

**N-S-N Wild & Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council Meeting**  
NRWA's River Resource Center, 592 Main Street, Groton, MA  
February 20, 2020

**DRAFT INFORMAL NOTES**

*Members Present:* Beth Suedmeyer (Ayer); Rona Balco and Rebecca Longvall (Bolton); Jordan Bailey (Brookline); Michele Girard and Lucy Wallace (Harvard); Tom Dufresne (Hollis); Ken Hartlage and Paula Terrasi (Pepperell); Heidi Ricci (Shirley); Joan Wotkowicz (Townsend)  
*NRWA Staff:* Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell, Al Futterman, and Martha Morgan  
*NPS:* Emma Lord  
*Guests:* Anne Gagnon (MA Division of Fish & Wildlife); Mike Fleming (former MA DCR and current NRWA Director) and Warren Kimball (former MA DEP and current NRWA Director)

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by the Interim Chair, Lucy Wallace.

Administrative

The minutes of the January 16, 2020 meeting were approved as amended.

NPS Update

Emma Lord reviewed the proposed NPS budget for FY20 which will provide \$150,000 for the Council under a new Cooperative Agreement. She reminded the Council that a budget and work plan should be submitted to the NPS by the end of February in order to expedite review and approval by the various entities within the NPS and Department of Interior. She added that the proposed timeline for approval has been expedited, with the goal of approving new cooperative agreements by mid-July.

Bylaw/Policies & Procedures Working Group

As a brief note before reviewing the draft policies, Lucy noted that once all of the policies and procedures have been adopted by the Council they will be put in a standardized format. At the moment, however, they are as drafted by individual members of the working group (Anne Gagnon, Neil Angus, Emma, Lucy, and Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell). Lucy walked the Council through the following policies:

*Process for Selecting Additional Voting Member Entities, 2-13-20:* Mike Fleming suggested adding Nashua River Chapter of Ducks Unlimited (as opposed to simply Ducks Unlimited) to the list of "Additional Participants," to make it parallel to the Squann-a-tissit Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Elizabeth explained the list was as provided in the *Stewardship Plan* and not intended to be all-inclusive. On motion made and seconded, the 2-13-20 draft was unanimously approved.

*Voting Member Entity Responsibilities, 2-14-20:* There was some discussion of the need for Representatives and/or Alternates to keep their appointing authorities apprised of the work of the Council, both in general and as it may apply to a specific voting member entity. It was noted that communication is a two-way process: both to the towns and from the towns and their stakeholders. On motion made and seconded, the 2-14-20 draft was unanimously approved.

*Selecting Council Projects, 2-13-20:* The Council members found the criteria straightforward and complete. On motion made and seconded, the 2-13-20 draft was unanimously approved.

*Establishing and Operating Subcommittees, 2-13-20 draft:* It was suggested that a note be added to “Possible Subcommittees” that it was not limited to the five listed suggestions. On motion made and seconded, the 2-13-20 draft was unanimously approved.

Lucy reported that the working group would next focus on developing policies for advocacy, advisory committees, small grants, meeting posting requirements, and budget management.

### Budget and Work Plan Working Group

Elizabeth explained that the proposed Budget and Work Plan had been drafted by a small working group (Ken Hartlage, Emma, Lucy and Elizabeth), noting they covered the 12-month period commencing upon signing the new Cooperative Agreement. She also noted that funds not expended during the initial 12-month period could be carried forward into the next year. Lucy added that the Cooperative Agreement would be for five years, with NPS funds being appropriated each federal fiscal year. However, a new budget and work plan would be required each year of the Agreement.

Elizabeth reported that, according to Jamie Fosburgh and as reconfirmed by Emma, the budget and work plan could be quite general in its categories, especially in this our first year. In addition, the NPS allows the fiscal agent a 10% fee for services (\$15,000 in the budget below). Therefore, the working group was proposing very broad categories and associated funding, based on Council discussions at previous meetings. They are:

Stewardship Council Projects	\$115,000
Community Small Grants Program	20,000
Fiscal Agent Fee	<u>15,000</u>
Total	\$150,000

Elizabeth then reviewed the proposed staffing for the Council, noting the NPS was making 50% of Emma’s time available to it. The working group felt that there were two distinct staffing needs: 1) administrative, liaison to the NPS and assistance on special projects; and 2) continued outreach to the river towns, state and federal agencies, and other stakeholders first begun during the Study. In addition, the Council projects already underway were being managed by Al Futterman, continuing in his role as Study Coordinator. The working group, therefore, was recommending the creation of two positions: Administrative Coordinator, to be filled by Emma; and Outreach and Project Coordinator, to be filled by Al. While Emma’s position will be covered by the NPS, the working group was recommending funding the Outreach and Project Coordinator at roughly 6 hours/week (\$15,000). Elizabeth noted that for simplicity in presenting the budget, the \$115,000 for Stewardship Council Projects includes the \$15,000 for the Outreach and Project Coordinator. This leaves \$100,000 available for Council projects.

Elizabeth discussed other areas where NRWA staff would be needed to fulfill the Council’s projects. In addition to assistance from the Outreach and Project Coordinator, Ken had advised that there would be need for general Project Management, assisting the Council in starting or initiating Council projects. For instance, the NRWA Communications Director, Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold, could provide assistance in gathering cost estimates on graphics and publication for the self-guided driving tour. Martha Morgan, Water Programs Director, could provide assistance and guidance in determining river or water quality related projects or inquiries. With the understanding that the Council would benefit from the range of expertise available to it by NRWA staff, the working group was recommending allocating some portion of the Council’s Project Budget to Project Management. Ken suggested using the industry standard of 20% for Project Management, in this case 20% of the \$100,000 allocated for Council projects. Ken further explained the project management role, noting that considerable time can be spent by managers

upfront in planning for and getting a project underway. Once implementation has begun and the project is underway, the project manager's role shifts to oversight and coordination.

Lastly, regarding staffing needs, the individual Council projects might require further staff or technical expertise to implement. The amount of such implementation assistance would vary with each project and would be up to the Council to determine. Budgets will be established for each individual Council project undertaken.

Jordan Bailey asked for confirmation of the period covered by our budget and work plan. Do we need to complete this work by the end of the current federal fiscal year (September 30)? Elizabeth reiterated that our budget and work plan is based on the 12 months beginning when the Cooperative Agreement is signed.

Mike Fleming noted that should a Forest Legacy project go forward, Al's time, to the extent it is paid for under the Cooperative Agreement, could not be applied to the requisite 25% match as federal funds cannot be used to match other federal funds. Elizabeth noted, and Mike agreed, that a non-federal grant to fund Al's work on a Forest Legacy project could be used as match.

Mike also asked how flexible our budget was with respect to the small grants category. The budget allocation of \$20,000 for the Community Small Grants was based on 4 to 5 grants of up to \$5,000. Could the grants be greater than \$5,000? Elizabeth replied that it would be up to the Council to determine in setting the criteria in the RFP and which community projects it would fund, and that they could be for less than or more than \$5,000. Beth Suedmeyer felt the \$5,000 was a reasonable estimate for a small community grant. Jordan asked if a community could not complete its grant within our 12-month budget window, could its funding be extended into the next year. Elizabeth said we could look at other councils to see what practice or policy they had. Elizabeth noted that SuAsCo may focus on specific goals or areas when putting out RFPs for its community grants, such as the arts and the river, and that the specifics vary from year to year.

Warren Kimball asked how indirect costs and overhead would be covered. Elizabeth explained that the budget, as proposed and approved, would then be transferred into an NPS budget form which would include line items for staff salary, fringe benefits, and indirect costs. Emma added that an NPS budget officer would work with Elizabeth and herself in completing the requisite form.

There being no more questions, Lucy called for a decision. On motion made and seconded, "Draft Version Two on 2-17-20" was unanimously approved.

### Fiscal Agent

Lucy explained that the Council needed to designate a fiscal agent. She reported that the NRWA's Executive Committee had discussed the possibility of NRWA serving in this capacity. Should the Council agree, the Executive Committee would recommend NRWA serve as fiscal agent at the NRWA Board of Directors meeting on February 26<sup>th</sup>. On motion made and seconded, it was unanimously agreed that NRWA should serve as the Council's fiscal agent, subject to NRWA Board approval.

### Interim Projects

Al provided a brief update on the two projects.

*Canoe Access Assessments:* Al gave an update of this project as of the most recent meeting on January 29<sup>th</sup>:

- West Hollis site: Beaver Brook Association and the Nissitissit River Land Trust are paying attention to this site (the Land Trust's land abuts Beaver Brook Association) which is a trailhead as well as canoe access. Both organizations are working together on possible improvements for parking at this site.
- Elm Circle cul-de-sac, Townsend and South Main Street, Brookline sites: While both sites may be worth pursuing, they have been put aside for the moment.
- Mill Race/Powerhouse at Pepperell Dam and Shattuck Oil sites: Both sites are under consideration, but cost estimates and/or agreement with landowner to improve site need to be obtained.
- Sites to revisit: These include the Kemp Conservation Land in Pepperell, Petapawag, the Oxbow NWR site in Still River, Ice House Dam (Shirley side of river), and the Rt 119 car-top carrier site. All merit consideration after additional investigation this spring.

Al reported that the working group has selected its top three sites:

- West Hollis/Beaver Brook site: Peter Smith (Beaver Brook Association) is very interested in improving this site as it intersects with trails, making it a multi-purpose site. An initial estimate of \$15,000 was obtained just for engineering to determine course to correct bank erosion.
- Townsend Harbor Church/Historical Society: Joan Wotkowicz reported on her efforts to secure canoe access at this site. She will be on the agenda for the Historical Society's next meeting on February 24<sup>th</sup>. There already is an easement on the property for pedestrian access to the rail trail. She noted that this site hits all three of our outstandingly remarkable resource values: recreational (pond is a great family paddling area), biological (you can paddle slightly upstream on the Squannacook to find some interesting flora and fauna), and historical (one of the town's historical districts, which includes the Cooperage, Reed Homestead).
- Shattuck Oil site: Paula Terrasi reported that the owner is very amenable to the public using his site for access to the Nissitissit River and associated parking. It is already used by anglers and, occasionally, swimmers. Anne Gagnon asked if the owner would consider granting an easement for public use of the site. Paula indicated she would be willing to ask. Al noted minimal work is needed for this site; essentially signage.

Related to this group's work, Emma reported on an upcoming River Access Planning Guide workshop being held March 31<sup>st</sup> – April 2<sup>nd</sup> in Farmington River Valley, Simsbury, CT, which she plans on attending. Al had registered for it as well, but since now he cannot attend, his spot is available for anyone on the Council interested in going. Lucy mentioned she was not sure we had the funds to cover the cost should someone want to go.

*Conservation Networking Breakfasts:* As reported at the January Council meeting, there is great interest in pursuing a Forest Legacy project (see the Land Stewardship Subcommittee below).

*Self-Driving Tour:* Al, Ken, and Rebecca Longvall have begun work on the self-driving tour. They have developed a preliminary map, which Al shared with the Council. He noted that while he has received some of the requested "top two town-identified historical/cultural" river-related sites, he still needs more. His goal is at least two sites for each town. Lucy noted that the self-driving tour for the "Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway" included private sites that were not open to the public, but worth noting for their significance. She suggested adding the large wetland complex within Oxbow NRW which is visible from Rt. 2, noting its historical value as a shared Native American food source.

## Land Stewardship Subcommittee

Ken reported that the Subcommittee had met and agreed that its first task had been to review the *Stewardship Plan* in order to re-familiarize themselves with the ORRVs, particularly those relating to the biological diversity associated with the rivers and adjoining lands. They then ranked their three top goals:

- Assure biological diversity;
- Maintain and enhance the riparian habitat; and
- Maintain and improve the rivers' water quality.

Heidi Ricci asked if the Subcommittee had a charge and clear purpose. While this had been provided at the January Council meeting, Al offered to resend it.

Ken then reported that the Subcommittee was very interested in advancing a Forest Legacy application, as proposed by Al, as one way to assure biological diversity. Mike noted that the application would have extra points because of the area's outstanding biological resources as evidenced by our Wild & Scenic Rivers designation. Al added that for an application to be competitive it should include approximately 1,000 acres and to achieve that amount of acreage would, on average, require about 200 acres in each town. He is trying to gauge now if there is sufficient acreage. It might be possible to include forested lands along the headwaters of these rivers in outlying towns which are adjacent to our 11 Wild & Scenic Rivers towns. Ken suggested a deadline for identifying possible projects. He noted that any local land trusts that would be willing to enroll their holdings in a Forest Legacy application, without being reimbursed other than for required due diligence, this could be one way to raise the requisite 25% match. Anne noted that state MA Department of Fish & Game lands might be available for match as well.

The application will be due in September. Emma had prepared a set of meeting notes which she will share with the Council. These notes need to be approved by the Stewardship Subcommittee and, therefore, may be subject to minor edits.

## Other Business

*Capital Commerce Property, North Lancaster:* Al shared a map of the property and its proposed development (IPOD under Lancaster zoning). It is bounded on the west and south by the North Branch of the Nashua River and abuts the Lancaster State Forest and Cook town conservation land. Approximately 50% of the site is within the Central Nashua River Valley ACEC, including the proposed 80-acre class two auto salvage site. Al reported that the Lancaster Planning Board had denied the application, but that the developer may redesign the project to pull it out of the IPOD area and up closer to Rt. 70. Martha Morgan and Al had drafted a Draft EIR comment letter, with input from Elizabeth, , noting various issues of concern. Elizabeth had signed the letter on behalf of the NRWA and it had been sent to the state's Executive Office of Energy and Environment. Heidi noted that MassAudubon had also submitted a letter using NRWA's letter as a template.

*Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers Group:* Elizabeth reported that Fred Akers had drafted a "White Paper" to submit to Congress supporting the need for funding for the Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers. The requested funding of \$220,000 was essentially the same for most of the rivers, although several were higher, including the Musconetcong River in New Jersey at \$400,000. Emma stated that the policy of the NPS is to request equal funding for all the rivers. On motion made and seconded it was unanimously agreed that we should endorse the White Paper.

*Losing Ground:* Heidi reported that MassAudubon has just released an update of its "Losing Ground" report, which is available on line. There will be a presentation of the report at the MACC conference.

The meeting adjourned at 9 PM.

Next Meeting: March 19, 2020 at 7 PM at the River Resource Center