

N-S-N Wild & Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council

MINUTES OF JULY 16, 2020 MEETING

By Zoom Video Conference

Members Present: Rona Balco and Rebecca Longvall (Bolton); Tara Alcorn (Dunstable); Michele Girard and Lucy Wallace (Harvard); Alix Turner (Lancaster); Ken Hartlage and Paula Terrasi (Pepperell); Heidi Ricci (Shirley); Joan Wotkowicz (Townsend)

NRWA Staff: Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell and Al Futterman

NPS: Emma Lord

Guests: Neil Angus (DEC); Anne Gagnon (MA DFW); Mike Fleming (former MA DCR and current NRWA Director); Warren Kimball (former MA DEP and NRWA Director); Shane Piccarello (Bolton summer intern)

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by the Interim Chair, Lucy Wallace. Due to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic the meeting was held virtually by Zoom. The meeting began with informal updates on how attendees were managing during the extended “shelter in place” advisories issued by the Governors. All reported being well and remaining busy with a variety of activities: dealing with the challenges of working at home and associated increase in workload, spending time tackling household projects, gardening, and spending more time outdoors on trails or the river. Paula Terrasi and Ken Hartlage commented on the problem of increased ATV use of trails in Pepperell. Heidi Ricci commented on changes in her work at MassAudubon due to the retirement of Jack Clark. Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell noted that two NRWA teams were hand-pulling water chestnut from Pepperell Pond in those areas not reached by SOLitude’s treatment. Lucy noted that Jordan Bailey and her family would be relocating to the Annapolis area. Council members acknowledged Jordan’s help on the Study Committee and Council.

Administrative

The minutes of the June 18, 2020 meeting were approved as presented.

NPS Updates

Emma Lord reported on the following items:

1. The Cooperative Agreement has been executed by the NRWA (as fiscal agent) and NPS. It is effective as of July 16, 2020. As expected, the Council has been awarded \$150,000 for the current year.
2. Emma reported that the NPS has added more staff to serve the New England region’s Wild & Scenic Rivers program so that, for the first time in 15 years, it is fully staffed.

Land Stewardship Committee Update: Shoreline Survey

Al Futterman reminded Council members that at their last meeting they had agreed to undertake a comprehensive shoreline survey as a Council project. To assess the project’s proposed protocols, the Council agreed to his surveying a few sections of the river as a pilot demonstration. Al reported that he and Neil Angus had paddled a section of the Nashua main stem (from Rt 117 on Bolton/Lancaster town line to the Oxbow NWR pull-out at Still River Depot Rd in Harvard). Using a “Mass Riverways” survey sheet (which had been reformatted by Rebecca Longvall and Joan Wotkowicz), they were able to record a significant amount of information on not only the shoreline, but also impediments or hazards in the river. Al noted because a cell phone has an internal GPS capability, using one for taking photographs was an

effective way to tie observations to a precise location. Neil Angus commented that they encountered lots of blowdowns and had to portage in one spot. Clearly, this one section of the river would not be good for beginner recreational paddlers.

Al plans to do a shoreline survey of the Squannacook River with Stacey Chilcoat and/or Gaynor Bigelbach in the next day or so. He anticipates that it will be useful to compare the two surveys for completeness, given the differences in the rivers and shoreline ownership. It was suggested that space be added to the survey form to comment on trash, recreational suitability, and to note existence of trails alongside the river. Al will continue to work on setting up and preparing teams to eventually survey all sections of the rivers.

Current Projects' Updates

Al Futterman reported on the two on-going Council projects he has been coordinating:

1. *Networking Breakfasts for Conservation Agents*: Al announced that Pat Swain Rice will be presenting at the next virtual breakfast meeting on August 4th at 9 AM. The topic will be “Natural Communities of Conservation Interest in the Nashua River Watershed” and will be open to local/regional land trusts and other interested parties in addition to the regular attendees. He continues to look for future speakers willing to do a Zoom presentation. He learned recently that Peter Hazelton, a potential speaker, had moved to Georgia. He hopes to find another speaker to present on fresh water mussels and dam removal, such as Aquatic Ecologist Jason Carmignani of the MA Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program.
2. *Canoe Access Assessment*: No report

Other Business

1. Rona Balco offered to find volunteers to do shoreline surveys and will forward their names to Al.
2. Jordan Bailey explained that a great opportunity had come up for her husband that required their move. Unfortunately, his current position at the Aquatic Wildlife Conservation Office will not be filled, which will be a great loss to the USWFS River Herring restoration work. She urged Council members to contact the state partners to request this position be filled.
3. Al asked for a recommendation on someone to contact for help in identifying a particular aquatic plant, possibly invasive hydrilla, found on the recent shoreline survey of the Nashua River. Michele Girard offered to send the name of a contact she has at DCR; Paula suggested he contact Tom Flannery at DCR or the SOLiTude team.

Next Meeting: August 20, 2020 at 7 PM - by Zoom