

N-S-N Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 19, 2024 MEETING

By Zoom Video Conference

Voting Member Entities Present:

Towns: Brookline: Drew Kellner; Groton: Stacey Chilcoat; Harvard: Lucy Wallace and Michele Girard; Hollis: Bernadette McQuilkin; Pepperell: Paula Terrasi; Shirley: Heidi Ricci; 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 July 18, 2024 meeting were approved as amended.

NPS Update

Emma Lord reported on the upcoming PWSR Council Organization workshop being held on September 26, 2024 from 9 to 11 AM. She will send a Zoom invitation to Council members and encouraged them to attend. Emma has been part of a group working with consultants on developing this workshop based on information gathered through interviews with several PWSR Councils.

Finances

As we had not met in August, Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold began by giving a brief overview of the Council's finances as of July 31, 2024:

- Total Contractual: of the \$418,723 budgeted, \$262,337 has been expended and \$138,907 committed to ongoing activities, leaving a balance of \$17,479 to spend or obligate. The change in committed funds reflect the additional \$39,000 set aside for Land Protection Grants.
- NRWA Program Support: of the \$249,459 budgeted, \$224,404 has been expended and \$16,324 committed for ongoing projects. This leaves a balance of \$8,730.

Wynne then reviewed the August financial report, noting:

- Total Contractual: Expenditures to date through August totaled \$277,315, an increase since July due to payments to grantees under the Land Protection Grant program and to Anna Wilkins for FLP management services. With another \$123,929 in committed funds, the balance of Contractual funds is \$17,479.
- NRWA Program Support: Staff support of the Water Chestnut and Dragonfly Mercury projects, expenditures to date increased to \$228,106. With committed funds of \$13,433 there remains a balance of funding for NRWA Program Support of \$7,920.

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

Dragonfly Mercury: Wynne reported that sampling was done at the three sites on August 26th. Led by Emma, the sampling day was a great success and enjoyed by the several volunteers, and NPS and NRWA staff.

Interpretive Signage: Wynne reported that the sign proofs have been submitted to Pannier and confirmed the cost of producing three signs would be as expected, approximately \$3,000. The next step will be Pannier sending a PDF proof to be approved, followed by a full-sized proof for final approval. Pannier estimates that once the proofs receive final approval it will take eight weeks to manufacture the signs. Wynne added that the Groton Conservation Commission had approved the siting of the Nashua River sign at Petapawag.

Jr Ranger River Book: Emma reported Beth Suedmeyer had brought to her attention that the SuAsCo Stewardship Council has developed a *Jr Ranger River Book*, similar to the book developed by the NPS for the National Parks and wondered if our Council would like to develop one for our Wild & Scenic Rivers. The purpose of the books is to engage children in learning about the river by finding specific items. Once the tasks in the book have been completed, the child gets a badge. NPS has a template for a River Book which we could use as a basis for our book and that the NPS would cover the cost of printing. Stacey asked about distribution of the books, given we do not have a fixed location where they could be made available. Emma noted that the SuAsCo book is available on line, as well as in hard copy at Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and Minute Man National Historic Park. Stacey added that she had developed a similar book for NRWA's education programs for children and offered to help develop a book for the Council. Wynne and Lucy also offered to help. Emma expects Beth would also be interested in this project.

NRWA FLP Staff Support: Lucy noted that NRWA staff is providing support to the FLP project, most of which is reimbursable by DCR as an administrative expense. However, some of the work being done by staff, such as meeting with partners and contacting potential contractors, is not reimbursed by DCR. NRWA has submitted a proposal to cover this additional support, requesting up to \$10,000. On motion made and seconded, the proposal was unanimously approved.

Forest Legacy Project

Lucy gave a very brief update: the project is moving forward with a couple of tracts nearly ready to be submitted to DCR for a Yellow Book appraisal. Partners continue to meet monthly to share progress and issues. Anna Wilkins is doing an excellent job managing and coordinating the 19 tracts involved in this project.

Community Grants

Ayer 2024 PACE Grant: Lucy reported that PACE had completed another successful year of Water Chestnut Pulls on Grove Pond and, due to the work done in prior years, this season's work required less work and, as a result, there is approximately \$2,000 in unspent grant funds. Laurie Nehring, the project lead, had submitted a proposal to apply these funds to removal of invasives along the shores of Grove Pond. Drew Kellner raised concern about expanding the scope of the project beyond the original intent. After a lengthy discussion a motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously not to fund this request.

Harvard 2023 Harvard Conservation Trust: The Final Report for this 2023 grant to the Harvard Conservation Trust to build a trail, including boardwalks, on a newly acquired conservation easement was accepted by the Council. The remaining grant funds will be distributed to the grantee.

Lancaster 2023 World Farmers: The Final Report for this grant to World Farmers to complete the engineering and permitting for culverts to relieve spring flooding was accepted by the Council. The remaining grant funds will be distributed to the grantee.

Land Protection Grants

Following the July meeting at which an additional \$39,000 was set aside for the 2024 program, three grantees submitted applications to amend their grants by increasing their respective awards by \$13,000. By motion made, seconded, and unanimously approved, the grants to the Brookline Conservation Commission, Town of Townsend, and Town of Westminster were each awarded an additional \$13,000, bringing each grant award to \$23,000.

Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers Gathering: October 21-23

Lucy announced that Stacey Chilcoat, who had originally intended to attend this event, no longer has the time to attend. Lucy reminded members that we have funds to cover travel and related costs for attending the meeting which is being hosted by the Upper Missisquoi and Trout Wild & Scenic Rivers in Vermont. She will resend the notice and encouraged members to consider attending. Emma noted that SuAsCo was sending representatives, so there would be opportunities for carpooling.

Updates and Announcements

Nissitissit River Access: Emma reported that John Field of Field Geology Services had completed a geomorphologic assessment of this site to improve it for canoe and kayak access, as well as the parking area. Should Beaver Brook Association (BBA), the owner of this site, be interested in improving access, the next step would be an engineering report. Lucy suggested that the Council consider assisting BBA in pursuing this activity, should they request it.

Rodent Control: Heidi reported that MassAudubon has collaborated in preparing a guide on managing rodents without poison. As rodents are often eaten by prey birds and animals, such as hawks and coyotes, these animals are also poisoned by ingesting a poisoned rodent. A virtual forum will be held on October 9th at 6 PM. Registration is available under “News” on the MassAudubon site.

Miscellaneous: Joan Wotkowicz noted that the state’s MassTrails Grant Program has a standard form for amending grants. She will send it to the Council members to consider as a template for grantees to use in seeking amendments to their grants.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Next meeting: Thursday, October 17, 2024 at 7 PM by Zoom