

Nashua River Wild & Scenic River Study Committee
Groton Electric Light Building, 23 Station Avenue, Groton, MA
March 21, 2019

INFORMAL NOTES

Members Present: Beth Suedmeyer (Ayer); Rona Balco and Rebecca Longvall (Bolton); Jordan Bailey (Brookline); Nadia Madden (Groton); Michele Girard and Lucy Wallace (Harvard); LeeAnn Wolff (Hollis); Paula Terrasi (Pepperell)

NRWA Staff: Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell and Al Futterman

NPS: Jamie Fosburgh and Emma Lord (Wild & Scenic Rivers Fellow)

Guests: Warren Kimball and Joan Wotkowicz (NRWA Board members)

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

Celebrate Designation

Lucy opened the meeting by acknowledging the hard work of everyone present which resulted in our getting to this point: passage and signing by the President of S.47 which included designation of sections of the Nashua, Squannacook and Nissitissit Rivers as Wild & Scenic Rivers. Special congratulations to the NRWA staff for their work over the last three years, particularly to Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell who quietly kept in touch with Senator Markey's staff on the status of legislation. The Committee celebrated with cake and cider.

Administrative

The minutes of the February 21, 2019 meeting were approved as presented.

Jordan Bailey announced she has recently taken a position with the US Department of Agriculture, NRCS, in Hillsborough County, NH. She also reported that Drew Kellner had recently been elected to the Brookline Board of Selectmen.

Various Updates

Jamie Fosburgh, NPS: Jamie reported that the final draft of the Study Report was submitted to NPS Headquarters in Washington, DC on March 20, 2019. Lucy asked if the Report would now be put out for a 90-day public review and comment. Jamie reported that it had been decided to forego the 90-day review as the legislation had already been passed and signed into law. The Report would, however, be sent by the NPS to the appropriate Congressional Committees and Leadership. Elizabeth asked how many copies would be needed, assuming the NRWA would oversee the printing of the Report. Jamie thought 50 copies would be sufficient for both NPS and NRWA needs. A brief discussion followed on the pros and cons of NRWA having it printed or having the Congressional Printing Office do it (which might take longer to have completed, but would likely be cheaper). Jamie will look into the possibility of the CPO handling the printing and get back to Elizabeth. He did not think it would be necessary to print the appendices, as they would be available on line and probably not of primary interest to Congress.

Jamie reported that NPS has been finalizing its FY20 budget, which will include funding for Wild & Scenic Rivers. As the President's FY20 budget includes cuts to the NPS budget, and does not include funding for the new Wild and Scenic rivers, they may not be added until the FY21 budget cycle.

Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell, NRWA: Elizabeth reported on a coalition of the Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers, most of which are located in the northeast. Elizabeth has brought this coalition to the attention of the Study Committee in the past. There will be a meeting of this coalition in New Jersey September 15-17, 2019, which we may want to have representatives of our group attend. Jamie strongly encouraged our participation, noting travel and lodging could be covered by the Cooperative Agreement as the meeting is considered a training opportunity.

Elizabeth went on to report on the specific contacts she has had with the Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers coalition which, like the larger Wild & Scenic Rivers coalition coordinated by American Rivers, advocates for funding for the Partnership rivers. She circulated a white paper that had been prepared by Fred Akers of the Partnership coalition which gives a brief description of the 16 rivers, as well as the actual funding in 2018 to these rivers and the FY20 request. Our rivers are in the Partnership request for \$175,000 for FY20. In addition, Elizabeth distributed a draft "Dear Colleague" letter which was suggested we give our Congressional Representatives Trahan and Kuster for them to send to their colleagues to encourage funding for these rivers in the FY20 budget. Elizabeth and Alison Field-Juma of the SuAsCo Wild & Scenic River Council had recently met with Representative Trahan and had been able to brief her on this request for funding support. She reported that the Representative was supportive and would reach out to her colleagues.

Beth Suedmeyer asked how it is determined how much money the rivers will receive, and asked if it is based on the amount they request. Jamie replied that the NPS generally divides the available funds evenly between the rivers. He added if we do not get funding through the FY20 budget, there are some NPS funds (~ \$20,000) available to cover start-up costs. We also would still have access to NPS staff time to assist us.

Elizabeth then raised the matter of our joining the American Rivers-sponsored group which covers all Wild & Scenic Rivers. She noted that there are members of the Partnership Wild & Scenic River group that are liaisons with the larger American Rivers group – Alison Field-Juma is one. Nadia Madden offered that she has a prior professional connection to American Rivers and would be willing to look into the American Rivers-led national coalition for us. The Committee agreed to postpone a decision on formally becoming part of the group this until we had more information.

Lucy then asked for confirmation by the Committee members that we should continue to work with the Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers coalition. It was unanimously agreed to do so.

Review of Interim Projects

Canoe Access Assessment: Al Futterman reported that he and Doug Cameron, Assistant Director/Deputy Chief Engineer, MA Office of Fishing and Boating Access, along with Nadia, Paula Terrasi, Joan Wotkowicz, and Marion Stoddart, had visited and assessed two canoe sites: the boat launch at Petapawag and car-top access across the river on Rt 119 from Petapawag. Al noted that the boat launch at Petapawag is considered the "Cadillac" of sites (of our approximate 30 sites). Paula noted that Petapawag is managed jointly with Groton by a cooperative agreement with the state.

Jordan commented on the three canoe access sites on the Nissitissit in Brookline, two of which are generally safely usable all season (spring to fall), the third being less accessible and less suitable all season. The first, behind the Sunoco station, is part of the new Nissitissit River Park being developed on town-owned land by the town with \$50,000 from the USFWS Land & Water Conservation Fund. When completed, the Park will include parking, a fishing dock, improved canoe access, and an ADA-compliant

trail. The second access is a Bohanon Bridge Road. Parking will be provided on one side of the river with access being via the bridge on the other side of the river.

Paula reported that through the FERC license with Pepperell Hydro there will be three car-top accesses in the vicinity of the dam: the first off the Rail Trail, the second across the river behind the garage, and the third approximately 900 feet downstream of the dam. In addition to these access sites, Paula reported that the town's right-of-way to the river over a portion of the new subdivision on Rt 111 (to the Kemp Conservation Area Launch) is being recreated and improved for vehicular access to parking nearer the river. The town hopes to have work completed later this spring.

In closing, Al said he will distribute a schedule of site visits to do in the near future. He is hoping that at the very least one of the town representatives will join him on the assessments of sites in their towns.

Networking Breakfasts for Conservation Agents: Michele Girard and Al reported that the next breakfast will be on April 9th at the River Resource Center. The speaker's topic will be invasives.

Designation Celebration

Lucy and LeeAnn Wolff gave an overview of planning to date for a larger public celebration of designation. The first item to confirm was the date: Sunday, April 28th, which is the date that both Representative Trahan and Tsongas are available. The second item to confirm was the location: the Bill Ashe Visitor Center at Devens which has now been reserved by the USFWS for our use, thanks to Linh. LeeAnn had organized a site visit a couple of weeks ago and walked through the logistics of the event, including:

- advertising the event (NRWA will take lead)
- parking and shuttle buses (provided by FWS)
- traffic control (provided by FWS)
- need for tent
- food and beverages (Rona Balco offered to coordinate)
- ways of tracking number of attendees
- acquire a banner to use at this and all future Wild & Scenic events?

Lucy explained the event would run approximately 2 hours – either from 1 – 3 PM or 2 – 4 PM. In addition, the Friends of Oxbow have offered to lead walks on the trails either before or after the event, and we could let the public know of the access to the river should they want to canoe or kayak that afternoon. Beth asked if we should give each town a plaque commemorating designation, which precipitated discussion on cost and time to produce. Rona offered to donate wooden plaques; Lucy wondered about using photographs of the three rivers – perhaps the ones on the cover of the *Stewardship Plan*. Beth offered to speak to Cindy Knox to see if she had any photographs we might use. LeeAnn distributed a spreadsheet of tasks and asked that everyone take responsibility for an item.

Elizabeth added that Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold, Communications Director, is quite stretched by NRWA projects and will have little time to assist with new projects such as selecting photographs for commemorative plaques and helping with their design. Wynne will focus on thoroughly publicizing the April 28th event. Lucy and LeeAnn will try to meet with Wynne in the next week to go over where she might be able to help with April 28th beyond basic publicity, while requiring minimal imposition on her time.

Elizabeth asked how many attendees we thought would come; while weather dependent, some thought around 100, and the general consensus was around 200, perhaps 250, but certainly no more than 300.

Creating the Stewardship Council

AI had drafted a letter to the towns' Boards of Selectmen regarding the need to appoint a representative and alternate to the Stewardship Council. Originally hoping to have one meeting of the Council before the end of June, it had been thought the letters would go out very soon and would request that the appointments be made by the middle of June. Elizabeth suggested, and the Committee agreed, to postpone sending the letter until after the April celebration and that we target September for the first meeting of the Stewardship Council. Jamie reminded us that Emma Lord would be available to assist us as we transition to the Stewardship Council.

On a related note, Jamie reported that the National Park Foundation will be offering grants up to \$50,000 for Wild & Scenic Rivers, especially newly designated rivers. He suggested we apply for one and, to that end, will let us know when the grant requests are out to the public.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Next Meeting: April 18, 2019 at 7 PM at the River Resource Center. Lucy announced she will be away that week and so will miss the meeting.