

Nashua River Wild & Scenic River Study Committee
NRWA's River Resource Center, 592 Main Street, Groton, MA
October 18, 2018

INFORMAL NOTES

Members Present: Beth Suedmeyer (Ayer); Rona Balco and Rebecca Longvall (Bolton); Jordan Bailey (Brookline); Lucy Wallace (Harvard); Paula Terrasi (Pepperell); Heidi Ricci (Shirley)
NRWA Staff: Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell, Al Futterman, Martha Morgan
Guests: Warren Kimball (NRWA Board member)

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

Various Updates

Legislation: Elizabeth reported that the bill, HR 6825, the Nashua River Wild and Scenic River Act, has been filed in the House. It was introduced by Representatives Tsongas (MA) and Kuster (NH). Rep. Tsongas sent a letter, including a list of stakeholders' supporting letters, to Committee Chair Bishop requesting a hearing before the House Committee on Natural Resources (HCNR). Elizabeth noted the NRWA had prepared a similar request for the Study Committee to send, including copies of letters of support, once it receives a letter from MA Governor Baker. Elizabeth reported that MA Senator Eldridge had been successful in putting the request for a letter before the Governor's staff; she believes the letter will be received in the next week or so. Elizabeth has been in contact with Becky Cairns of Rep. Tsongas' DC office regarding the possibility of a hearing this fall. According to Becky, the House will not come back into session until November 1st, so a hearing will not be scheduled before then. Becky does not think the chances are good for a hearing being held, but if it is, it will be on short notice. That said, she believes we are setting the stage for a hearing on the legislation early in the next Congress.

Study Report: According to a recent email from Jamie Fosburgh, Elizabeth believes the NPS is nearing completion of the final draft of the Study Report. The appendices made available to the NRWA have been sent to the graphic designer for lay out.

Stewardship Plan Distribution: Al Futterman has drafted a form cover letter to the town clerks and town library directors, which he will customize for each town, to accompany delivery of copies of the *Stewardship Plan*. He asked if the representatives could deliver the letters and Plan, and collect the binders that had been left prior to the annual town meetings in the town halls and libraries. Those present offered to deliver the Plan as follows:

Ayer – Beth Suedmeyer
Bolton – Rebecca Longvall or Rona Balco
Brookline – Jordan Bailey
Dunstable – Al Futterman
Groton – Beth Suedmeyer
Harvard – Lucy Wallace
Hollis – Jordan Bailey
Lancaster – Rona Balco
Pepperell – Paul Terrasi
Shirley – Heidi Ricci
Townsend – Al Futterman

Administrative

The notes of the September 20, 2018 meeting were accepted as presented

Potential Interim Projects

Lucy reported that after refining the matrix the Next Phase working group had developed a list of potential projects that could be initiated in the interim period before legislation for designation is passed. She turned the Committee's attention to their list of 15 projects, noting that the first four were projects being suggested for more careful review. Before that, however, she led a review of the remaining 11 projects. The Committee agreed that some fell within the purview of or were currently being undertaken by state agencies (such as BMP's for snow and ice control) or the regional planning agencies or conservation organizations (such as training sessions for town land use boards on town bylaw amendments). Some projects were more focused on working with state partners than towns (such as promoting state goals for species and fisheries improvement, and developing a protocol for woody material removal). One project was viewed as educational in scope, a workshop of rain barrels and rain gardens, while another would require training boaters to collect and/or map information on aquatic invasives on the rivers. Finally, two projects (historic markers; stream signage at road crossings) should wait until after designation when we would have funding and NPS participation (which would enable use of the Wild & Scenic logo on the signage). All of the projects were viewed as having merit, and so worth considering in the future.

The Committee then considered the top four projects, weighing each for maximum outreach to the 11 towns, feasibility to accomplish given our current funding, and the time and manpower needed to organize and accomplish a project in the next 6 – 12 months. Elizabeth noted that the NRWA had the staff capability and capacity to take the lead on whichever projects were selected. After a lengthy discussion the Committee agreed on the following initial projects:

Canoe Access: This project could use the recently completed *NRWA Canoe and Kayak Guide* as a starting point. It was noted that there could be additional accesses; in addition several known access points need improvement either for parking or for safe put-in/ take out. Finally, the project would be applicable to all 11 towns. (There are no canoe sites in Dunstable at the present time, but there is the potential for some in the future.). The Committee agreed to pursue this project.

Networking Breakfasts for ConComs and Conservation Agents: While, as Jordan Bailey noted, this serves the "players" more than the general public, it will provide an easy way to bring parties most closely aligned with many of the goals of the *Plan* together to discuss topics and issues of common concern. Paula Terrasi noted that a similar series of gatherings had been held several years ago at the NRWA, which participants found extremely useful. She suggested rotating responsibility for providing speaker/topic and food among participating towns as had been done in the past. The Committee agreed to pursue this project.

The Committee did agree that the other two projects, *Shoreline Surveys by Stream Teams* and a *River-related Historical-Cultural Tour* would be feasible as interim projects, but would require more advanced planning and coordination. Al suggested that training teams to do the *Shoreline Surveys*, which he felt would be done from the water, would not be difficult. Designating sections to be covered by each team would take some planning, while organizing teams and doing the surveys would take considerable staff time. Elizabeth noted that given the staff time needed for this project, NRWA staff could not undertake it

at the same time as another project requiring substantial staff time, such as the canoe access. Nonetheless, Heidi Ricci felt this project would be a good way to engage people, as would the canoe access project.

Al had envisioned the *Historical-Cultural Tour* as being done with participants traveling together to the designated sites, perhaps by trolley. The other option would be to organize it as a self-guided tour, which would require volunteers at each stop to explain the site's historical or cultural value. Lucy suggested partnering with Freedom's Way Heritage Association on the Historical-Cultural Tour, or at least seeking their advice as they have organized similar events.

Heidi asked if we would consider a special event in June 2019 as part of Rivers Month. Beth Suedmeyer reported that Ayer had considered organizing a river celebration a year ago: the idea being to close off part of McPherson Road and provide music, food, activities for kids, and opportunities for people to bike along or paddle on the river. The event never came together, but the Committee felt it might be worth trying to do this coming June (2019) – understanding it would start in a modest way. Elizabeth cautioned against it being held the same time as Groton's Greenway Festival. Heidi noted it would take coordination with the USFWS and Friends of Oxbow as McPherson Road is within the Oxbow NWR.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM

.Next Meeting: November 15th at 7 PM at the River Resource Center