

Nashua River Wild & Scenic Study Committee
Notes from the Study Committee Meeting
NRWA's River Resource Center, 592 Main Street, Groton, MA
April 21, 2016

INFORMAL NOTES

Members Present: Robert Pontbriand & Beth Suedmeyer (Ayer); Judy Larter (Dunstable); Nadia Madden (Groton); Lucy Wallace (Harvard); Bill Flynn (Lancaster); Rob Rand (Pepperell); Heidi Ricci (Shirley)

NRWA Staff: Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell, Al Futterman

Ex Officio Members: Jeff Barbaro (USGS); Libby Herland (USFWS); Anne Gagnon (MA F&W); Cindy DelPapa (MA DER)

Guests: Buddy Dougherty (Brookline Conservation Commission); Cindy Knox (Ayer IT staff); Mike Fleming and Warren Kimball (NRWA Board members)

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

Administrative

The March 17, 2016 meeting minutes were accepted as presented. Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell circulated a list of members who had turned in a signed Conflict of Interest Disclosure form, along with blank forms, and asked that those who were not on the list to complete and return a signed form to her by the end of the meeting. Elizabeth suggested that copies of meeting handouts be sent to Al or her so they can be emailed to those committee members not present.

ORRV Subcommittee

Notes from the last meeting of the subcommittee were distributed, along with a copy of an email from Jamie Fosburgh, NPS. Lucy asked Warren Kimball, who had been at the last ORRV subcommittee meeting, to give an overview of the work he was proposing to do regarding the history of water quality improvement. He envisioned three sections to this work: 1) a 1-page narrative summarizing the river's classification in 1973 ("C") and expectation that even with clean-up, it would never attain a "B" classification, which, in fact it now has; 2) a report card drawn from state water quality data on 10 segments of the Nashua, including a graphic presentation of the severity of pollutants and subsequent improvement to water quality between 1973 and 2010; and 3) a narrative of the story of the river's clean up, beginning with Marion Stoddart's efforts leading to the state and then federal clean water acts in the early 1970's, and upgrades to several water treatment facilities. Bill Flynn mentioned he knew of a report on the river going back to the 1960's that had been collected by Camp Dresser & McKee; it could be useful to include (several decades ago Bill gave copies to the NRWA and to the Fitchburg Historical Society - the copies will be retrieved for the Study Committee's use).

Discussion followed regarding the subcommittee's ongoing work to identify sources of information on ORRVs and possible need for studies this summer. As noted in Jamie Fosburgh's email, the nomination reports for the 3 ACECs include good information on

resources that would qualify as ORRVs. In addition, there is the 1992 USFWS report on Devens resources prepared to justify expansion of the Oxbow NRW along the river. Libby Herland noted that the USFWS had completed a Comprehensive Management Plan for Oxbow in 2005, which would be a good source of both resource inventory and management. Anne Gagnon noted that the state's Natural Heritage maps would have the most recent information on potential ORRVs, although they cover broad areas, as opposed to site specific location of particular resources. It was agreed that additional surveys were probably not needed to identify resources, particularly the previously suggested mussel survey.

In addition to the natural resource values, we need to focus on scenic/recreation and historical values associated with the Nashua and the two tributaries. Jeff Barbaro raised the value of the extent of protected lands along the rivers, which should be highlighted as contributing to the ORRVs (natural, scenic and recreational). Lucy asked that members of the full Study Committee send her, Al Futterman and/or Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell any local information that could be worth including in the Management Plan, even if not as an ORRV.

Beth Suedmeyer asked if a narrative of the milestones in the river's clean up would be a useful way to tell our particular and unique story. For instance, upgrades to treatment plants in the late 1970's (pushed by the passage of the Clean Water Act) had a dramatic and transformative effect on the river's water quality. To maintain and continue to improve the water quality, the Management Plan should include both upgrades, as needed, to waste water treatment facilities, but also address "green infrastructure" improvements to assure population growth and development do not negatively impact the river. It was noted that dams (Ayer, Wachusett and Pepperell) can have a major impact both on river flow and river temperature. Warming waters will negatively impact the cold water fisheries of the Squannacook and Nissitissit.

Outreach Subcommittee

Robert Pontbriand distributed notes from the subcommittee's last meeting and gave a brief update on status of their work and what they need from the committee members:

1. The target launch date of website is 9/1; prior to then he will bring a mock-up to the committee for approval. He needs material for the site; what information would the committee like to see on it?
2. The subcommittee is working on a 1-page "snap shot" of this study and its purpose to be given to local boards when visited by committee members.
3. The subcommittee intends to develop a press kit as an additional way to disseminate a clear message on our work.
4. The last round of formal presentations made to the local boards of selectmen was in about 2010 when support was being sought for pursuing authorization for the Study Committee.* It was agreed that we should target reaching out again this fall.
5. Robert would welcome more committee members joining this subcommittee.

Robert reiterated the subcommittee's needs and asked for feedback on three items:

1. Edits/comments on the draft "snap shot" statement (which he will send to members electronically).
2. Additional content for the website, such as FAQs.
3. Ideas for a name for this committee and its successor. (The "successor" committee will be created when and if Congress designates the river sections as Wild & Scenic and approval of the Management Plan.)

Beth asked if a simple brochure/flyer could be created to hand out at various community events that will be occurring beginning in the spring. Robert offered to try to put one together ASAP.

Bill Flynn noted that we should approach getting all 8 town meetings' approval of the designation and Management Plan (targeted for the spring of 2018) like a political campaign in terms of building broad support and engagement. Outreach will be critical for this.

Old Business

Management Tools: Nadia Madden noted that she had not been able to meet with Beth and Tim Newman again but intended to do so before our May meeting. They will investigate how best to use technology for internal communication.

NH Participation: Buddy Dougherty indicated that there was continued interest in attending these meetings and sharing information on the NH reaches of the Nissitissit and Squannacook.

Kinder Morgan Pipeline: Buddy reported that the pipeline application before FERC had been suspended (but not formally withdrawn at this point). Heidi Ricci noted that the Wild & Scenic River designation would add another layer of protection, should the pipeline go forward in the future.

New Business

Oxbow Dedication: Libby Herland reported that the USFWS will hold a dedication on Friday May 27th at 11:00 AM of its new visitor contact station at the Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge at Devens. It will be dedicated to Bill Ashe, who, as Deputy Regional Administrator for the USFWS, was instrumental in the creation and expansion of the Oxbow NWR. She urged the committee to have a table with brochures and information on our work as the Wild & Scenic Study Committee at the event, and encouraged everyone to attend.

Calendar: Robert offered to prepare and maintain a calendar of events where we should have a presence.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM. Next meeting: May 19th at 7 PM.

***Note: The BOS were notified when the Study was authorized, and BOS were invited to the press event in early 2015, etc. Subsequently the NRWA was in touch with each BOS about nominating a Representative and Alternate to the Study Committee.**