

**Nashua River Wild & Scenic River Study Committee**  
**Notes from the Study Committee Meeting**  
NRWA's River Resource Center, 592 Main Street, Groton, MA  
October 19, 2017

**INFORMAL NOTES**

*Members Present:* Beth Suedmeyer (Ayer); Rona Balco (Bolton); Jordan Bailey and Drew Kellner (Brookline); Leah Basbanes (Dunstable); Nadia Madden (Groton); Lucy Wallace (Harvard); Laura Bianco and LeeAnn Wolff (Hollis); Bill Flynn (Lancaster); Paula Terrasi (Pepperell); Heidi Ricci (Shirley); Bill Wilkinson (Townsend)

*NRWA Staff:* Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell, Al Futterman

*Ex Officio:* Anne Gagnon (DFW); Neil Angus (Devens Enterprise Commission)

*Guests:* Mike Fleming (NRWA Board member)

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by the chair, Lucy Wallace.

Administrative & Sharing

The meeting opened with its usual round of introductions by Committee members and by welcoming our new member-towns and their representatives, Jordan Bailey and Drew Kellner (Brookline), Laura Bianco and LeeAnn Wolff (Hollis) and Rona Balco (Bolton). In addition, Neil Angus, planner for the DEC, was welcomed as a non-voting member.

The minutes of September 21, 2017 were approved as presented.

NPS Update

In Jamie Fosburgh's absence, Al Futterman gave an update on Jamie's input on the draft Management Plan and where we are in our outreach process. First, Jamie suggested that there be a Summary of the Plan, highlighting the overarching themes (Biological Diversity, Recreation and Scenic, and Historic and Cultural). Second, the Plan needs to set forth the administrative function and composition of the future stewardship committee.

As for building community support for the designation and Plan, Jamie had several suggestions. First, we need to focus on obtaining community support, a part of which would be to get the draft Plan to the communities for their review and input. Second, we need to have a clear explanation of what the Wild & Scenic Rivers designation would mean – and not mean. And third, we might have a fact sheet or sheets listing the priority issues to be addressed in the Plan. Al circulated several samples.

ORRV Subcommittee

*Update:* Lucy gave a brief overview of the Subcommittee's meeting on October 12<sup>th</sup> which focused on the draft Action Plan chapter of the Management Plan. She first explained the proposed structure: a section on each major category (Biological Diversity, Recreation and Scenic, Historic and Cultural) and within each category relevant goals, objectives and strategies for accomplishing the goals. Given the density of actions pertaining to the first category, Biological Diversity, that was the only category reviewed. The remaining two will be considered at the next ORRV meeting.

Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell noted that Al had asked for comments and feedback on the draft Action Plan by October 15<sup>th</sup>, but was still willing to take Committee members comments. Al noted that the Plan is constantly being revised, so comments are always welcome; he noted that Paula Terrasi and Neil Angus had sent their comments. Rona Balco suggested adding to the Plan forestry best management practices that are designed to limit erosion of river banks when an area is being cut.

*Visual Resources Assessment:* Al explained that he had identified 9-12 possible sites for the assessment, being 3-4 on each river. Some would need to be done on river, others on land adjacent to the river. Prior to the actual assessment, those participating in it would need to be trained using a webinar session led by NPS. He noted that he and Nadia Madden had had a similar training when they participated in the program given at the Westfield Rivers conference last July. The webinar would last 1-2 hours and could be done from one's home or office. Following the webinar there would be on-site training. Lucy asked if that would be part of the team's actual visual assessment of the rivers; Nadia and Al both concurred that the first of our assessment sites would function as the on-site training and, therefore, would take the longest. Al asked how many people would be interested in participating in the assessment. Given the level of interest, but members' various time constraints, Lucy suggested that Al arrange and set a date for the webinar (depending on availability of NPS's Mark Meyer who would be conducting the training), set a date for doing the assessment, and then notify the Committee to see who would be available those two days.

*Dam Exclusion Areas:* In Martha Morgan's absence, Elizabeth gave an update on meetings with dam owners regarding the exclusion areas.

- Hollingsworth & Vose Dams: Elizabeth, Martha, and Jamie had met with Kathy Puff, H&V Environmental Engineer and, by phone, Peter DiPasca, Pare's Environmental Compliance Manager, H&V's consultant. H&V had initially proposed very large excluded areas around both dams (at H&V in W. Groton and Townsend Harbor); Jamie suggested smaller areas as needed to accommodate basic dam maintenance. Elizabeth reported that H&V is considering Jamie's proposal and will get back to Martha. (For those new to the Study and unfamiliar with excluded areas, Drew Kellner provided a brief overview.)
- Ice House Dam: Elizabeth, Martha and Jamie had also met with Liisa Grady Marino regarding the exclusion area for the Ice House dam. As with the H&V dams, Liisa was asking for a very large exclusion area, which Jamie suggested could be smaller and still meet the needs for maintaining the dam. Liisa was going to check with her contact at FERC and get back to Martha.
- Pepperell Hydro Dam: Martha has still not been able to set up an initial meeting with the owners.

Jordan asked if Jamie had provided these dam owners the information on FERC-licensed dams in Connecticut W&S rivers, which supported the smaller – or even no - excluded areas. Jamie was not at the meeting to say if he had or had not done more than raise it at in-person meetings.

Neil asked if areas around the dam are excluded does that preclude requiring installation of fish ladders? Drew noted that a similar question had been asked when Jamie was meeting with the NH towns and he had replied that fish ladders could still be required, as that is a common requirement for a FERC-licensed dam. Al will confirm this with Jamie.

*Next Steps:* As the Action Plan is being finalized, Al is still seeking input from state agencies with respect to goals, objectives and strategies to be included. Anne Gagnon reported she has reached out to her contacts within MA Department of Fish & Wildlife. After some discussion about whether it would be best for the NH representatives should reach out to the NH state agencies or have the MA agencies reach out to their NH counterparts, Drew offered to give Anne the contact information for Kim Tuttle, NY Fish & Game. Jordan offered to find other contacts. Drew noted that the state had just completed a “prime wetlands” assessment of a section of the Nissitissit as part of a restoration permit, as well as a mussel survey of the river.

### Outreach Subcommittee

*Municipal Officials Paddle:* Lucy gave a brief report on the paddle held on October 16<sup>th</sup> for municipal officials, which she thought was valuable for those who participated. In addition to LeeAnn and Laura, a member of the Townsend Board of Selectmen, a member of the Groton Conservation Commission and Harvard’s Conservation Agent were on the paddle, along with Al, Martha and members of the Study Committee. Lucy asked those who had gone on the paddle what they felt; they agreed it was good to be reminded how scenic and peaceful the river is. Elizabeth reported that Nashoba Paddler very generously provided the canoes.

*Stakeholders’ Gatherings:* Al distributed a draft flyer regarding a meeting for stakeholders on Tuesday, October 24<sup>th</sup> from 7– 8:30 PM which will focus on recreational users of the river and adjoining trails. Elizabeth noted that there had been very few RSVP’s so far; Heidi Ricci asked what groups had received notice of the meeting. Al listed those he had contacted: bass groups (30+), trail groups, land trusts, conservation commissions, local chapters of Trout Unlimited and Ducks Unlimited, the Friends of Oxbow, etc – an extensive list. The flyer was posted at Nashoba Paddler; Rona offered to post flyers at the kiosks for the two USFWS boat launches in Oxbow NWR. Anne, Nadia and Paula Terrasi offered to bring food.

The format was discussed and agreed as follows: a brief power point presentation to give an overview of W&S and our work to date, particularly the Management Plan. Al, Elizabeth and Martha will put this together. The program will then be opened to questions and answers, and additional considerations to include in the Plan.

It was asked if the October 24<sup>th</sup> gathering was going to be videotaped for local access cable. Elizabeth said that Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold typically contacts Groton cable for such programs but she did not know if Wynne had done so. Jordan and Paula mentioned Dave Pease in Pepperell as someone who might film these programs. In the ensuing discussion Nadia suggested that we develop a Public Service Announcement (PSA) to run on local access and our website prior to the spring annual town meetings. Several possible videographers were mentioned; Beth Suedmeyer mentioned Dawn McCall in Shirley. It was agreed a drone flyover of all 3 rivers would be good. Lucy noted that Harvard’s Conservation Agent, Liz Allard, had told her such a flyover had been done in Harvard. Lucy will follow up with Liz.

*Getting to Spring 2018:* Elizabeth distributed the timeline developed early in the Study process (February 2016) and noted that we were, more or less, on track for taking the vote to the towns in the spring of 2018. According to the 2016 timeline, the final draft Management Plan should be completed by this December and early in 2018 we should be meeting with the towns’ boards of selectmen and other boards to solicit their endorsement of the Plan ahead of their April/May annual town meetings. Leading up to the December final draft, we should be doing public

outreach, holding public meetings in the towns to both inform them and receive their comments on the Plan.

Drew noted that the NH towns hold their annual town meetings in early to mid-March and, therefore, issues or actions to be included in the meeting warrant need to be before the selectmen in December. Jordan added that the process used with the Nissitissit project was first to get the selectmen to put it on the warrant and then to engage in serious outreach to all possible constituents and supporters. Drew noted that it would be good to bring it to the Conservation Commission first, and the Conservation Commission would likely ask the Selectmen to put it on the Warrant. Drew will explore this further at the November Conservation Commission meeting, noting he would only need rough, and not the exact, wording for the Warrant article. This precipitated a discussion on timing for the MA towns as to when to go before town boards and when to go to the selectmen to ask to have endorsement of the Plan on the warrant. Elizabeth noted that Robert Pontbriand offered to reach out to the town administrators to get their timelines on developing the warrant for annual town meeting. She was not certain how many town administrators he had been able to reach to date, noting he has been very busy with Ayer's recent Special Town Meeting and other matters. According to the schedule for annual town meetings, all are held in late April or May, except for Harvard's which is in late March. Lucy noted that in 2018 Harvard's would be held on May 5<sup>th</sup>. Lucy suggested that each MA town representative contact their town administrator to give him/her a heads up that we would be seeking the boards of selectmen's endorsement of the Plan (coming before them in early 2018) and ask for a "place holder" to include an article on the warrant for endorsement of the Plan. In addition, the representatives should learn when language for the warrant will be due. Bill Flynn noted that we have more time in MA to devote to outreach given the slightly longer run time to annual meetings; nonetheless, we should go to the town boards for input now.

The discussion then moved to the need for a unified message ("elevator speech") to use as we go out this fall and early next year seeking both town boards' and local constituent groups (garden clubs, conservation/land trusts, etc) support of the Plan. Leah Basbanes suggested a 1-page fact sheet highlighting the benefit of designation and the Plan, and emphasizing that it would not lessen local control, lead to NPS taking private land or an increase in local taxes. Lucy suggested it should emphasize the regional planning aspect of the Plan. Neil noted it should be meaningful to all audiences including the town departments (such as DPWs) who will be interested in the cost implications of the Plan. Al will draft a message; LeeAnn (who is a marketing consultant) offered to copy review it. Beth suggested using the graphic of the river and timelines which was on the NRWA's most recent newsletter.

Elizabeth asked what we should distribute as part of our outreach this fall: the Action Plan? Mark's piece assessing the towns' planning status and capacity? A Summary of the Plan? And should the draft Plan in its current version be posted on our website? We would like more public input. It was agreed that Action Plan, Mark's piece and a summary should be made available as part of our outreach. It was also agreed that the draft Plan (marked WORKING DRAFT) should be posted on our website for those who are interested in reading the entire document. Elizabeth said it would be posted immediately. It is clear the Plan needs a Summary to provide a context for introducing the Plan to our communities. Al will draft one in the next couple of weeks. The summary will include information on the role of the Plan's stewardship committee, how towns can receive funds for projects that are in accord with the Plan's objective and strategies, and highlights of the Action Plan. Once we have finalized the Summary it can be posted on our website along with the draft Plan.

The timeline for the MA communities was finalized as follows:

- November: Representatives reach out to town boards to get on their meeting agendas to give a brief overview of the Plan.
- November: Representatives meet with town administrators to give heads up for Plan to be on the annual town meeting warrant and to get deadline for submitting language.
- November-December: Hold series of three public evening meetings, one on each category, at the NRWA River Resource Center. Hopefully the meetings can be filmed and then posted on our website.
- December: Finalize draft of Management Plan.
- January-February: Seek endorsement of town boards and committees.
- January-March: Extend outreach activities to other town constituent groups (garden club, conservation/land trusts, etc) and build additional public support.

Drew asked about engaging the NH delegation in this process. He is willing to reach out to the local Congresswoman. Elizabeth said she had previously spoken with Jane Adams in Rep. Tsongas' office about the NH delegation. Elizabeth will contact Jane to let her know that Drew is going to reach out now and will send Drew Jane's contact information.

Neil offered to keep the DEC apprised of the availability of informational materials and access to draft Plan on our website.

#### Announcements

Elizabeth announced that the NRWA Annual Meeting would be held on November 2<sup>nd</sup> beginning at 6 PM at the Devens Conference Center. She reported that the NRWA Land and Water Conservation Award is being given to the three groups that led the "Nissitissit River Project" in recognition of the recent acquisition of lands along that river. She encouraged Committee members to attend. The speaker is David Vallee, Hydrologist-in-Charge of the National Weather Service's Northeast River Forecast Center. His topic will be "River Flooding and Climate Trends," a topic relevant to our work on the Management Plan.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Next meeting: November 16<sup>th</sup> 7 – 9 PM at the River Resource Center.