

**N-S-N Wild & Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council Meeting**  
NRWA's River Resource Center, 592 Main Street, Groton, MA  
September 19, 2019

**INFORMAL NOTES**

*Members Present:* Beth Suedmeyer (Ayer); Rona Balco (Bolton); Tara Alcott (Dunstable); Stacey Chilcoat (Groton); Lucy Wallace and Michele Girard (Harvard; Michele arrived late); Alix Turner (Lancaster); Ken Hartlage and Paula Terrasi (Pepperell); Hans Onsager (Shirley); Joan Wotkowicz (Townsend)

*NRWA Staff:* Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell, Al Futterman, Martha Morgan

*NPS:* Emma Lord

*Guests:* Linh Phu (US fish & Wildlife Service); Anne Gagnon (MA Division of Fish & Wildlife); Mike Fleming and Warren Kimball (NRWA Board members)

This meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by the acting chair, Lucy Wallace. She welcomed both the returning members of the Study Committee and newly-appointed members to this first meeting of the Nashua-Squannacook-Nissitissit Wild & Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council. Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell noted that both Mike Fleming, a retired MA DCR employee, and Warren Kimball, a retired MA DEP employee, can offer important expertise to the Council's work.

Administrative

The minutes of the June 20, 2019 meeting were approved as presented.

NPS Update

Emma Lord reported that the U.S. House of Representatives has passed its FY20 budget, which includes increased funding for newly designated Wild & Scenic Rivers. The Senate has not yet approved its FY20 budget, so she is not sure if a similar increase in funding will be included.

The NPS Study Report has been submitted to the Government Printing Office (GPO). However, the date of publication is still uncertain.

Role of Council/Initial Tasks

Lucy and Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell led a review of a draft "Overview of Tasks and Draft Timeline", dated 9-19-19, prepared by Elizabeth.

- *Members:* The 11 towns, NPS and NRWA are the permanent members of the Council, each of whom has 1 vote. The towns are allowed to appoint a representative and alternative member, and most have done that. The Council is allowed to appoint 2 additional voting entities, which Lucy suggested be done by the end of the year.
- *Conflict of Interest:* A conflict of interest statement was provided to each member. Lucy asked that they be signed and returned by the end of the meeting.
- *Decision Making:* As with the Study Committee, it was agreed that most decisions would be made by consensus. Per the Study Committee's policies, decisions requiring a vote would need 2/3 of those formal voting members present to pass. Lucy suggested members considered if a

straight majority vote would be preferable, even in the case of awarding funds for specific projects.

- *Quorum:* A majority of formal voting members constitutes a quorum.
- *Policies & Procedures:* Lucy reported that the Study Committee had adopted policies and procedures to guide its proceedings. The Stewardship Plan also requires the adoption of policies and procedures and set forth some suggested elements. Recalling the formation of subcommittees to address specific tasks related to the Study, Lucy asked for volunteers to form a working group to draft the policies and procedures. The hope is to adopt such policies by the beginning of 2020. On a motion made and seconded, it was agreed to follow the policies and procedures set forth in the Stewardship Plan in the interim.
- *Officers:* Lucy was elected interim Chair/President. The working group will recommend the additional officers to be elected (Vice Chair/President, Secretary, Treasurer).
- *Fiscal Agent & Staff Support:* Elizabeth reported that the current Cooperative Agreement between the NPS and NRWA runs until the end of June 2020. NRWA provided coordination and support for the Study Committee as outlined in the initial July 2015 Cooperative Agreement and subsequent modifications. The NRWA also serves as fiscal agent. Lucy noted that in the future we will need a designated fiscal agent as this body, the Stewardship Council, is not a legal entity which could enter into a Cooperative Agreement. In addition, we need to consider what level of staff support we might want, especially given the invaluable role of NRWA staff in the Study process. Emma reported that the other Partnership W&S Rivers stewardship councils have adopted a variety of approaches to this need, often using an existing watershed association as fiscal agent and getting staff support from the NPS, through the watershed association or lead non-profit organization, or through hiring staff. On a motion made and seconded, NRWA was affirmed as the fiscal agent and staff support to the Council through June 2020.
- *Website:* A website was set up by Ayer's IT staff, Cindy Knox, for the Study Committee and provided a place where information on the Committee's work was posted, along with meeting notes. For the past two years it has been maintained and kept current by NRWA staff. Elizabeth offered to have NRWA continue to do this for the Council for the time being.

### Financial Update

Elizabeth gave a brief update on the status of funds as of July 1, 2019 available to support the Council's work through June 2020:

\$10,000 – NPS Cooperative Agreement

\$10,000 – grant to NRWA from the North Central Massachusetts Community Foundation

\$ 8,000 – grant to NRWA from the Bruce J. Anderson Foundation

Elizabeth noted that of the \$10,000 remaining in the Cooperative Agreement on June 30, 2019, approximately \$2,000 had been earmarked for printing the NPS Study Report. As the GPO was now doing the printing, those funds would be available for other Council activities. The Cooperative Agreement can cover the cost of NRWA staff support during this transition period and staff assistance on initial projects, and other costs such as attending the recent PWSR meeting in New Jersey. The two grants to the NRWA can also be used to cover NRWA staff support during this transition period and staff assistance on initial projects.

Ken Hartlage asked if regular financial reports were required by the NPS and made to the Committee. Elizabeth responded that in the past she submitted quarterly reports to the NPS (Form 425s) along with that the Study Committee Notes. She also provided oral reports on financial updates to the Study Nashua River NPS W&S Notes for September 19, 2019 Stewardship Council Meeting

Committee at its meetings which were reported in the Committee Notes, along with any financial decisions made by the Committee. Elizabeth will continue to submit the quarterly Form 425s to the NPS and will include the Council's Notes for the duration of the Cooperative Agreement. Should the Council request it, she would be willing to provide a written financial report at its meetings.

### Interim Projects

Elizabeth explained that once the Stewardship Plan had been completed and legislation for designation filed, the Study Committee decided to undertake a couple of projects "to keep the momentum going." It was felt the projects should include as many of the 11 river towns as possible and be visible to the towns. It was also felt the projects should be within our major resource categories. Two projects were selected: Conservation Networking Breakfasts (representing biological diversity and opportunities to address issues impacting it) and Canoe Access Assessments (representing recreational resources). A potential third project could address historical or cultural resources. One such project considered was a trolley or virtual tour of historic river-related sites in the towns. This topic can be further explored at our October meeting.

*Conservation Networking Breakfasts:* Al Futterman reported that these networking breakfasts were being held every six weeks. The last one, held in September, featured a presentation by Martha Morgan on culvert replacement and upgrades. Other topics covered at these breakfasts included: siting solar arrays (February); dealing with invasives (April); conservation leadership (June); and creative land protection with Janet Morrison (August). As initially envisioned, these breakfasts were for conservation agents only or, if a town did not have an agent, a conservation commissioner could attend. Al added that Michele Girard and Paula Terrasi had been providing the food for these breakfasts, as well as contacts for speakers. Lucy asked if Michele and Paula felt the current attendees would feel comfortable if the breakfasts were open to land trust members and other interested parties. Both Michele and Paula agreed it would be good to open them to a broader audience.

In seeking suggestions for future topics, Al asked about 40B (affordable housing) projects. This led to a lively discussion of the difficulty of challenging poorly located 40B projects. It was agreed that this is a complicated topic and, as Alix noted, our focus should be on resource protection.

*Canoe Access Assessments:* Al Futterman provided an update on this project, reporting that 27 of the initial 30 sites actually provided canoe access. He has mapped the sites as follows: #1-11 are on the Squannacook River; #12-20 are on the Nashua River; and #21-27 are on the Nissitissit River. He has developed an extensive spread sheet capturing the information from the "Canoe Assessment" worksheets. With Warren Kimball's help he has begun a more rigorous evaluation of the sites. He noted, however, we need to determine what our next steps should be for these sites. Should we pick the top five and determine what work we could do to improve them and at what cost? While he has participated in each assessment, which was important for consistency in building the spreadsheet, Al noted and thanked Paula, Joan Wotkowicz, and Bill Wilkinson for assisting him in the majority of assessments, noting others including Mike Fleming, Jordan Bailey, Stacey Chilcoat and Ken Hartlage, had also participated. Beth asked about signage at these sites and the level of information to be provided. Al answered that most of the sites do not have signage or information on safety, invasives, etc., which would be helpful for boaters to see. Only Petapawag has the most comprehensive information. He added that Brookline is improving the access at Bohanon Bridge with parking and a kiosk, and that Drew Kellner has asked for a poster or information on the Wild & Scenic Rivers designation to include on one of the kiosk panels. This site not only provides access to the river, but it also is the juncture of a rail trail and hiking trails along the river. There are also plans to provide new sidewalk access to the site.

Paula noted that a new canoe launch of the left as you approach the Pepperell Dam has been completed by Eagle Creek Renewable Energy. This site should be added to the list of canoe access to be assessed.

### Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers (PWSR) Meeting

Lucy asked Emma and Anne Gagnon, who had attended the meeting on our behalf, for a report on the meeting. Emma explained that Great Egg River was the first river designated as a PWSR river in 1992. She added that there was NPS staff from New England and Washington, DC as well as at least one representative from each of the partnership rivers. Anne explained that the first day was devoted to a talk by Lindsey Wight, the coordinator for the Mississquoi/Trout Rivers study who spoke about developing and having a "PWSR Tool Kit". The morning of the second day was spent on the river and the afternoon given over to opportunities to network, which she found quite useful. Anne's only criticism of the event was the lack of an actual, hands-on workshop. As she had driven to the meeting with Alison Field-Juma, she had a chance to learn more about the work of the SuAsCo Wild & Scenic Council.

The next PWSR workshop will be in two years.

### Miscellaneous

*Commenting on Projects:* Martha Morgan asked how the Council felt about commenting on current projects that could impact one of the three rivers. For instance, Pepperell is now dealing with a controversy surrounding the ZBA's approval of the use of an old quarry site adjacent to the Nashua River for dumping potentially contaminated soils from Boston reconstruction projects. The Board of Selectmen is challenging this decision which has garnered significant public opposition. She felt the Council might want to weigh in on this. Anne suggested that it would be helpful to have a policy to guide us in these matters and that we should have a way of tracking them as well. Elizabeth wondered if the representatives would have to get approval from their town boards before voting on an issue.

*Meeting Schedule:* It was agreed that the Stewardship Council would continue with the meeting schedule established by the Study Committee with meetings held on the third Thursday of the month from 7 – 9 PM at the NRWA's River Resource Center offices.

Next Meeting: October 17<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM at the River Resource Center

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.