

N-S-N Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 17, 2024 MEETING

By Zoom Video Conference

Voting Member Entities Present:

Towns: Ayer: Beth Suedmeyer; Brookline: Drew Kellner and Greg Martin; Groton: Diane Carson;
Harvard: Lucy Wallace; Lancaster: Justin Smith; Pepperell: Paula Terrasi; Shirley: Sarah Widing
NRWA: Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold
NPS: Emma Lord
DEC: Neil Angus

Guests: Mike Volmar (speaker); NRWA current and past staff – Lauri Johnson, Joanne Ward, Paulina Torres, Al Futterman, and Martha Morgan

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

Presentation on Indigenous People of the Nashua Valley

Lucy introduced Mike Volmar, the invited speaker, who would be giving a presentation on the Indigenous People living along our Wild & Scenic Rivers. Mike shared that he had been curator at Fruitlands Museum in Harvard, MA for over 10 years. His interest in the Indigenous People in New England began in college which eventually led to a PhD in Anthropology/Archeology and work at Fruitlands.

Mike began with an overview of the history of people living in New England, noting that there is evidence of their having lived in this area for at least 11,000 years. Over the course of the millennia as the environment and ecological systems changed, native people adapted and thrived until the arrival of Europeans in the 1600's. The Nipmuc, a tribe living in our watershed, was one of many tribes living inland from the coast. As the Europeans' settlements moved inland exposing tribes to more diseases and the King Phillips War ended in defeat, the Nipmuc were absorbed by other tribes or otherwise disappeared. Historically, the Nipmuc did not settle in fixed locations, rather moved about following the seasons and availability of food. Their lifestyle was a model for living sustainably and as a result, they really left little trace of their existence. What fragments might remain (stone tools, pottery, etc) most likely have been covered by development. Furthermore, as they used trees and vegetation to make many of the items they needed - from dwellings to mats to baskets - our acidic soils have gradually erased them. There are, however, some instances of stone carvings in rocks found elsewhere (western Massachusetts and northern Connecticut). There was a brief question and answer session following Mike's presentation.

For more information on the history of the Nipmucs, go to www.nipmucband.org/knowning-nipmuc/

Administrative

The minutes of the September 19, 2024 meeting were approved as presented.

NPS

Emma Lord will be attending the PWSR Gathering in northern Vermont and will give the Council a report on activities at the November meeting.

Finances

Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold began by giving a brief overview of the Council's finances as of September 30, 2024:

- **Total Contractual:** As of September 30th \$286,685 has been expended, with another \$114,560 committed to on-going activities, leaving a balance of \$17,479 to spend. Wynne noted that most of the committed funds are those set aside for the 2024 Community and Land Protection Grants. Lucy added that there are a couple of older grants that need to be closed as well.
- **NRWA Program Support:** As of September 30th \$281,775 has been expended for NRWA staff support and fiduciary oversight. Another \$12,772 is committed for staff support to complete on-going projects, leaving a balance of \$6,640. Wynne explained that the increase in staff time in September was mostly tied to the TMDL and FLP projects.

Wynne reminded Council members that these funds, all of which are from our first NPS Cooperative Agreement, need to have been spent (not even obligated) by April 30, 2025.

Update on Current Projects

Jr Ranger River Book: Emma reported that a small working group (Wynne, Stacey Chilcoat, Beth Suedmeyer, Lucy and Emma) would be meeting on October 28th to begin work on this project.

Interpretive Signage: Wynne reported that there had been a mail delay in getting the 50% required deposit to Pannier, which needs to be received before they will start work on the proofs. She hopes it will begin shortly and that proofs of the three signs will be available before the end of the year.

Community Grants

Ayer 2024 PACE Grant: Lucy reported that she had reached out to Laurie Nehring after last month's meeting to let her know the request for funding to remove invasives had been denied. Laurie has since submitted a second amendment request to apply the remaining grant funds (~\$2,000) to purchase supplies for next year, as well as two kayaks, two paddles and four life jackets. Beth spoke in favor of this request, noting the purchase of these items was within the grant's scope of work. On motion made and seconded, the amendment to the grant was approved. Beth abstained as she is involved with PACE and this project.

Townsend 2024 Squannacook Greenways Grant: Lucy explained that Bill Rideout, Treasurer for Squannacook Greenways, had requested an extension to the grant period as work on fencing along the new trail section had been delayed in anticipation of a culvert replacement. Due to uncertainty on when the replacement would occur, the grantee has decided to proceed with fence installation, but probably not before next spring. The remaining grant funds are targeted for purchase of supplies, which they would like to delay until closer to installation (due to storage issues). On motion made and seconded, it was unanimously approved to extend the grant period as requested, with the proviso that funds be expended and disbursed to the grantee by April 30, 2025.

Land Protection Grants

Brookline 2024 Grant: The Brookline Conservation Commission has submitted its Final Report on this land acquisition project. On motion made and seconded, the Final Report was accepted. Drew Kellner abstained as he was involved in the project. The remaining grant funds (\$18,000) can now be disbursed.

Proposed Project

Culvert Assessment & Training: Wynne explained that a member of NRWA's staff, Utkir Adkhamov, had participated in and was now certified to lead and train others for culvert assessment and prioritization according to metrics set forth in the Non-Tidal Streams Protocol. While NRWA has mapped and prioritized culverts in Massachusetts under a contract with the Massachusetts Department of Ecological Restoration, sections of the Nashua and Nissitissit Rivers in New Hampshire have not been similarly assessed. The NRWA is seeking \$9,000 to train an additional NRWA staff person, Marisa Browning-Kamins, and a cohort of volunteers to enable two-person teams to assess, map, and prioritize approximately 80 culverts in the Nashua and Nissitissit Rivers sub-watersheds in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. On motion made and seconded, this project was unanimously approved with the proviso that funds must be spent by April 30, 2025. Wynne abstained from the vote due to her involvement in the project.

Updates and Announcements

Destination Nature: Wynne announced that "Destination Nature," a juried art show focused on our Wild & Scenic Rivers and their watersheds and funded by our 2024 Community Grant Program, will be opening at the Fivesparks facility in Harvard on November 16th.

MACC Fall Conference: Heidi announced that the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions' fall conference, "Water, Water Everywhere," will be held on Devens on Saturday, October 19th. She will be participating in one of the panels.

Devens Tours: Beth announced that the Devens Enterprise Commissions will be conducting two tours highlighting its work using Nature-Based Solutions, similar to tours given last spring. If interested, contact Beth and she will provide more information on dates and times.

Dedication: Diane Carson announced that the Groton Middle School will be renamed and dedicated to Marion Stoddart at a ceremony on October 25th at 3 PM. Nashoba Paddler will be offering the use of kayaks and canoes before the event.

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

Next meeting: Thursday, November 21, 2024 at 7 PM by Zoom