

Nashua River Wild & Scenic River Study Committee
NRWA's River Resource Center, 592 Main Street, Groton, MA
June 20, 2019

INFORMAL NOTES

Members Present: Beth Suedmeyer (Ayer); Rona Balco and Rebecca Longvall (Bolton); Lucy Wallace (Harvard); Paula Terrasi (Pepperell)

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

NPS: Emma Lord

Guests: Anne Gagnon (MA Division of Fish & Wildlife)

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

Administrative

The minutes of the April 18, 2019 meeting were approved as amended.

NPS Update

Emma Lord reported that the House FY20 budget includes increased funding for Wild & Scenic Rivers, including rivers recently added in January 2019. She is not sure if a similar increase in funding is included in the Senate FY20.

Canoe Access Assessments

Al Futterman provided an update on this project, reporting that 22 of the 30 sites have been assessed. He intends to assess the sites in Brookline, NH on June 26th. He noted there is a possible new access site where the rail trail ends at the MA/NH state line. Al shared his map of the 30 sites and the 22 assessment forms/field notes with the Committee, the latter showing the level of detail and information being gathered. He asked what he thought the next steps on this project should be. Is there additional information to gather? What should we do with the information we have? How do we prioritize the sites that need improvement if we have funds? How many people do we think should use a given site? Should we indicate how much of the river can be accessed - Upstream only? Downstream only? Both directions? Do we have an accessibility standard (one size fits all)? Petapawag is the gold standard and not likely to be replicated elsewhere. Finally, Al recommended that the sites be checked a few times a year and in different conditions. It was suggested we work with our partners, particularly Joan Wotkowicz and Paula Terrasi, in addressing accesses in the individual towns. Paula noted that the access road to the Kemp Conservation land had been improved, thereby improving canoe access to the river.

Al suggested a subcommittee be created to continue to monitor these access points. This subcommittee could establish criteria for assessing the safety of a given site, as well as address factors impeding access, such as knotweed. In addition, possible improvements to the sites could be discussed and ranked, including noting if a given improvement would be longer term in nature, requiring substantial funding and possible permissions. Al noted there was a core group, comprised of Joan, Paula, and Bill Wilkinson that assisted him in the assessments. They might become the core of a subcommittee on canoe access sites,

but obviously other members of the Wild & Scenic Study Committee (and eventually Stewardship Council) would be invited and encouraged to join.

Conservation Agents' Breakfasts

Rebecca Longvall and Paula reported on the recent breakfast which featured Stow's Conservation Agent, Kathy Sferra, as the main speaker. She spoke about leadership and ways to avoid burn out, which they both thought was helpful. Paula indicated that there is interest on the part of some conservation commissioners in attending these breakfasts, but that the agents still prefer keeping the gatherings for themselves for the time being. Lucy suggested inviting commissioners to one breakfast a few times a year. Rona noted that she had attended a breakfast and found it quite informative. It was also suggested that Al post any power points presented at these breakfasts on our website.

The next breakfast will be on August 6th and will feature Janet Morrison speaking on "Creative Land Protection."

Stewardship Council

Al reported that Representatives and Alternates have been appointed to the Stewardship Council by Bolton, Brookline, Harvard, Hollis (still need an Alternate), Lancaster, and Pepperell. Hollis and Shirley still need to appoint alternates. Bill Wilkinson has indicated he would like to continue as Townsend's Alternate. Ayer, Dunstable and Groton have not yet confirmed their appointees. Al will get the dates of the appointments (none of which was made with a specified term limit, with the exception of Hollis which has a 3-year term) and send reminders to the other towns of the need for appointments. The goal is to have a kick-off meeting in September.

Grants and Budget Update

Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell provided an update on the Committee's finances. Total expenses for the Designation Celebration came to \$843 (\$1,000 had been authorized). The NRWA previously had received \$18,000 in grants from the Bruce J. Anderson Foundation (Anderson) and Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts (CFNCM) to support NRWA staff work on behalf of the Committee. She reported these funds will have been used by the end of June, leaving \$10,000 in NPS funds available for work over the summer, per the Committee's plan. In addition, NRWA is applying for another \$8,000 grant from Anderson, and has received a \$10,000 grant for FY20 from CFNCM.

Given the uncertainty of when we will receive additional funds from the NPS, Elizabeth asked the Committee how it would like to use the remaining \$10,000. She suggested the following potential budget:

\$2,200	printing the NPS Study (50 color copies)
150	misc. travel
1,200	attending the PWSR Conference in NJ this September
200	misc materials
6,250	NRWA staff (mainly Al, Martha Morgan and Elizabeth)

Emma reported that there were funds available in the NPS budget to cover printing of the Study by the Government Printing Office (GPO), although when the printing would be done is uncertain. Given designation has already been granted, there is less urgency for the printing. Emma confirmed that if the Study is printed by the GPO that cost will be borne by the NPS-DC office. After a brief discussion the

Committee agreed to have the GPO handle the printing so that the \$2,200 set aside from our funds for printing could be applied to other needs. It was decided to leave these funds undesignated at this time. Lucy noted that the NRWA has already contributed substantial staff time this year, culminating with development of the Stewardship Plan.

Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers Conference

Elizabeth reported that the Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers (PWSR) conference is being held this year in Egg Harbor, NJ on September 15th, 16th, and 17th. Jamie Fosburgh, who will be attending, strongly urged we send a representative, as it would be a good opportunity for networking. It also is important for the PWSRs to work together to assure adequate funding and program assistance from the NPS. Al was in Westfield, MA two years ago to participate in the NPS' Visual Resource Inventory Training, which was offered at the same time as the last PWSR Conference. He was, therefore, able to sit in on other sessions. Emma also attended the previous conference and noted the value of the workshops and opportunity to meet other PWSR organizations. Anne Gagnon has expressed interest in attending this year as our representative. The Committee would cover her expenses from the \$1,200 set aside in the proposed budget. Anne would be happy to have a second person from our Committee join her and would be willing to drive as a way to save money. Emma noted that several groups also carpooled to these conferences. Al will send an email to the entire Committee once the agenda for this year's conference has been set to see if anyone would like to go with Anne.

Miscellaneous

Bolton Paddle: Rebecca reported that Bolton is organizing a paddle on the Nashua for community members and wondered about the best section. She has reached out to the Bolton Conservation Trust to provide boats and insurance; she does not know how many people will participate. While it would make the most sense to paddle the section in Bolton, the general consensus was that it might be the least suitable for paddlers with a range of skills. It was suggested she put in at the Oxbow NWR access in Still River, MA. Martha suggested Rebecca contact the Appalachian Mountain Club for guides (she knows of one who lives in Ayer).

Ice House Dam: Martha reported that as part of its FERC recertification Ice House Partners had requested a letter from NRWA stating that the dam does not negatively impact the Nashua River. She noted that previous multiple upstream activities had probably had a greater impact on the river than the dam. The Committee felt the letter from NRWA was appropriate. Beth Suedmeyer reminded the Committee of the open house and tour of the dam being offered on July 18th by the NRWA as part of its 50th Anniversary Year celebration.

Signage: Beth asked if the Committee would consider signs demarcating when entering the watershed in addition to signs identifying river crossing. While signs noting the watershed seemed excessive, it was agreed that signs identifying the crossing of a wild & scenic river would be appropriate. A logo and design would have to be made as well. This might be a good future project when funds are available.

McPherson Road Block Party: Beth raised the possibility of closing McPherson Road for a block party to celebrate the Nashua River's status as a Wild & Scenic River. It was agreed this would be a good event to hold next summer (2020) and would require coordination with the USFWS and DEC. Beth offered to talk to Linh Phu and Peter Lowitt about the possibility of such an event.

Next Meeting: To be determined as many Committee members expressed an interest in attending the event at the Ice House Dam on July 17th, which would be our next regularly scheduled meeting. The Committee may meet ahead of the event or postpone our next meeting to August. Al will poll members to determine a preference.

The meeting adjourned at 9 PM.