July. The main stem of the Nashua River, on the other hand, is considered usable year round, as long as there is no ice.

Joan Wotkowicz raised the possibility of improvements to the canoe access site at Townsend Harbor Pond near the Townsend Historical Society (THS). She noted there is an easement over the THS property that was granted to provide access to the soon-to-be-constructed Squannacook Rail Trail; canoe access to the Pond at this location would be quite easy.

Al offered to provide an updated “Heat Map” – or shaded data matrix -- showing all the canoe access sites at the next Council meeting.

*Conservation Networking Breakfasts:* Al reported that the January 7<sup>th</sup> breakfast was well attended and the topic, Forest Legacy, was well received. He noted that the current targeted Forest Legacy area includes most of the Nashua River watershed. Furthermore, the program has been modified so that entire towns within the proposed designated area can be included, even if only a portion of the town is within the current boundary area. There was considerable enthusiasm for seeking to apply through the Forest Legacy program, especially as the application could be enhanced by virtue of the Wild & Scenic Rivers designation and including two states. The application will be due approximately mid-September. It will require considerable work to line up landowners willing to go through a two to three year process to get their lands enrolled in the Forest Legacy program. It was agreed this topic could be pursued further at the next Networking breakfast.

*Brochure:* Al shared NPS “unigrid” brochures prepared for other Wild & Scenic Rivers. Jamie noted that should the Council want a similar brochure we have the option of having the NPS design and print it, or we can design it ourselves and either print it ourselves or have the NPS print it. He added that there are probably funds at NPS available for printing because the cost of printing the NPS Study Report (by the Government Printing Office) was less than expected. The printed Study Report is expected shortly.

*Self-Driving Tour:* Al noted that this project could address our Historical/Cultural Resources (the Canoe Access and Networking Breakfasts address our Recreational/Scenic and Biological Diversity Resources, respectively). He suggested using a hard copy map, such as that offered by the NPS Harrier Tubman Visitor Center, and/or an interactive map using an app or software such as Open Street Map, UMAP, or Avenza. He reminded Council members that he had previously asked for two river-related historical or cultural sites in each town. Beth Suedmeyer noted this would be a good project on which to partner with Freedom’s Way Heritage Association. Ken Hartlage and Rebecca Longvall offered to work with Al on this project and encouraged day-time meetings.

*Street Festival:* Lucy reminded Beth that last spring she had suggested holding a Street Festival, ostensibly to celebrate Wild & Scenic River designation. As the opportunity for this had passed since designation occurred relatively quickly, there would be more flexibility for when to hold a Festival to promote general awareness. Beth explained her concept: to close off McPherson Road on a weekend day and offer a variety of events along the river, such as music, a bike course, a river-related activity, and, of course, food. She added such an event would require coordination with the USFWS and Devens. Linh Phu offered to reach out to her contacts at Devens and to work with Beth on this project.

*Signage:* Lucy commented on questions she has received about Wild & Scenic River signs, especially where roads cross the designated rivers and at boat launches. Linh and Emma Lord offered to gather information on the cost of signs made by their respective agencies. Al has information on sign costs through Massachusetts Correction Industries (MassCOR) *re* a trail project he has been doing in Groton. Beth will contact SuAsCo as well. Lucy asked about a logo and most agreed the standard NPS Wild & Scenic River logo should be included. She also noted we needed to ascertain how many signs would be needed in order to understand the production cost of doing this project.

### Formation of Subcommittees

*Land Stewardship Subcommittee:* A revised draft of a proposal for the formation of a Land Stewardship Subcommittee was reviewed by the Council members. LeeAnn Wolff asked if managing invasives would

be considered part of this subcommittee's efforts; Ken replied it would be. On a motion made and seconded, the Council unanimously approved the creation of the Land Stewardship Subcommittee as described and set forth in the January 8, 2020 draft prepared by Ken and Paula. Others who expressed interest in serving on the Subcommittee included Rona Balco, Heidi Ricci, Michele Girard, Anne Gagnon, Rebecca, LeeAnn, Ken, Paula, and Al.

*Administration Subcommittee:* Lucy noted that the need to develop a budget and work plan by the end of February, plus determine a process for selecting a Council coordinator and Fiscal Agent, would best be resolved by having a Subcommittee look into our options and make a recommendation to the Council at the February 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. Emma offered to send sample budgets and work plans. Jamie reiterated that the budget could be quite broad: for instance, instead of listing specific projects have a grants category. The on-going canoe access and networking breakfast activities could be funded by that category. Lucy asked about having a formal grant application and award process. Jamie felt at this early stage decisions made by the Council on its current and potential projects would be acceptable. Should we elect to retain our own staff coordinator, we would need to include not only the hourly rate, but also benefits and personnel-related costs. Ken offered to work with Elizabeth and Lucy on this Subcommittee. Beth was willing to review drafts, should we so desire. Lucy noted she would like to send drafts of the options and recommendations before our next meeting, if possible.

#### Other Business

*Open Space Design Workshop:* Heidi distributed a flyer regarding an upcoming Open Space Design Workshop, co-sponsored by MassAudubon, being held in Harvard on February 6<sup>th</sup>.

*Proposed Reclamation Project in Pepperell:* Paula provided a very brief update on the on-going legal action in Pepperell regarding the Board of Selectmen's appeal of the Zoning Board of Appeal's ruling regarding fill at a site adjacent to the Nashua River. The suit is in Land Court, which means it will probably not be resolved in the near future. Because the suit is in Land Court, Paula had very little she could report to the Council.

*Climate Action Plan Survey:* Neil Angus distributed copies of a survey being done by the Devens Enterprise Commission as part of its development of a Climate Action Plan. They are looking for input from not only Devens' residents and businesses, but also residents and businesses in the surrounding towns. The survey can also be completed on line; Neil will send the Council members its link. He asked that it be broadly shared.

*Rt 70 Development Proposal:* Alix Turner reported on "Capital Commerce," a proposed mixed use development on a 471-acres property on Rt 70 in Lancaster along the North Nashua River. The initial phase of this project will be an auto salvage facility. As 50% of the property is within the Central Nashua Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), this proposed project requires an MA Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Al offered to send information relating to the EIR should Council members be interested in commenting on it as individuals.

*Mine Falls, Nashua:* Linh reported that a FERC study is being undertaken as part of the licensing of the dam at Mine Falls. One aspect of the study involves the ability of fish to move upstream of the dam. To ascertain their mobility, the FWS will be tagging fish and will need small (three to four feet high) antenna in the river upstream of the dam. The FWS needs the names of property owners willing to have an antenna installed in the river along their property. The furthest extent of inquiry is to the Pepperrell Hydro Dam on the Nashua and to Lake Potanipo, considered the headwaters of the Nissitissit.

*Budget Update:* Elizabeth gave an update on the budget for the current Cooperative Agreement, noting that nearly all of the funds allocated for personnel had been expended. In addition, there were funds remaining in two other line items: travel and contracted services. While some NRWA personnel costs are funded through grants to the NRWA for assisting the Council and its projects during transition, and while the NRWA has provided significant *pro bono* time, additional funding will be necessary to provide staff support through June 30<sup>th</sup>. On a motion made and seconded, it was unanimously agreed to re-allocate the balance (approximately \$3,000) from the travel and contracted services line items to the line items pertaining to personnel. Jamie reminded the Council that all of the current Cooperative Agreement funds need to be spent by June 30<sup>th</sup>, as they cannot be carried over into the next Cooperative Agreement.

*NPS Newsletter Article:* Elizabeth shared an advance copy of an article AI had drafted for the next issue of an annual NPS newsletter, *Wild and Scenic River Currents*, that will be out shortly. He had been asked to describe the first projects being undertaken since our recent designation as a Partnership Wild & Scenic River, and the short article focuses on the canoe access assessment project.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Next Meeting: February 20, 2020 at 7 PM at the NRWA's River Resource Center