

N-S-N Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council

MINUTES OF MARCH 19, 2026 MEETING

By Zoom Video Conference

Voting Member Entities Present:

Towns: Ayer: Beth Suedmeyer; Brookline: Greg Martin; Groton: Stacey Chilcoat and Diane Carson; Harvard: Lucy Wallace and Michael Girard; Hollis: Bernadette McQuilkin; Lancaster: Justin Smith; Pepperell: Paula Terrasi; Shirley: Heidi Ricci; Townsend: Eva Vaughan
NRWA: Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold and Marisa Browning-Kamins
NPS: Emma Lord
MA F&W: Pat Huckery
Guests: Cliff Simmonds, NRWA; Anne Gagnon, MA F&W; Sherry Anders, Shirley Greenway

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 February 19, 2026 meeting were approved as presented.

NPS

Emma reported that the FY27 Work Plan and Budget had been modified to add the \$25,500 the Council had received through the NPS-PWSRS Supplemental Funding grant. It is now moving forward in review by the Finance Team in Washington, DC.

Finances

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

Contractual: As of February 28th, \$107,324 has been paid for outreach, projects, and community grants, and \$24,942 has been committed to on-going projects. Therefore, \$91,120 remains available in Contractual funds to spend by June 30th. Wynne noted that only \$2,200 of the \$12,000 allocated for Outreach & Education remains. With requests for funding through the Community Grants program exceeding the set aside amount, Lucy added that we do have the option of moving funds from Projects/Land Grants to Community Grants as they both are in the Contractual bucket.

NRWA Staff Program Support: Of the \$150,133 allocated to NRWA staff support, \$88,959 has been expended and \$26,862 is committed to on-going projects. This leaves \$34,312 to cover staff support through June 30th.

Potential Projects

At last month's meeting the Council had reviewed several proposals submitted by NRWA staff which would support the objectives of the Stewardship Plan. Given questions with the amount of funding requested, the Council asked that staff reconsider and revise the budgets for the Water Quality Data Loggers and Monthly Water Quality Monitoring (WQM). It also declined to support the request to fund water quality monitoring of several unofficial swimming holes. Lucy introduced Cliff Simmonds who explained the reasoning behind the revised budgets. The Data Loggers and WQM are now each seeking \$15,500 to support the coming season's work. Wynne noted that approval of the requested funding for

staff support, there would still remain approximately \$3,000 for staff support should a need arise before June 30th. On motion made and seconded, the Council approved funding each project at \$15,500 (for a total of \$31,000). Wynne abstained from voting.

Review of Community Grant Applications

Lucy opened the discussion noting the 13 grant applications were seeking a total of roughly \$73,000, approximately \$31,000 more than the planned \$42,000 for this program. The challenge would be to determine which applications to fund at the full amount, which at a reduced amount, and which to deny. She suggested that those applications we decide not to fully fund and, therefore, would need a revised budget, we postpone a final decision on approving to our April meeting. Also, given that many of the applications were for invasives management, she proposed we first consider those that were stand alone requests and then look at those in closer proximity. Heidi Ricci suggested we require grantees for invasives species projects submit photographic documentation showing before, during and after removal. Pat Huckery advocated for funding all the invasive species projects. A lengthy discussion followed on the applications.

Beaver Brook Association: This request of \$7,500 for mapping and tracking Blandings Turtles on portions of Beaver Brook properties in Hollis, NH was strongly supported. On motion made and seconded, the Council unanimously approved fully funding this project at \$7,500.

Bolton Conservation Commission: This request was for \$7,500 to repair the trails on the earthen levees adjacent to two impoundments in the Bolton Springs Conservation Area as part of a larger levee restoration project. It was noted that this is a very popular conservation area, particularly among dog walkers who let dogs run free and into the ponds, thereby damaging the banks. It was suggested that dogs should be leashed so they are under control and unable to access the ponds. There also was concern about funding maintenance of trails and the impoundments as they restrict the free flow of streams that feed into Bowers Brook. On motion made and seconded, the Council voted to deny this funding request.

Harvard Conservation Commission: This request was for reprinting 500 copies of a highly popular brochure developed for landowners on removal of invasive plants and site restoration. Wynne suggested adding a condition to the grant that the Conservation Commission make a digital copy of this brochure available to the Council and allow us to edit it to be generic and not town-specific. Copies could then be made available at NRWA's offices. Beth Suedmeyer also suggested that brochure be made available on Harvard's and the Council's websites. On motion made and seconded, the Council approved the request for \$2,315.

Lancaster Conservation Commission: The Conservation Commission requested \$3,300 to replace a sign noting canoe access to the Nashua River at Seven Bridge Rd. Given there was a second request from the Conservation Commission to remove Japanese Knotweed at this launch site and improve access to the river, the Council felt this request could be postponed. On motion made and seconded, the request for \$3,300 was denied with the recommendation they reapply next year after work has been begun on the access site. It was noted the signage should be approved by the Council as well.

Pepperell INPAC: The Pepperell Invasive and Native Plant Advisory Committee (INPAC) was seeking \$1,350 for a "Tool Kit" to be comprised of equipment to lend and seeds for restoring the site once invasives have been removed. Paula Terrasi noted that she had a large supply of seeds which could be made available to INPAC, thereby reducing the amount requested by \$760. On motion made and seconded, the Council unanimously approved funding this project at \$590.

Groton Conservation Commission: The Commission requested \$3,076.50 for removal of Japanese Knotweed and site restoration at Carol Wheeler Park and along the MBTA right-of-way in West Groton. The site is located upstream of the West Groton dam which is under consideration for removal or repair. While the MBTA is not contributing to the cost of this project, it has granted the Conservation Commission access to the right-of-way. The Council noted the level of volunteer work going into this project, especially by a volunteer certified herbicide applicator, and that the funding request was for seeds and bare root plants to be used in the site's restoration following removal of the invasives. On motion made and seconded the Council unanimously approved the request for \$3,076.50.

Pepperell INPAC: This second of two grants submitted by the INPAC, this request was for a third year of funding for Phragmites removal and site restoration on Boynton Street. Paula noted that the first year we provided funding for preparation of a removal and restoration plan and that actual removal began in our second year of funding. As with the prior grant to the Groton Conservation Commission, this project has considerable volunteer and DPW support. On motion made and seconded, the Council unanimously approved funding of \$5,500 for this project.

Harvard Conservation Trust: The Harvard Conservation Trust (HCT) was seeking a second year of funding for invasives removal and site restoration on the Coke Property. This wooded site contains several small streams that are bordered by significant invasive plant infestations. The requested funding of \$7,500 would cover contracted services for plant removal (\$2,805) and replanting (\$4,695). There was a question regarding use of volunteers to do the planting and use of grant funds to purchase plants. Lucy will contact the HCT to ask that the \$4,695 be reduced to cover the cost of plants only, thereby reducing the total amount of the grant. A final decision will be made at the April 16th Council meeting.

Lancaster Conservation Commission: The second of two applications, the Conservation Commission was seeking \$7,500 for the removal of Japanese Knotweed and improvement of the canoe access to the Nashua River at Seven Bridge Rd. The Council was generally supportive of the application, but asked for a cost estimate from a contractor to support the requested funding. A decision on the amount of the award will be made at the April 16th meeting.

World Farmers: Although this project's site in Lancaster is across the river from the previous Lancaster Conservation Commission's site, there were significant questions about the strength of the proposal, including cost of tractor uses, effectiveness of repeated mowing, timing on replanting with native species in light of on-going mowing, and charges for personnel. Lucy will discuss the proposal further with the applicant. The Council supported the efforts to control invasives at this location.

Indigenous Landscape Initiative: Indigenous Landscape Initiative is a newly formed non-profit that will partner with Squannacook Greenways and the Townsend Historical Society to engage the community in removal of invasive plants along the shore of Harbor Pond behind the Historical Society's building and to raise awareness of Indigenous land stewardship practices. The Council questioned the basis for the proposed \$7,500 budget and Lucy will seek clarification of costs, including estimates for professional services. The consensus was that the funding request should not exceed \$4,000. A final decision will be made at the April 16th meeting.

Townsend Conservation Commission: This request is to fund the first year of a multi-year effort along the Squannacook River from the Canal Street Bridge to Adams Dam to manage invasives, clear log jams that limit safe paddling on the Squannacook River, and develop a riverine path. The requested funding of \$7,500 in the first year would be for development of an invasive plant control plan. The Council was generally in support of the application, but requested a basis for the \$7,000 consultant cost. Lucy will follow up. A final decision will be made at the April 16th meeting.

North County Land Trust: A request for \$7,500 to fund removal of Japanese Knotweed along a privately-owned stretch of the North Branch of the Nashua River near the confluence of Wekepeke Brook was submitted by North County Land Trust (NCLT) in partnership with the landowner. A contractor has been identified for this work and the landowner will restore the area with native plants once the Knotweed is under control. The Council expressed concern that there was no permanent protection, such as a conservation restriction, over this area. There also was some concern about the extent of Knotweed in this area and that the project would only address a small portion. These concerns will be shared with the applicant. On motion made and seconded, the Council voted to deny funding at this time, perhaps postponing for one year to allow our concerns to be addressed. Wynne abstained.

West Groton Dam

Due to the lateness of the meeting and the importance of this topic, it was agreed to hold an out-of-cycle meeting. Lucy noted that Groton's Annual Town Meeting (ATM) is scheduled for May 2nd and that the Select Board has an article seeking funding for repair of the dam. Sherry Anders added that the Groton Select Board will be meeting on March 23rd to vote on support of the warrant. The Select Board has requested Community Preservation Act funding; the CPA Committee will also be meeting on the 23rd to make a decision on this request. If not funded with CPA funds, the ATM (and following town elections) will need to approve a borrowing to fund the repair. Heidi expressed concern over the process, noting Shirley officials or residents had not been involved in this matter.

The Council will hold a special meeting Wednesday, April 1st, at 7 PM; Emma will send a zoom invitation. Lucy encouraged the Council members to review our *Stewardship Plan* and Horsley Witten report on dam removal in preparation for this meeting.

There being no announcements or further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 PM.