

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

### MINUTES OF March 21, 2024 MEETING

By Zoom Video Conference

#### Voting Member Entities Present:

*Towns:* Brookline: Greg Martin; Dunstable: Kate DeLourerio; Groton: Stacey Chilcoat; Harvard: Lucy Wallace; Hollis: Bernadette McQuilkin; Lancaster: Justin Smith; Pepperell: Paula Terrasi; Shirley: Heidi Ricci; Townsend: Joan Wotkowicz  
*NRWA*: Jennifer Keegan and Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold  
*MassWildlife*: Pat Huckery

Guest: Leslie Gabrilka, MassWildlife

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 February 15, 2024 meeting were approved as presented.

#### NPS Update

In Emma's absence, Lucy announced that the NPS Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers Team will be holding two 2-hour workshops on June 13<sup>th</sup> on best practices. Information and registration will be sent out in mid-April.

#### Finances

Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold began by highlighting recent changes in anticipated expenses. First, with the completion of the three charrettes and decision against pursuing development of an ACEC Resource Management Plan for the Central Nashua River Valley ACEC, these two projects have been zeroed out, freeing their remaining funds for other Council projects. She also noted that \$8,500 has been added to committed Projects and Plan Implementation expenses to cover the contract with Anna Wilkins to oversee management of the FLP project. The \$8,500 is based on an expenditure of \$500 per week through June 2024.

Wynne walked through the Summary of NPS funds used, committed, and balance, as of the end of February.

- Total Contractual: of the \$418,723 budgeted, \$222,780 has been expended and \$47,823 is committed to ongoing activities. This leaves a balance of \$148,120.
- NRWA Program Support: of the \$249,459 budgeted, \$208,674 has been expended and \$17,385 is committed for ongoing projects. This leaves a balance of \$23,400.
- Fiduciary & Indirect: based on 10% of the total NPS funding, \$474,599 has been expended and \$71,729 is set aside as for committed funds, leaving a balance of \$188,672.

Lucy noted that the current FY24 Budget included \$40,000 for Community Grants. The current 2024 applications before us total approximately \$52,000. If all the applications are approved at the requested amount, we would be adding \$52,000 (as opposed to \$40,00) to committed funds. With a balance of \$148,120, after obligating \$52,000 for Community Grants there would remain a balance of \$96,120 in

unspent and uncommitted Contractual funds. After some discussion it was moved, seconded and unanimously voted to set aside \$30,000 for a 2024 Land Protection Grants program. The announcement will go out the week of March 25<sup>th</sup>, with applications due June 14<sup>th</sup> and awards made at the June 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. As in the past, the maximum award would be \$10,000. Should the Land Protection Grants be fully funded at \$30,000, the Contractual account would have a balance of roughly \$66,120 through June 30, 2024.

Lucy will notify Emma Lord of both the request to move approximately \$12,000 to Community Grants from Plan Implementation and the decision on offering Land Protection Grants.

#### FY25 Draft Work Plan and Budget

Lucy reviewed the draft FY25 Budget and Work Plan, noting it was unchanged from our previous meeting. Given the level of interest in Community Grants this year, it was suggested that the amount set aside for Community Grants in FY25 be increased from \$35,000 to \$40,000 and the amount allocated for Plan Implementation be reduced by \$5,000 to \$76,464. There was a brief discussion on the hourly rate and number of hours allocated in the Budget for NRWA staff support (Outreach/Project Coordinator and Plan Implementation) but agreed that no change would be made at this time. On a motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to submit the FY25 Budget and Workplan subject to the changes in funding for Community Grants (to \$40,000) and Plan Implementation (\$76,464). Lucy will advise Emma of the vote so she can submit the FY Budget for review and approval.

#### Update on Current Projects

*Interpretive Signage:* Wynne reported that she has been working with GERALYN Miller, the graphic designer, on finishing details and hoped to have it completed in the next week. Pat Huckery asked if the Council could have one last review of the sign. Lucy asked that the text, which has been subject to several edits, not be changed unless there is an error.

*Networking Breakfasts:* Based on feedback from the three regional conservation stewardship workshops, several topics for networking breakfasts (or meetings) are being considered, including managing invasives and turtle habitats. Wynne asked if breakfasts were still the preferred time and if these sessions should be opened to a larger audience than the original group. It was agreed that it would be preferable to open these sessions up to more town boards and interested groups, and that a midday/lunch meeting might work best. The only day ruled out was the first Wednesday of the month at noon, due to another standing meeting. It was also suggested that we hold a hands-on workshop on invasives removal, drawing on the experience of the several local efforts being undertaken in our communities.

#### Forest Legacy Program Project

Lucy reported the work is well underway for this project. She has met with Anna Wilkins, Project Manager, who is currently contacting all of the Steering Committee members to assess the status of their respective Forest Legacy enrollees. The FLP Steering Committee meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month, its next meeting being on March 27<sup>th</sup>.

#### 2024 Community Grant Applications

Before beginning the review of applications, Lucy noted that approximately \$52,000 had been requested, while the current Budget only set aside \$40,000 for this program. Therefore, if all

applications were to be funded, the requested amount for each would need to be reduced. She also noted that food/volunteer appreciation events could not be funded with federal funds. Pat asked if there was a way to fully fund these applications. Lucy noted that as these are considered Contractual Funds, similar to those set aside for Plan Implementation, we could seek permission to move funds from the latter category to Community Grants. The Council agreed to fund these projects to the extent allowed.

The Council reviewed and approved the ten applications submitted for 2024 funding as follow:

- Ayer/PACE: \$6,445 to support a third season of water chestnut pulls on Grove Pond. \$150 for food for volunteers was removed from the requested funding.
- Harvard/Bare Hill Pond Watershed Management Committee: \$7,500 for removal of aquatic invasives by divers in public swimming areas.
- Harvard/Fivesparks: \$5,875 for “Destination: Nature 2024” juried art show focused on rivers and riparian landscapes. \$600 for reception was removed from the requested funding.
- Harvard/Conservation Commission: \$6,226 for training and workshop on invasives removal on private property and primarily along waterways. \$250 for food was removed from the requested funding.
- Lancaster/OneLancaster: \$3,250 for raising community awareness of the ecology of the Nashua River. Removed \$150 for food was removed from the requested funding.
- Pepperell/INAC: \$2,900 for on-going invasive plant removal from disturbed areas along a public way.
- Shirley/Conservation Commission and Shirley Greenway Committee: \$1,810 for outreach to private landowners on riparian land stewardship.
- Shirley/Select Board: \$4,000 for third year of invasive plant removal and restoration of riparian areas in Fredonian Park.
- Townsend/Squannacook Greenways: \$4,789 for construction of wooden fence adjacent to rail trail to protect riparian areas along the Squannacook River.
- Lancaster/World Farmers: \$7,500 to construct culverts under existing levee/roadway to enhance spring high water run-off into the Still River/Nashua River.

On motion made, seconded, and unanimously approved (Justin Smith abstained from the vote on OneLancaster), the Council awarded \$50,295 in federal funds to the above projects. Lucy will request approval from Emma that \$10,295 be moved from Plan Implementation to Community Grants.

### Other

*Land Protection Grants:* A decision on offering a 2024 Land Protection Grant program had been deferred pending completion of various on-going projects and award of Community Grants. Based on our current financial reports, it is apparent there are sufficient funds to cover offering this program. Given this program’s value, it was agreed to proceed again this year. On motion made, seconded, and unanimously approved \$30,000 was set aside for land protection grant requests having an allowed maximum of \$10,000. The RFP will be issued as soon as possible; grant applications will be due June 14<sup>th</sup>, with awards being made at the Council’s June 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.

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