

Nashua River Wild & Scenic River Study Committee
Notes from the Study Committee Meeting
NRWA's River Resource Center, 592 Main Street, Groton, MA
July 20, 2017

INFORMAL NOTES

Members Present: Beth Suedmeyer (Ayer); Leah Basbanes (Dunstable); Lucy Wallace (Harvard); Paula Terrasi (Pepperell); Heidi Ricci (Shirley)
NRWA Staff: Mark Archambault, Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell, Al Futterman, Martha Morgan
NPS: Jamie Fosburgh
Ex Officio: Jeff Barbaro (USGS)
Guests: Warren Kimball (NRWA Board member); Drew Kellner (Brookline ConCom)

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM by the chair, Lucy Wallace.

Administrative & Sharing

The June 15, 2017 meeting notes were accepted as presented.

Drew Kellner gave an update on Brookline's and Hollis' recent success in acquiring two parcels on the Nissitissit River. The towns had approved funding at their respective Annual Town Meetings and the purchase had closed yesterday, July 19th. A conservation restriction was placed on the properties at the same time. The Committee congratulated Drew – and his colleagues – on successful completion of this important acquisition.

Canoe Paddle on the Nashua River

Al Futterman had organized a canoe paddle the afternoon of July 19th for members of the Wild & Scenic River Study Committee. Lucy asked those present who had gone on the paddle to share their impressions. General impressions were that the river (from Nashoba Paddler's launch site in W. Groton at Route 225 upstream to the railroad bridge) is incredibly scenic, peaceful and quiet, making it feel quite remote. Warren Kimball's wife, Linda, who came on the paddle, took photographs over the course of the trip, some of which Al projected as people shared their experience. Nashoba Paddler LLC had generously made their canoes and kayaks available without charge for this paddle, which was very much appreciated.

Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell wondered if it would be worth offering a similar trip to town officials, such as selectmen and conservation commissioners. This is an idea that had come up some time ago that seemed worth considering again at this point. The trip would need to be on a weekday this fall, as town meetings will be voting on the Management Plan and seeking designation next spring. The general consensus was that it would be good to do as part of our outreach. Beth Suedmeyer suggested having maps available. There was some discussion of also inviting town staff, such as town administrators, conservation agents and planners, and perhaps members of planning boards and zoning boards of appeal. The Committee seemed amenable to including all. Lucy suggested inviting members of the local press, too, as a way to publicize our work. Heidi Ricci suggested that the Committee representatives could take officials from their towns on individual trips between now and the fall, as well. Al and Elizabeth will pursue the possibility of a paddle on a weekday in mid-September or early October.

NPS Update

Jamie Fosburgh reported that he has reviewed and sent comments to Liz Lacy on her latest draft of the Eligibility Chapter of the Wild & Scenic River Designation Study. She is continuing to revise the draft; the goal is to send a draft of this chapter to the DC office of the NPS for an initial review and comments by the end of August and before the complete draft Study is sent for a more formal review later in the fall. Elizabeth noted that Martha Morgan has not yet been able to meet with all of the dams' owners, but hopes to in the near future. We then will be able to pin down the excluded areas above and below the dams. Timing for completing this is not certain at this point. Jamie said this first draft could go to DC even if those areas have not been precisely defined, as that information could be added before the entire draft Study is sent for review.

Jamie gave an update on NPS budgetary issues. He reminded the Committee that at the June meeting he had reported that the Administration required that all contracts for \$100,000 or more be reviewed and approved for funding by a panel. The panel has now completed its review and has approved funding of these contracts.

ORRV Subcommittee

The draft notes of the July 13th ORRV Subcommittee were distributed with Lucy noting that the Subcommittee had not yet approved them. There were two main topics discussed at that meeting which were coming before the Committee at this meeting for review and direction: mapping of sub-basins/sub-watersheds and matrix for evaluating local regulatory capacity with respect to implementing the goals and strategies to be set out in the Management Plan.

Mapping: Al had been asked to calculate the acreage of protected land within the areas to be included in the Wild & Scenic River Designation Study and Management Plan. Because the Plan can consider area beyond the Study, he was looking for direction on the extent that would be feasible and appropriate to manage. He added that the available lens or range to consider ran from watershed to sub-watershed to sub-basin, and that it had been agreed at the outset that the entire watershed was too large. Therefore, the focus would be sub-watersheds or sub-basins; the latter being the present direction. He showed several maps illustrating various options, including the ¼ mile corridor along the three rivers, the sub-basins of the rivers within the Study's 8 towns, and the sub-basins of the rivers as they extend beyond the 9 towns. After considerable discussion, the Committee agreed on the following mapping of areas to be within the scope of the Management Plan:

- Sub-basins of the Squannacook and Nissitissit Rivers extending to their headwaters, which are based on the HUC 14 standard that maps first and second order tributaries. In the case of the Nissitissit, this would extend into NH. All felt this was the most inclusive approach and would cover the streams (especially cold water streams) that have the most critical impact on the ORRVs. Beth suggested that there are many ways to use data contained in these layers that could be parsed from the sub-basin level to individual towns as needed and presented in a chart form where appropriate.
- Sub-basins of the Nashua River would be those that run from the confluence of the North and South Branches to the MA/NH line (these were shown in brown, purple and bright blue on Al's map) that are immediate to the River, but not extending beyond to sub-basins, if any, of the headwaters of the streams flowing directly into the Nashua.

Jamie reiterated that rivers, tributaries (if any) and sub-basins (if any) must be specifically named in the Study in order to be included in the designation legislation and qualify for Section 7 protection under the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. The Plan, however, can – and it is appropriate to – include areas beyond the designation, especially as activities upstream of the designated rivers can impact the ORRVs. The NPS is given standing to comment on projects receiving federal funding that involve upstream waters. Having them included in the Plan gives the management/stewardship committee reason to reach out to communities outside of the participating towns.

Ideal Regulatory Framework: Mark Archambault explained his draft matrix, Ideal Regulatory Framework, that he has created for inclusion in the Management Plan's chapter on local zoning and regulatory capacity. The criteria and ideal standards were drawn from many sources and included as relevant due to his review of the 8 towns' land use activities with respect to zoning, regulations, staff, planning and funding. He has also created a chart showing the extent to which each of the 8 participating towns meets the matrix's categories. He is beginning review of Bolton, MA and Hollis and Brookline, NH and will add them to this chart.

He first walked through the categories in the matrix, explaining the criteria for meeting the ideal standard. The purpose would be to provide a tool for evaluating areas needing attention.

Comments on the draft matrix included:

- An Open Space & Recreation Plan completed within the last 7 (not 10) years is acceptable. Mark should review to determine extent to which OSRP overlaps in citing critical resources with our ORRVs.
- Should OSRD be required for subdivision of parcels over a certain size?
- Wetlands: Mark noted that local wetlands law is often stricter than state law. Furthermore, MA state law is stricter than NH law. That said, Hollis has excellent local wetlands ordinances.
- Impervious surfaces: Heidi suggested he look not only at commercial development standards, but also at residential development and make sure they are consistent.
- Stormwater control: Towns such as Weston, Sudbury and Concord have higher standards; Mark will review to see which are considered the best in the state and consider including such as a footnote to this chart.
- Funds for land acquisition: Drew reported that in NH change of use tax receipts are dedicated to land acquisition. The amount of tax that can be applied to land acquisition is determined locally. There was a question about NH allowing use of stumpage tax from logging activities for land acquisition as well.

Mark is using the Lower Farmington River Management Plan as a template for the narrative he needs to write. The matrix and towns' chart will be a major part of this chapter, however, and the consensus was that this was a good way to present this information. He noted that his chart with the towns had many blanks and asked the town representatives to provide him the missing information.

NPS Visual Resource Assessment

Al gave a brief report on the recent NPS Visual Resource Assessment training he had recently attended with Nadia Madden. To date, the NPS has used this tool to assess visual resources and

set a baseline of scenic value of land-based areas, and not rivers. Jamie said he would adapt the assessment tool for application on rivers and, if possible, he would like to use the Nashua River as a pilot project. The assessment is performed by teams of 6 to 8 people, who have been trained in the technique. Given the highly subjective nature of a Visual Assessment, the tool provides a mechanism whereby team-members discuss their views and then arrive at a consensus ranking. Areas that could be included in a river Visual Resource Assessment could be both land-based (the view of the river from a bridge or place people commonly visit to see the river or river landscape such as from Fruitlands Museum in Harvard) and water-based (views from the river of the abutting landforms).

Jamie suggested if we were to do a Visual Resource Assessment of the Nashua we should select views that typify the ORRVs associated with the river. It would supplement what and why we consider specific scenic resources worthy of protection and, thereby, inform goals and strategies in the Management Plan. The Committee members expressed general interest, and AI will follow up on this.

The Visual Resource Assessment training was held in conjunction with the NPS' annual gathering of the 13 New England partnership rivers. The Committee members expressed appreciation that NPS had included AI and Nadia and underwritten their participation.

Outreach Subcommittee

Logo: Leah Basbane had passed on the input from our last meeting to her graphic designer who then had produced 6 new logos (A-F) for Committee review which focused on the two major directions of interest at the last meeting. Leah encouraged us to focus on the graphic and not the words, as the word changes discussed at the last meeting had not yet been made. Options B and C were very quickly rejected. A lengthy discussion followed, with Committee focus settling on A (variation of yin-yang pattern) and E (stylized monogram of NSN). Elizabeth advocated for Option E, noting the NRWA staff she had shown it to felt Option A was too similar to other logos that have similar yin-yang pattern and that Option E was more unique. There was a suggestion to change the font of the "&" in the title to be more in keeping with the monogram style. Option A's design, on the other hand, suggested a drop of water and a leaf with lines in the green denoting the Squannacook and Nissitissit.

Minor revisions to each Option were suggested: bring the Ns closer to the S in Option E to fill in some white space and make the lines of depicting the Nissitissit and Squannacook Rivers the same in Option A.

Jamie commented that tightening the lines in Option E would suggest the greenway along the river (as the Ns are green and the S is blue).

It was decided that Leah would take our comments on slight tweaks to Options A and E to the graphic consultant and ask her to revise these two choices. Once those changes are made we will make a final decision.

Outreach Letter: AI distributed a draft letter he would like to send to town historical commissions and historical societies requesting additional historical and/or cultural information on our ORRVs. Committee members were asked to review the letter and send comments to AI ASAP.

Announcements

Elizabeth reported that Al and Lucy had met with the Bolton Board of Selectmen and they are interested in participating. They are currently seeking two volunteers to be named their representative and alternate. Since the Study Committee has invited them to participate and they have agreed, it is now time to adjust all our literature and web-pages to reflect 9 participating towns instead of 8. Elizabeth will ask Cindy Knox to correct our website to be 9 towns with the addition of Bolton.

Al will be meeting with the Groton Board of Selectmen on July 24th to give them a status report.

Jamie and Al will be meeting with the Brookline Conservation Commission on July 25th. Drew said the hope is to then meet with the Brookline Select Board in late August or early September. An information session for the public could also be arranged. And, if all goes well, the BOS would vote to participate in this effort, taking the Plan to the spring 2018 annual town meeting for approval.

The second gathering of the three current rivers study committees that Jamie was hoping to have in early August will have to be postponed to September.

Elizabeth announced that the NRWA had applied to the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts (CHNCM) and the Bruce J. Anderson Foundation for funds to support the NRWA's work with the Study Committee. The NRWA did receive a \$10,000 grant from the Anderson Foundation but did not receive one from CFNCM.

The next regular W&S Committee meeting should be on August 17th at 7 PM at the River Resource Center. A quick poll showed 8 people would not be present, 5 people could make it. A poll will be sent to all members to determine if it should go forward on the 17th or on the 24th or perhaps postpone to the regular September meeting. Al expressed his inclination to hold the meeting in August and shape the agenda to what would be productive for those in attendance to work on with him.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 PM.