

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

### MINUTES OF JUNE 20, 2024 MEETING

By Zoom Video Conference

#### Voting Member Entities Present:

*Towns:* Brookline: Greg Martin; Dunstable: Kate DeLoureiro; Groton: Stacey Chilcoat; Harvard: Lucy Wallace; Hollis: Bernadette McQuilkin; Pepperell: Paula Terrasi; Shirley: Sarah Widing; Townsend: Joan Wotkowicz  
*NRWA:* Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold  
*NPS:* Emma Lord

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 16, 2024 meeting were approved as presented. Sarah Widing was introduced as Shirley's newly-appointed Alternate. As she had not yet been sworn in by the Town Clerk, she did not participate in any votes.

#### NPS Update

Emma Lord reported that the new Cooperative Agreement is in place and will run from July 1, 2024 to April 30, 2029. The funding for the first year will be \$210,000. She explained that while there will be an overlap of the two Cooperative Agreements this coming fiscal year (FY25), we must spend down the current Agreement's funds by April 30, 2025. Lucy suggested that we think bigger in the coming year on our Community and Land Protection Grant programs as well as pursuing other projects that would benefit from paid consultant services.

There will be a workshop on September 26<sup>th</sup> for PWSR Council members on Best Management Practices. Emma is working with a team planning for this workshop and with a consultant on BMPs for volunteer boards. She expects this workshop will be a good opportunity for folks from various PWSR Councils to share ideas on what has and has not worked for them in managing their rivers.

#### Finances

Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold provided an update on the Council's finances as of May 31, 2024:

- Total Contractual: of the \$418,723 budgeted, \$254,692 has been expended and \$104,177 is committed to ongoing activities. This leaves a balance of \$59,854 to spend or obligate. The change in expenses reflects the expenditure of \$5,400 for the Dragonfly Mercury project and some expenses related to the signage project.
- NRWA Program Support: of the \$249,459 budgeted, \$218,814 has been expended and \$9,609 is committed for ongoing projects. This leaves a balance of \$21,667.

#### Update on Current Projects

*Interpretive Signage:* Wynne reported that sign is close to completion; she needs to confirm the QR codes with GERALYN Miller and reach out to Heidi Ricci to finalize the map. We also need to reconfirm with Groton the placement of a sign at Petapawag; Joan Wotkowicz and Greg Martin confirmed that

Townsend and Brookline, respectively, have approved location of signs in their towns. Wynne has contacted Pannier and learned it will take 8 to 9 weeks to prepare the signs. The cost will be \$975 per sign, plus \$300 for shipping, bringing the total cost to \$3,225. We are hoping that the towns might provide DPW or other labor gratis to install the signs and that the signs can be installed this fall.

### Forest Legacy Program Project

Lucy reported the work is well underway for this project. There is considerable due diligence work that needs to be done for each parcel before closing can occur, the first major piece being a title examination. The title report for several tracts has been completed; another is expected to be completed in July. If there are portions of the tract to be held out (for instance for an existing house) or boundaries are found to be unclear in the title examination, a survey will be required. The next major element to finalize is the Conservation Restriction. Stakeholders are working with landowners reviewing the Forest Service/DCR template and modifying as may be necessary. While a couple of partners have encountered delays in securing funding for title work or in getting a state vendor number so they can be reimbursed for due diligence costs, in general the project is moving forward at a steady pace. Lucy added that Anna Wilkins, the project manager retained by the Council, is doing an excellent job in keeping track of the 19 tracts. The next Steering Committee will be on June 26<sup>th</sup>.

### Land Protection Grants

Two grant proposals were submitted for consideration.

- Brookline, NH – Palmer Bartell Addition: The Brookline Conservation Commission requested \$10,000 to apply to the acquisition of approximately 254 acres adjacent to the Palmer Bartell Forest, an 825-acre Conservation Commission holding. The Town Meeting has approved the bond to cover this acquisition. This will continue the Commission's goal of building a conservation corridor and trail network into the neighboring towns of Mason, Milford, and Wilton. The property to be acquired is bisected by an unnamed brook that eventually feeds into Lake Potanipo, the headwaters for the Nissitissit River. On motion made and seconded, the Council unanimously approved funding this project.
- Westminister, MA – Phillips Brook Acquisition: The Town of Westminister is seeking funds to cover unexpected costs associated with closing on the purchase of 80 acres, which include demolition and replacement of a bridge over Phillips Brook, a tributary of the Nashua River. It also abuts other conservation lands and will provide access to the Mid-State Trail. On motion made and seconded, the Council unanimously approved funding this project.

### FY25 Projects

Lucy had asked members to propose projects we might want to pursue in the coming year, especially given the level of funding we will have in the coming year. As Heidi Ricci could not attend this evening's meeting, she had emailed her support of convening additional workshops that would follow up on the topics raised at the initial round of regional conservation stewardship workshops held in 2023. Building off this idea, it was suggested the workshops be organized around clusters of communities, as opposed to the river corridors, as a way of considering other shared goals. Other suggestions included:

- A periodic e-news letter to stakeholders, the towns, partners, etc, which could also be posted on our website;
- Posting the rivers' water quality report card, along with an explanation of its importance, on our website;

- Resuming networking breakfasts/meetings and/or expanding them to include open public meetings, perhaps in collaboration with the NRWA and its Climate Impact Committee. This is something Wynne and Michele Girard were already pursuing; Lucy added that we have funding which could pay speakers' fees;
- A program in invasives, building on what several town committees have undertaken,

Bernadette McQuilkin offered the Lawrence Barn in Hollis is a possible location for public meetings.

Lucy asked for volunteers to form a working group to refine these ideas and bring them to the July meeting. Bernadette offered to work with Lucy, Wynne, and Michele . Lucy asked if others were interested to let her know.

Lucy shared a proposal she had received from Martha Morgan requesting \$7,000 to provide NRWA staff support to volunteers doing hand pulls of Water Chestnut in various locations on the Nashua River: Pepperell Pond (impoundment behind the Pepperell Dam); Oxbow NWR near the Bill Ashe Visitor Center launch; and reaches in Hollis and Brookline, NH. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year the Council is being asked to support this effort. On motion made and seconded, the Council unanimously approved funding this project.

#### Other

*MA Department of Public Health:* Lucy had sent members the State's May 23<sup>rd</sup> notice regarding eating fish caught in PFAS-contaminated waters. She encouraged them to make sure this notice was prominently displayed along the rivers in their towns.

*PWSR Meetings:* The annual gathering of PWSR Council members is being held in Vermont October 21-23. Emma again asked for topics that she could share at the upcoming planning meeting and the workshop on BMPs on September 26<sup>th</sup>.

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

Next meeting: Thursday, July 18, 2024 at 7 PM by Zoom