

N-S-N Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 19, 2026 MEETING

By Zoom Video Conference

Voting Member Entities Present:

Towns: Ayer: Beth Suedmeyer; Brookline: Drew Kellner; Groton: Diane Carson; Harvard: Lucy Wallace; Hollis: Bernadette McQuilkin; Pepperell: Paula Terrasi; Shirley: Heidi Ricci; Townsend: Eva Vaughan

NRWA: Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold and Marisa Browning-Kamins

NPS: Emma Lord

Guests: Cliff Simmonds and Ryan Hennrikus, NRWA

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 January 15, 2026 meeting were approved as amended.

Adopt-a-River Presentation

Ryan Hennrikus, NRWA Senior Land & Climate Associate, gave an overview of the Adopt-a-River program supported by the Council over the past few years. The focus of this project has been water chestnut removal in reaches of the Nashua River upstream of the Pepperell Hydro dam, Grove Pond in Ayer, and the Bill Ashe Visitor facility in the Oxbow NWR. In 2026 he would like to expand the number of teams in order to do pulls on tributary streams to Grove Pond, continue pulls on Grove Pond, and add pulls in Robbins Pond in Devens and Phoenix Pond in Shirley. The Council was very appreciative of these efforts and encouraged Ryan to map other invasive plants his teams might notice, such as Purple Loosestrife, and to consider other river stretches with slow water flow as these are prime areas for water chestnut to take hold.

NPS

Emma noted that her topics were being addressed elsewhere in the agenda.

Finances

Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold gave a brief summary of the Council's January finances.

Contractual: As of January 31st, \$106,790 has been paid for outreach, projects, and community grants, and another \$17,825 has been committed to on-going projects. There remains \$98,771 in Contractual funds to spend by June 30th.

NRWA Staff Program Support: Of the \$150,133 allocated to NRWA staff support, \$80,348 has been expended and \$19,974 is committed to on-going projects. This leaves \$49,812 to cover staff support through June 30th.

Lucy noted that the potential projects to be considered later in the meeting could exceed the available funding. That said, the projects are seasonal in nature and will continue into FY27 when there will be additional funding.

NPS Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers Supplemental Funding

Lucy reminded the Council that Emma had advised us of the possibility of this one-time program at our last meeting and that in the interim we had learned that up to \$30,000 could be awarded for a Council project. Partnering with the NRWA, a grant proposal has been prepared requesting \$30,000 for the purchase of canoes and equipment. With the retirement of the owner of Nashoba Paddler in the next couple of years, we will need the canoes to continue the NRWA's River Classroom program, a key element of the Stewardship Plan's goal of educating the public on the importance of our river resources. In addition, canoes are needed for our Adopt-a-River program. Several questions and suggestions were made, including seeking other funding to assist in the purchase of the canoes and equipment. On motion made and seconded, submittal of the grant request was approved. Emma, as one of the NPS reviewers, and Diane Carson, one of the Nashoba Paddler owners, abstained.

FY27 Work Plan and Budget

Lucy opened the discussion on the proposed FY27 Work Plan and Budget by noting the text of the Work Plan was similar to that of the last several years and that the Budget had been modified to show an increase in NPS funds from \$210,000 to \$220,000. Wynne added that the hourly rates, number of hours, and indirect costs associated with NRWA staff and fiscal agent support had also been adjusted. After a brief discussion on a motion made and seconded, the FY27 Work Plan and Budget was approved for submittal to NPS. Emma is hopeful it will be approved in time for our receipt of FY27 funds by the start of our next fiscal year, July 1st.

Potential Projects

NRWA staff had submitted several proposals to continue support of on-going Council programs. All of the following proposals would advance the Stewardship Plan's goals of protecting the significant resources of our three Wild & Scenic Rivers, either through invasive plants management or tracking the health of our rivers as they are subjected to a warming climate or impact of run-off from abutting land. Lucy is seeking direction from the Council on which projects to fund and to what amount. While the projects, being seasonal, would be funded by both FY26 and FY27 funds, the combined requests for NRWA staff support exceeded that amount that could be available in the two fiscal years. She added that additional funding sources were being pursued for some of these projects, which could reduce the requests for Council funds. The projects included:

- Invasive Species Management Committee – \$7,491.60 to purchase weed removal equipment for rent to local groups, to cover four speakers' programs, to purchase and raise beetles for release into Purple Loosestrife infestations, and to fund hiring licensed applicators for invasive plants' removal
- Adopt-a-River – \$15,500 to provide equipment (\$1,363) and staff support (\$14,137) to manage volunteer pulls of water chestnut in oxbows and back coves in the Pepperell Hydro Dam impoundment, supplementing the work of the Nashua River Regional Aquatic Invasives Alliance, and continuing and expanding pulls in Grove Pond, Robbins Pond, and Phoenix Pond, as well as selected river stretches in the Oxbow NWR
- Water Quality Data Loggers – Up to \$35,000 for NRWA staff (up to \$30,500), equipment (up to \$3,880), and travel (up to \$570) to continue the current program. Staff time includes data logger checks, data analysis, and planning for 2026 season (spring through early fall).
- Monthly Water Monitoring– Up to \$44,500 for NRWA staff (up to \$35,098), equipment (up to \$8,973) and travel (up to \$429) to support NRWA's decades-long water quality monitoring

program. Significant staff management is needed to assure strict quality-control collection standards required by Mass DEP are met.

- Swimming Hole Monitoring – Up to \$37,299 for staff (up to \$33,890), equipment (\$2,009), lab analyses (up to \$1,080), and travel (up to \$320) for volunteer testing for e coli in 10 unofficial swimming holes in the three Wild & Scenic Rivers. This would support the fifth year of this program.

There was general agreement that all five of these programs had merit and were worth funding; the issue is allocation of Council funds both for the balance of FY26 and, more critically, FY 27. After lengthy discussions, the Council agreed to fund the Invasives Species Management Committee and Adopt-a-River proposals for a combined total of \$23,000. The remaining three proposals were deemed worthy of funding, but at a lower level, especially of staff support if possible. Lucy and Wynne will meet with the Water Programs Director, Jessica Veysey-Powell, to pursue reductions in the funding requests to bring to the Council for consideration.

Lucy reminded the Council that funds for two on-going projects, installation of one new sign on each of our rivers and upgrade of our website, were being carried as “committed” in our monthly budget reports. Wynne added that she had attended a Squannacook Greenways Board meeting in Townsend where installing a sign near the Squannacook Rail Trail and popular fly fishing site on the Squannacook River was approved.

Forest Legacy Project

Referring to the status report sent to the Council in the meeting packet, Lucy reported that the FLP Steering Committee, with Anna Wilkins serving as project coordinator, is continuing to make steady, albeit sometimes slow, progress towards enrolling 18 tracts in this program. She noted that references to specific tracts in the report were sometimes based on location, a commonly known name, or the name of the landowner. Given that, she asked that Council members not refer to these tracts by name and treat the status report as confidential.

Lucy asked for approval to pay an invoice in the amount of \$375 submitted by North County Land Trust for services rendered by Anna Wilkins as coordinator of the FLP project. Upon motion made and seconded, payment was approved.

Announcements and Other Business

West Groton Dam: Diane reported on a public meeting to be held by the Groton Select Board on March 3rd at the Groton Senior Center/Community Center regarding the proposal to either remove or repair the West Groton dam on the Squannacook River. She added that there is information on the town website regarding this issue. Diane will send Lucy a link to the appropriate site to forward to the rest of the Council and encouraged those who were interested to attend the public meeting. Heidi noted that the river is the boundary between Groton and Shirley and, therefore, is partially in each town. She will advise Shirley officials of the meeting. Lucy added that as the Council has not been following this particular matter, and so should not take a position at this time on this matter. However, dam removal, especially of smaller dams, can have a significant impact on our rivers.

There being no announcements or further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM.