

N-S-N Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council

MINUTES OF JANUARY 15, 2026 MEETING

By Zoom Video Conference

Voting Member Entities Present:

Towns: Ayer: Beth Suedmeyer; Brookline: Greg Martin; Groton: Stacey Chilcoat; Harvard: Lucy Wallace and Michele Girard; Hollis: Bernadette McQuilkin; Lancaster: Justin Smith; Pepperell: Paula Terrasi; Shirley: Heidi Ricci; Townsend: Rob Templeton
NRWA: Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold and Marisa Browning-Kamins
NPS: Emma Lord
MA F&W: Pat Huckery

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by the Chair, Lucy Wallace. The meeting was held virtually by Zoom.

Administrative

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

NPS

Emma reminded the Council that the Continuing Resolution for FY26 passed last fall would expire January 31, 2026 unless the FY26 budget is passed by Congress. At the moment it appears the budget bill will pass and, if so, our current funding level of \$210,000 for our FY27 will hold.

Our FY 27 Budget and Work Plan will be due in March and a draft will be available for review at our February meeting. For purposes of preparing it we should use \$210,000, although, as in the past, it could be more or less that amount.

Emma reported that the NPS is considering creating a “special projects fund” for Councils to apply to for its own projects.

Finances

Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold explained that as we had not met in December, her report would cover October, November and December finances.

October 2025: The report reviewed at our November meeting was a draft; the report presented tonight is final. The changes from the draft report included:

- A decrease in NRWA staff time.
- A change in allocation of Committed Contractual Funds moving \$9,000 for signs (\$5,000) and website design (\$4,000) from Projects to Outreach & Education and setting aside \$12,000 in Projects for Forest Legacy and Dragonfly Mercury testing. Committed Contractual Funds balance is \$21,000.

November 2025: The report reflected:

- An increase in Contractual Expenses and decrease in Committed Funds reflecting payment to North County Land Trust for FLP Project Coordinator. Committed Funds’ balance is \$19,950

- Increased charges to staff time related to the Forest Legacy and data loggers projects.

December 2025: Again, not significant change in expenses, committed funds or balance of total funding remaining.

- Contractual: Increase in expenses with payment of \$2,450 to the Townsend Conservation Commission reflecting an amendment in its 2025 Land Protection Grant. Balance of uncommitted funds is \$98,780 which includes the \$42,432 set aside for the 2026 Community Grants program.
- NRWA Program Support: Expenditures include the two Coordinator positions, and NRWA staff support of the Forest Legacy Program and data loggers project. There remains \$48,397 available for NRWA Program Support.
- Balance of NPS Funds: A total of \$177,066 of NPS funding remains for Contractual activities, NRWA Program Support, and future Indirect Costs.

2026 Community Grants

Lucy reported that Wynne has been advertising the 2026 Community Grants program by sending notices to conservation organizations and non-profits, municipal boards, and local newspapers and posting on both the NRWA and Council websites. Wynne thanked those who had provided additional contacts for her to include in her outreach, noting she has sent information to about 150 groups. Applications will be due March 6th, with awards being made at our March 19th meeting.

FY26 Activities

Invasive Plant Management: Marisa Browning-Kamins reported that the working group is continuing to work on its series of four speakers to be held every couple of months as “lunch and learn” programs. The first program, to be held on February 11th, will feature Joe Johnson, an expert on community engagement in managing invasives. Information has been sent out on NRWA’s e-news and posted on the NRWA and Council websites. Wynne will forward the e-news notice for Council members to share. As this will be held by Zoom, registration is required in order to get the Zoom link.

The next speaker in this series will be Dan Bove speaking on invasive plant management and site restoration. He will do an in-person event at the NRWA on April 23rd at 9 AM. As this is during school vacation week another date may be selected. Suggested future speakers include Cathy Rooney, who led the invasives plant removal and restoration activities at Fredonian Park in Shirley, and Nic Gualco. The last two events in the speakers series are anticipated to be held in the summer and early fall.

Marisa then reported that she had succeeded in locating a source for purchasing Gallerucella beetles to be reared and released locally on purple loosestrife. The Invasives Plant Management working group will be meeting on January 20th and will bring a proposed budget for this project to the February meeting. Marisa estimates the cost for 500 beetles to be \$300.

Interpretive Signs: Possible sites for another three signs were discussed. Rob Templeton suggested installing a sign on a newly fenced section on Squannacook Rail Trail which is about 3 miles from the current sign location at Adams Dam. Lucy confirmed that the Council had funded the fencing through a Community Grant and suggested Rob reach out to Bill Rideout or Joan Wotkowicz about installing a sign in this location. Paula Terrasi suggested placing a sign at the Millie Turner Dam site on the Nissitissit River in Pepperell. As the site is managed by MA Fish & Wildlife, we would need their approval. Pat Huckery indicated she would be willing to consider a sign there. Another possible site

would be at the Pepperell Hydro dam. Unfortunately, the impoundment behind the dam and the dam are not included in the Wild & Scenic River designation.

There are a couple of good sites to consider on the Nashua River. Stacey Chilcoat suggested Groton Place which has a well-used trail along the river. She thought New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF), which owns the land, would be willing to allow a sign. She added that the Groton Land Trust owns an abutting parcel which might be another site. Stacey and Wynne will look into this further.

Wynne again noted that approximately \$5,000 has been designated as Committed Contractual Funds for signs (\$200/sign for minor changes to graphics, \$1,000/sign to fabricate for each sign, and \$300 for shipping).

Website & Outreach: Wynne reported that she had been working with Rob and Eva Vaughan on the website and ways to improve access to information and make it user-friendly. She suggested that much of the material on our current website, such as meeting minutes, could be archived and stored on the Council's Google Drive, along with other important Council documents such as policies. These items could be bundled by year and/or topic to make retrieval easier. Given the Council had already set aside \$4,000 for website design, Wynne was authorized to reach out to the contractors who had designed and upgraded NRWA's website, Geralyn Miller Design (GMD) and RoMP for quotes. They had submitted the following for doing the work:

Geralyn Miller Design (graphics) - \$2,250
RoMP (design) - \$2,000
RoMP (hosting/annual fee) - \$360

On motion made and seconded, the Council unanimously approved to retain the services of GMD and RoMP for design and hosting the Council's website.

Potential Projects

Lucy opened the discussion asking for members to suggest possible projects to undertake both this year and to include in our Work Plan for FY27. Lucy also asked for a couple of people to help advance the ideas. The following were proposed, but were not necessarily tied to a given FY nor prioritized:

Projects:

- Invasive Plant Management – Continue current work being pursued by the working group. Greg Martin is interested in following their work as time permits and connecting it with groups in Brookline dealing with invasives.
- River Access – Follow up on work begun a few years ago by Al Futterman and raised in the workshop held last year assessing two pull-out sites. A recent update of the Canoe Guide pointed out the need for a safe pullout before the Runnells Rapids on the Nashua River in Hollis, perhaps in Pepperell. Paula, Emma, and Bernadette expressed interest in this.
- Biodiversity – Using apps such as iNaturalist, encourage the general public or volunteers to note and provide information on native or invasive species found when exploring trails or on the rivers. Heidi noted information on state listed species should not be shared generally, but should be reported to the Natural Heritage Project. Beth, Pat, and Paula expressed interest in pursuing this.

- Water Quality – the NRWA Water staff is working on several projects to present at our February meeting. Wynne and Lucy will meet with NRWA staff in order to refine any proposals to come to the Council.

Education & Outreach:

- Develop family-friendly programs – Lucy noted that Gaynor Bigelbach, NRWA Education Director, could be a helpful resource. Stacey offered to reach out to her. Beth Suedmeyer is also interested in developing family programs, such as a vernal pool walk. It was also noted that Bob Durand might be a good speaker to invite to a family program.
- Jr Ranger Booklet – Beth suggested revisiting this project.
- Conservation Breakfasts – Beth would like to see these offered again. Lucy noted the Invasives Plant Management working group is planning four events, probably two in person and two by Zoom.
- Swag – Beth also asked we consider developing simple items, such as hats, to brand with our logo and make available to Council members, volunteers and the general public as a way to advertise our presence.
- Native Americans – Lucy would like to see us focus on the Native American presence in our region, perhaps by offering a public event.

While there was no shortage of ideas, Emma suggested revisiting the Stewardship Plan for other possible projects and activities.

Announcements and Other Business

Upcoming Events: Wynne reported that the NRWA Climate Impact Committee will be hosting a three-part series on hydrology by Zoom. In addition, Ben Goldfarb will be giving a talk on beavers and their impact on our ecosystems on March 12th, also by Zoom. Information on both is on the NRWA website, but Wynne will also send it to Council members.

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