

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

### MINUTES OF MARCH 20, 2025 MEETING

By Zoom Video Conference

#### Voting Member Entities Present:

*Towns:* Brookline: Greg Martin; Harvard: Lucy Wallace; Hollis: Bernadette McQuilkin and Ben Thyng; Lancaster: Justin Smith; Pepperell: Paula Terrasi; Shirley: Heidi Ricci; Townsend: Eva Vaughan and Rob Templeton

*NRWA*: Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold

*NPS*: Emma Lord

*MW*: Pat Huckery

*Guest*: Cliff Simmonds, NRWA Executive Director

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

#### Administrative

Lucy welcomed Ben Thyng and Rob Templeton, the new Hollis and Townsend Alternates, respectively, and Cliff Simmonds, NRWA's new (as of March 3<sup>rd</sup>) Executive Director. After the Council members introduced themselves, Ben, Rob and Cliff did the same.

The minutes of the February 20, 2025 meeting were approved as presented.

#### NPS

Emma Lord reported that Congress approved a Continuing Resolution to September 30, 2025, the end of the federal fiscal year. She expects flat funding of \$210,000 for our FY26 Work Plan and Budget but it will now be subject to review by both the NPS DC office and the Department of Interior and, therefore, could be decreased by \$5,000 or \$10,000.

#### Finances

Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold provided her monthly Summary of the Council's finances under CA1 through February 2025.

- **Total Contractual:** Over the course of this 5-year Cooperative Agreement we have received \$415,604 of which \$348,381 has been spent and another \$42,662 is committed for current projects and grants. This leaves a balance of \$24,561 to be invoiced for by April 30<sup>th</sup>.
- **NRWA Program Support:** As of the end of February the entire Personnel allocation of \$184,506 had been spent as had the remaining charges for Fringe, Travel, and Supplies. Of the \$66,818 awarded for NRWA Fiduciary and Indirect Expenses there remains \$2,456 which will be expended as the remaining Contractual funds are disbursed.

The combined remaining balance of Contractual and Program Support funds is \$27,017. Wynne cautioned that the balance is still being refined and may end up being slightly higher as committed funds are unspent.

As the only charge to date to CA2 funds was for February Personnel, Wynne did not present a Summary.

Wynne confirmed that all of our CA1 funds have been drawn from the NPS and, as of March 1<sup>st</sup>, 75% of our CA2 funds had been drawn as well.

### FY26 Work Plan and Budget

Lucy reported that she and Wynne had recently met with Cliff Simmonds to review the FY26 Work Plan and Budget regarding NRWA personnel billing rates. She noted that past practice had been to have the billing rate based on an average of various staff rates, while actual staff rates are charged to specific projects when the Council is invoiced for NRWA Program Support. At Cliff's suggestion, the document now makes it clear the rate is identified as an *estimated* rate (\$42/hr). She also noted that the NPS has recently increased the percentage allowed for Fiduciary and Indirect from 10% to 15%. On motion made and unanimously passed by Council members, the FYW26 Work Plan and Budget were adopted as proposed, with the proviso that should the total amount funded, \$210,000, be reduced by the NPS, the reduction in funds would be taken from the Contractual Projects and Stewardship Implementation category.

### 2025 Community Grant Applications

Lucy reminded members that at our February meeting there had been a discussion regarding zeroing out the CA1 account and the possibility of paying the approved 2025 Community Grants in full when awarded or advancing payments on other active Council projects. With an estimated \$27,000 in CA1 funds remaining and nearly \$29,000 in grant requests, the Council needed to decide 1) if it wanted to use CA1 to fund the 2025 Community Grants, and 2) if so, would we fund them at 100% or 50% upon execution of grant agreement. After considerable discussion and based on the uncertainty of balance of remaining CA1 funds, Lucy suggested the Council members authorize the Executive Committee to make a decision on how best to spend down these funds, either through Community Grants or other projects. A motion was so made, seconded, and unanimously approved by the members.

The Council then considered the following five applications it had received:

- *Beaver Brook Association – Hollis*: Request for \$7,500 to develop a detailed topographic survey and engineering plan for a sustainable solution to address critical runoff and erosion at a canoe/kayak access at the Potanipo Trail Parking Area on the Nissitissit River in Hollis, NH. On motion made and seconded, the members unanimously approved funding this request.
- *Friends of Woodlands and Wetlands – Oxbow NWR*: Request for \$7,500 to contract with Water and Wetland to treat for Japanese Knotweed located in riparian areas along the Nashua River within the Oxbow NWR. On motion made and seconded, the members unanimously approved funding this request.
- *Pepperell Cultural Council – Pepperell*: Request for \$1,975 to cover the cost of materials to complete seven panels to form a mural depicting the history of Pepperell and the Nashua River from pre-colonial times to the present. The panels will be located on the Nashua River Rail Trail at Railroad Square. On motion made and seconded, the members unanimously approved funding this request.
- *Shirley Greenway Committee & Conservation Commission – Pumpkin Brook*: Request for \$4,450 to 1) map and create a baseline of infestations of invasive plants, and 2) their removal first through cutting by volunteers and then herbicide treatment by licensed applicators. On motion made and seconded, the members unanimously approved funding this request.
- *North County Land Trust – Landowner Workshops*: Request for \$7,500 to cover staff time associated with organizing and hosting three landowner workshops to raise awareness of conservation value of their lands and to present ways to protect them. While the members

support the need to reach out to landowners to encourage protection of these lands, there was an issue with the application's lack of specific tie to implementation of the Council's *Stewardship Plan*. In addition, a NRWA staff person as one of the positions to be covered by grant funds would conflict with existing NPS funding for NRWA staff program support. On motion made, seconded and supported, the application was approved on the condition that the purpose be refined to link the workshop focus to the *Stewardship Plan* and the budget amended to eliminate the NRWA staffer.

### Community and Land Protection Grants Update

*Final Reports:* The following three final reports had been submitted for review and were accepted by the Council:

- Shirley 2024 Community Grant
- Shirley 2023 Land Protection Grant
- Townsend 2024 Land Protection Grant

At the February meeting the Council had approved advance disbursement of grant funds which would be due upon acceptance of final reports.

*Westminster 2024 Land Protection Grant:* The Westminster Planning Director had submitted a request to extend the completion date of this grant which had been awarded to 1) survey and mark the bounds of conservation land, and 2) improve and map a trail network. Lucy asked for approval to advance the \$11,500 balance due to the town and grant an extension to July 31, 2025. On motion made and seconded, the Council members unanimously approved the payment of \$11,500 and grant extension to July 31, 2025.

*Ayer 2021 Community Grant:* This grant supported the creation and installation of signage along Ayer's waterways to raise awareness of their connectivity to the Wild & Scenic Nashua River. Lucy summarized the situation as follows: due to various circumstances not all of the initial 50% of the total \$4,800 award, \$2,400, which had been sent to the town in 2021 had been spent, leaving \$1,077 to be spent or returned. She has been in touch with the Conservation Agent and reported there is now a plan to use the remaining funds to create and install at least one more sign. On motion made and seconded, the Council members agreed to allow the \$1,077 be used for signage or another activity supporting the purpose of this grant and to have the town submit a report documenting the use of the remaining funds. Absent this, the funds must be returned. The Council also agreed that the balance, \$2,400, being held as "committed" should now be released and added to the balance of CA1 funds to be invoiced for by April 30<sup>th</sup> and disbursed by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

### 2025 Land Protection Grants

A package of documents for the 2025 Land Protection Grants program (Request for Proposals, Grant Application, and Grant Agreement) had been distributed to Council members for review. The dates for submission were reviewed and accepted, as was additional language emphasizing the requirement to acknowledge funding being provided by the Stewardship Council and NPS. The Council agreed to a maximum grant request of \$20,000. The RFP and link to the application will be posted next week.

### Updates and Announcements

There being no announcements or further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Next meeting: Thursday, April 17, 2025 at 7 PM by Zoom