

Nashua River Wild & Scenic Committee
Notes from the Committee Meeting
NRWA's River Resource Center, 592 Main Street, Groton, MA
February 18, 2016

INFORMAL NOTES

Members Present: Beth Sudemeyer (Ayer); Leah Basbanes & Judy Larter (Dunstable); Nadia Madden & Tim Newman (Groton); Lucy Wallace (Harvard); Bill Flynn (Lancaster); Rob Rand (Pepperell); Betsy Colburn (Shirley); Bill Wilkinson (Townsend)

NPS: Jamie Fosburgh

NRWA Staff: Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell, Al Futterman, Mark Archambault

Guests: Dave Armstrong (USGS); Jordan Bailey (Brookline Conservation Commission); Mike Fleming (NRWA Board); Anne Gagnon (MA Wildlife); Marion Stoddart (NRWA Emeritus)

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

Administrative: The January 21, 2016 meeting notes were accepted as presented. A clean copy of the "Basic Rules of Operation," which had been approved at the January meeting, was distributed to the members. A revised copy of the "Conflict of Interest Policy," which had also been discussed at the January meeting, was distributed for final approval and adoption. It was further modified to amend the necessary vote by the members from a simple majority to a two-thirds vote. There was discussion regarding the difference between committee members and ex officio members. It was agreed the committee members, representing the 8 towns, are voting members, as is the National Park Service (NPS) and Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA), with each town, the NPS and the NRWA being allowed one vote. Ex Officio members (state and federal agency representatives) are not voting members.

Plan Timeline: Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell had prepared a draft timeline, dated 2-17-16, which was reviewed. The spring 2018 annual town meetings is the target date for the towns' approval of the Wild & Scenic River Designation Study and Management Plan. In order to meet that milestone, outreach to and hearings in the communities on the Study's draft findings and Plan should be completed by the end of 2017. This would provide several months to finalize the Study and Plan and present them to various town boards for their endorsement prior to the 2018 town meetings. After the town meetings' votes, the Study Report and Management Plan would be finalized by the NPS and submitted to Congress in the fall of 2018 if designation is being sought.

Given this short time, Jamie Fosburgh suggested the Outstanding Remarkable Resource Values (ORRV) need to be identified and documentation collected by the end of August 2016. Discussion ensued on various ways to track checkpoints to make sure milestones are being met. Nadia, Beth and Tim agreed to investigate several options and bring them back to the Committee for consideration. There was also discussion of the best way to share documents. Jamie reported that the NPS does not allow the use of Dropbox for security reasons. Google docs is another option, which NPS could use.

ORRV Subcommittee: Al reported on the first meeting of the ORRV subcommittee which was held on February 11th and attended by Betsy Colburn, Paula Terrasi and Lucy, along

with NRWA staff Al and Martha Morgan. Lucy suggested each town have a representative on the subcommittee as they would be the most familiar with resources within their towns and/or whom to contact for such information. Beth Sudemeyer indicated she would like to join this subcommittee; Judy Larter had indicated an interest in participating at a previous meeting, thereby providing representation from 5 of the 8 communities.

Al has begun a list of the ORRV and resources available to the subcommittee to be used in evaluating them. While there is considerable information on some stretches of the river and adjoining upland areas, there are also considerable gaps in other areas. Lucy asked Jamie how the subcommittee would select the outstanding remarkable resource values to justify the designation. Jamie responded that we should screen first for resources of statewide significance then regional and local importance. Resources to consider and map could include mussels, free-flowing segments of the river, forested tracts, protected lands, wildlife corridors, historic artifacts, such as the Shirley Shaker Village, and biological resources such as those noted in the 3 ACEC designation studies and on the state biomaps. It was noted that Keene State College is conducting a study of the Nissitissit River. Educational activities, such as River Classroom, do not qualify as an ORRV, but would be included in the management plan. Al will compile the GIS maps to document the ORRV locations and connectivities.

The next meeting of the ORRV subcommittee will be on March 10th at 10 AM.

Outreach Subcommittee: Al reported that he had met on February 11th with Robert Pontbiant and Cindy Knox, Ayer's IT staff person whom Robert is making available to the subcommittee, to discuss a website for the Wild & Scenic Study Committee. They are looking into hosts (Virtual Town Hall, GoDaddy), reserving a domain name, and other social media to be used for public outreach (Facebook). The goal is to have a link to our website on the websites of each of the member towns, the NPS and the NRWA. Al showed the committee the Sudbury Assabet Concord Wild & Scenic and Missisquoi Wild & Scenic websites as examples. Jamie suggested we think of the website as serving not only the Study Committee's activities, but also, once designation is attained, the site for the ongoing stewardship/management committee. Al asked for photographs of various areas within the study area to populate the website, as visuals are extremely important. Cindy will prepare a mock-up of the website to show at our March meeting.

Bill Flynn would like to join the Outreach Subcommittee.

Nissitissit Headwaters: Jordan Bailey explained her interest in attending the Committee's meetings, and that she was glad that the Study Committee had extended an invitation for her to participate. She has had several conversations with Jamie Fosburgh, and a meeting with Elizabeth, Lucy and Al at the NRWA's River Resource Center. At her initiation, Al was invited to give a presentation to the Brookline Conservation Commission, which he did recently, and she reported that the presentation has generated new interest in potentially having the Brookline section of the Nissitissit included in the Wild & Scenic study area.

Jordan noted that most of the lands along the Nissitissit (a stretch of about 1 mile) in Hollis are already protected, either by Beaver Brook Association or the Nissitissit Land Trust. The stretch of river in Brookline (about 4 miles) has river access for canoes and some protected lands, as well as excellent cold-water fisheries. The Study Committee agreed it would be

good to have it included as that would include the headwaters of the Nissitissit. Jordan also noted that Drew Kellner, an alternate on the Brookline Conservation Commission, is president of Beaver Brook Association in Hollis. The opinion of Beaver Brook Association and the Nissitissit Land Trust is very important. While the Hollis and Brookline boards of selectmen did not join in this effort when approached several years ago, Jordan felt there might be more interest now. Jordan noted that in her opinion there is a lot of interest among the local conservation groups, and this grass roots/bottom up support might encourage the boards of selectmen to reconsider joining the study area over the next year or so. Jamie is willing to meet with members of the Beaver Brook Association board, and other boards, to explain the implications and value of the Wild and Scenic River designation. Jamie noted that we do have the ability to add stretches of the river to our study area when submitting legislation seeking designation, and that Hollis and Brookline could participate informally on the Study Committee. If they do decide to participate, we should notify the NH Congressional delegation. He added that having the area to be designated be in two states would be a benefit in seeking Congressional approval.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM. Next meeting: March 17th at 7 PM.