

## N-S-N Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council

### MINUTES OF JUNE 15, 2023 MEETING

By Zoom Video Conference

#### Voting Member Entities Present:

*Towns:* Dunstable: Kate Deloureiro; Harvard: Lucy Wallace; Hollis: Bernadette McQuilkin;  
Lancaster: Justin Smith; Pepperell: Paula Terrasi; Shirley: Heidi Ricci; Townsend: Joan Wotkowicz  
*NRWA*: Jennifer Keegan  
*NPS*: Emma Lord  
*MF&W*: Pat Huckery

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by the Chair, Lucy Wallace. The meeting was held virtually by Zoom.

#### Administrative

The minutes of the May 18, 2023 meeting were approved as amended.

#### NPS Update

Emma Lord reported that the FY24 Budget and Work Plan is continuing through internal review but expects it to be approved before July 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### Finances

Jennifer Keegan provided an update on the Council's finances. The account balance as of the end of May is approximately \$136,406. This balance does not, however, include several approved projects (such as the Regional Conservation Charrette and Interpretive Signage Project) for which final costs are not yet known. The estimated cost for these projects is \$43,000, which would bring the Council fund balance to approximately \$93,700.

#### Update on Projects

*Squannacook River Regional Conservation Charrette:* Lucy provided a brief update date on planning for this charrette which will be held on July 14<sup>th</sup>, from 9 AM – 1 PM. Save the date notices were mailed in late May to entities representing state, municipal and private conservation organizations having management responsibility or other interest in the protected lands along the Squannacook River corridor. An agenda has been finalized and will be included with invitations being sent out the week of June 19<sup>th</sup>. The estimated cost for this project is \$20,000. Lucy reminded Council members that this is a pilot for similar projects focused on the Nissitissit and Nashua Rivers corridors.

*Interpretive Signage Project:* Lucy reported that the small working group (Joan Wotkowicz, Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold, Jen, and Lucy) had met with Kelly Finan, an illustrator who specializes in wildlife and nature artwork for interpretive signs. Emma screen shared examples of Kelly's work; Lucy noted that while the samples covered the entire sign area, we were recommending the artwork cover no more than 50% of the area. Lucy reviewed the options presented in Kelly's proposal which was based on the artwork including up to nine or twelve species; the Council agreed nine species would be sufficient. The base price for nine species on one sign was \$5,580; reuse of artwork on additional signs was 10% of base, making the cost for three signs \$6,696. Kelly also offered two additional options. The first would

allow the Council use of the artwork on unlimited interpretive signs at a cost of 50% of the base (\$2,790) for a total cost of \$8,370. The second involved buying all rights to the artwork and being able to use it for other purposes (posters, note cards, etc) at 100% of the base (\$5,580) for a total cost of \$11,160. The Council members were pleased with Kelly's work and thought the options were worth considering. Pat Huckery asked if the Council would have to go out for bid if the contract with Kelly exceeded \$10,000. She also asked if we had sought other illustrators. Jen reported others had been sought, but that Kelly's experience on interpretive signage was unique. It was also suggested that initially we not contract for more than the base project and wait on pursuing the other options until we have seen the artwork. Lucy will ask Wynne to contact Kelly to see if we could contract first for the base proposal and, if decided in the future, contract to purchase a 50% or 100% interest in the artwork. Given we hope to install more signs in the future, the 50% option would make the economic sense. She also asked Emma to look into both the threshold for going out to bid and if we could contract with Kelly for two phases of work product.

*River Canoe Access & Recreation Charrette:* Emma reported that this project is based on a River Management Society (RMS) training program, "River Access Planning Guide," and is being held in partnership with the RMS, Nashoba Paddler, NRWA, and the Council. Planned for a 2 ½ day event, it will be held September 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> using the River Resource Center as its base. The charrette, which is free, will include both field time and class time for participants to develop proposals for improved canoe access to two sites on the river. Heidi Ricci asked if there were any eligibility criteria for attendees. Emma replied that the program is designed for state agencies that oversee boating on state waters, municipal entities, fishing groups, and NPS River & Trails staff. Pat asked about wildlife considerations with improved access to the rivers. Emma noted the RMS charrette is focused on recreational use of rivers and having safe access to them. Lucy reported that as Al has recently retired from the NRWA, he will serve as a contractor or consultant on this project (as well as other Council projects he is involved with).

*Dragonfly Mercury Project:* Emma reported that the sampling equipment has arrived. The date for sampling will be August 14<sup>th</sup> and will probably take six to seven hours to complete, given each river will be sampled. August 15<sup>th</sup> is the rain date. Anyone interested in participating should contact Emma.

### Final Reports

*Townsend/Adams Dam 2022 Community Grant:* Lucy noted that the grantee had not expended all of the grant funds in this bank stabilization project, mainly due to the consultant's fee being less than anticipated. Although some funds had been redirected to purchase and install coir fiber matting on the banking, there remained \$533. Heidi asked if replanting had been done and. If not, what steps were being taken to avoid invasives taking over. Lucy will follow up with the grantee. By motion made, seconded, unanimously approved, the Council accepted the Final Report and approved disbursing the appropriate balance of grant funds.

*Pepperell 2023 Community Grant:* Lucy commented that the grantee, Pepperell Invasive and Native Plant Advisory Committee, had set a record in completing a project. On motion made, seconded and unanimously approved, the Council accepted the Final Report, noting the excellent work this group has been doing, including meeting with similar groups in area towns. It also approved disbursing the remaining grant funds.

*Townsend 2022 Land Protection Grant:* Lucy reported this grant was to fund surveys and associated costs for the transfer of two Townsend Conservation Land Trust (TCLT) lands to North County Land Trust. In surveying one parcel, TCLT learned a 50-acre parcel was actually only 14 acres, illustrating

the need for surveying and marking boundaries. On motion made, seconded, and unanimously approved, the Council accepted the Final Report and approved disbursing the remaining grant funds.

### 2023 Land Protection Grant Applications

Lucy reported that we had received 3 applications for this program, only one of which was focused on an acquisition. There was a brief discussion about postponing two applications to the next Community Grant round. Joan suggested combining both grant programs in the fall and offering only land protection grants in the spring, given opportunities to purchase land can arise anytime during the year. The Council can also consider offering more funding in the Community Grant program which would enable applicants to pursue more expensive land management-related activities. Given that two of the requests were related to improved management of protected lands along tributaries to the Nashua River, it was agreed they should be funded. Emma noted that we had set aside \$50,000 for this program and the three grant requests combined came to just over \$35,000.

*Harvard Conservation Trust:* The request for \$19,958 will be used to develop and implement a large-scale invasive plant removal, native plant reintroduction and habitat restoration on 27 acres along Bowers Brook, a tributary of the Nashua River. On motion made and seconded the Council unanimously approved the application.

*North County Land Trust:* The request for \$2,252 will fund the survey and marking of a strip of land along a public road which provides the only public access to the Peabody Conservation Area. Placing boundary markers will also protect this land from encroachment by abutting landowners. On motion made and seconded the Council unanimously approved the application.

*Shirley Conservation Commission:* Acting on behalf of the Shirley Conservation Commission, the Shirley Greenway Committee had applied for \$13,000 to cover the pre-acquisition costs for the purchase a 24.74-acre parcel containing the headwaters for Beaver Pond Brook, a tributary of Mulpus Brook (which flows into the Nashua River). Heidi noted this is a key parcel in a larger conserved corridor on the western border of Shirley adjacent to Lunenburg. On motion made and seconded the Council unanimously approved the application.

### Announcements

*Healey-Driscoll Forestry Initiative:* Lucy reported on a recent press release announcing that the Healey-Driscoll Administration had launched a climate-focused forestry initiative the purpose of which is to “ensure Massachusetts’ forests are managed to optimize carbon sequestration and mitigate climate harms.” To that end, there is a 6-month moratorium on the state issuing timber harvesting contracts while the “Forest as Climate Solutions” initiative is developed and guidelines for management of forests on state lands adopted.

*Updated FEMA Maps:* Paula Terrasi reported that the preliminary FEMA maps for the Nashua River watershed are now available for review and that town land use boards are encouraged to update zoning bylaws and other land development regulations taking into account the new maps. Lucy suggested Council members check with their respective town officials on the status of review and adoption of the FEMA maps in their town.

*EZ Dock, Pepperell:* Paula reported that the EZ Dock purchased by the Council last year had not yet been installed due to delays in building stairs to access the dock. She has been in touch with Pepperrell’s DPW and expects the stairs to be completed shortly and then the dock installed.

*Summer Meeting:* Lucy asked Council members about meetings over the summer, noting that last summer we skipped one month. It was decided that we should meet in July and could decide at that time if an August meeting would be necessary.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Next meeting: Thursday, July 20, 2023 at 7 PM by Zoom