

Nashua River Wild & Scenic River Study Committee
Notes from the Study Committee Meeting
NRWA's River Resource Center, 592 Main Street, Groton, MA
February 15, 2018

DRAFT INFORMAL NOTES

Members Present: Robert Pontbriand (Ayer); Jordan Bailey (Brookline); Leah Basbanes (Dunstable); Nadia Madden (Groton); Lucy Wallace (Harvard); Laura Bianco and LeeAnn Wolff (Hollis); Bill Flynn (Lancaster); Paula Terrasi (Pepperell); Heidi Ricci (Shirley); Bill Wilkinson (Townsend)
NRWA Staff: Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell, Al Futterman, Martha Morgan
NPS: Jamie Fosburgh
Ex Officio: Jeff Barbaro (USGS); Anne Gagnon (MA DFW); Neil Angus (DEC)
Guests: Mike Fleming and Joan Wotkowicz (NRWA Board members)

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

Administrative & Sharing

The meeting opened with its usual round of introductions by Committee members.

The notes of January 18, 2018 were approved as amended.

NPS Update

Jamie Fosburgh reported that the federal government is still operating under continuing resolutions so there is still not approval on the current fiscal year's budget. That said, there is enough funding already obligated for this project to allow work to continue.

He also reported that finalization of the NPS Study Report is proceeding slowly so that required NPS language can be incorporated.

Stewardship Plan

Review: Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell led a discussion and review of the current draft of the Stewardship Plan. She acknowledged the terrific work by Al Futterman and the input provided by Committee members; she reported that the ORRV Subcommittee had done a thorough review and suggested edits at its meeting on February 8th.

Dams: At Elizabeth's request, Martha Morgan gave an update on her work regarding the dams on the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers. She explained that she had divided dams into two categories: working and non-working. She reminded Committee members that while sections of the rivers may be excluded from designation, the Stewardship Plan will cover the entirety of the three rivers within the Study Area. That said, the non-working dams will not have any sections of the river upstream or downstream excluded from designation; whereas the working dams will have areas excluded. Martha described the process of reaching out to the dam owners and success in resolving the extent of excluded areas for the Ice House and Hollingsworth and Vose Dams which will be included in the Plan. She has not had a response from Eagle Creek, the owners of the Pepperell Hydro Dam, and does not expect one before the Plan goes to the towns for acceptance this spring. Jamie Fosburgh has provided Martha with language to incorporate in the Plan that notes discussions will be on-going between the NPS and owners to resolve the extent of the excluded area above and below this Dam.

Review of 2/15/18 Draft: Lucy and Elizabeth led review of the Stewardship Plan. Lucy explained that the goal was to have the Committee approve the Plan, dated February 15, 2018, tonight, with the understanding that agreed upon additions or corrections made during tonight's meeting will be duly added. Approval will be with the further understanding that there would be no further substantive amendments to the Plan. However, as Lucy, Elizabeth and Al continue to proof read it they would be allowed to make minor editorial and grammatical corrections, subject to Lucy's approval. They would also be allowed to finish the Reference Section, Outreach Section, etc., with Lucy having the final sign-off on behalf of the Committee. Elizabeth noted that the photographs, graphics, and maps in the current draft are placeholders as we are continuing to search for better images. The final text version (with placeholder photographs, graphics, and maps) will be delivered in binders to Brookline and Hollis Town Halls March 1st or 2nd so they are available for public review prior to the towns' March Annual Town Meetings. Elizabeth added that the bound and printed version of the Plan would not include the Appendices, as previously decided by the Committee – rather they would be available on line on our website.

The following are comments offered as the Committee reviewed the Plan:

- Chapter 2, Nashua River Wild and Scenic River Study: Leah Basbanes suggested that the statement at the end of the section, Summary of Findings, “In Conclusion, The Study Committee Recommends Designation” be highlighted more prominently.
- Chapter 3, The Rivers as Corridors: Al noted that the concept of the rivers as corridors was one first proposed by Benton MacKaye.
- Chapter 4, Outstandingly Remarkable Resource Values: Elizabeth highlighted the inclusion at the end of the opening general discussion on the ORRVs of possible threats that the Plan would seek to mitigate.
- Elizabeth reminded the Committee that Joan Wotkowicz will be addressing converting the PDF of the final Plan to a machine-readable format for the visually impaired, according to NPS accessibility guidelines. LeeAnn Wolfe has a visually-impaired co-worker and would be willing to ask her to review the Plan's machine-readable format, should that be useful.
- Mike Fleming corrected the reference to Benton MacKaye's education, to wit he had graduated from Cambridge-Harvard as opposed to Petersham-Harvard.
- Appendix A, Dams: Jamie reiterated that the working dams will be “grandfathered” when the rivers are designated and that it is important to assure dam owners that their operations will not be compromised by designation. Anne Gagnon suggested letting the owners of the Pepperell Hydro Dam know that the other two dam owners have reached resolution of their respective excluded areas. Martha reported that she had suggested to the owners a modified exclusion area extending approximately 1.75 miles upstream (to include two ponds), as opposed to all the way to the Rt. 111/119 bridge, and downstream to the end of the tail race.
- Appendix B, Regulatory Review: Elizabeth and Al are reviewing the charts for areas that need to be filled in. Doing this is part of what can be done after tonight before the binders go to the NH Town Halls, subject to Lucy's approval. It is important for the town representatives to make sure the information on their town is correct. The information on Townsend seems to have been dropped and needs to be added.
- Appendix K, Outreach: Photographs of the recent walks on the Nissitissit River need to be added. Al, Elizabeth and Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold will be compiling information on outreach and related activities through February 15, 2018.

In summary, Elizabeth reiterated that as the Plan is edited, the latest version will be posted on-line. However, once the Plan is sent to the New Hampshire Town Halls, the text will be “locked down” as final text. As previously noted, she asked for the Committee's approval that Al, Lucy and she be allowed to make small, non-substantive corrections over the next week, complete the lists of resources, references, and experts, and similar items.

Approval: A motion was made by Robert Pontbriand, seconded, and unanimously approved that the Stewardship Plan as presented this evening and dated February 15, 2018 is approved. A second motion was made by Robert, seconded, and unanimously approved that the NRWA staff be authorized to copy edit, add photographs, and complete the Appendices as noted at this evening's meeting.

Plan Production: Elizabeth reported that two graphic designers had submitted proposals to the NRWA to prepare the Plan for printing. The firm of Geralyn Miller Design was selected. The fee of \$3,650 was less than that of the second firm; in addition there were more opportunities for review. Furthermore, the NRWA had worked with Geralyn on the recent canoe guide and was pleased with the product. The goal is to get the Plan to Geralyn by March 1st which would give her 4 weeks to produce a print-ready copy. The current version of the Plan (approved this evening) is what will be on-line until the graphic design is completed around April 1st. Once the graphic design is finished the Plan with final text, photographs, graphics, and maps will be made available in binders to the MA towns. It will also be posted on-line. After the town meetings have voted on the Plan it can be printed and bound. Elizabeth reported that staff has begun investigating the cost of printing. One rough estimate has been gotten: assuming 150 pages and 50 bound copies, printing would cost roughly \$2,050; if 150 bound copies were printed the cost would increase to about \$4,050. If the page count is 275, the cost would also increase, to roughly \$2,650. Similarly, 150 copies would cost roughly \$5,550. At this point we do not know how many pages the Plan will be. Once the Plan is completed, the NRWA will seek bids from at least two printers. Jamie is looking into the cost and timeline for the Government Printing Office to produce the bound copies of the Study Report, as it may be that the NRWA and Study Committee would handle that as well.

Outreach Subcommittee

Robert reported the Subcommittee would be meeting before our next meeting on March 15th, and so should have more detailed information at that time. In the meantime, he summarized the status of the Subcommittee's ongoing and future work in preparation of the upcoming Annual Town Meetings:

- All of the town administrators have confirmed in writing to Robert that the article accepting the Plan and its recommendation for designation is on their towns' warrant.
- The presenters for the Annual Town Meetings need to be identified. Will we need a member of the Study Committee to be available to make the presentation? Does a member of the NRWA or NPS need to be at the ATMs?
- Robert will contact all of the Town Moderators to give them a heads up on this article and to learn the process they follow to allow a non-resident to speak to an article.
- He believes that in most instances this article will be placed near the end of the warrant. For towns that hold their ATMs on consecutive weeknights it will be more difficult to judge which night the article will be presented and, therefore, when NRWA or NPS may need to be present.
- Robert believes it will be the Selectmen identified in the warrant as having inserted the article, but he will confirm this.
- Robert noted that most towns allow and expect an explanation of the article; the amount of time, however, can vary from town to town.
- The Subcommittee will prepare a "cheat sheet" for the presenters explaining the town meeting process. In addition he will prepare a schedule of the dates of the Annual Town Meetings and identify which staff needs to attend which meetings.
- Robert asked the town representatives to let him know if there could be potential issues that the presenters should be prepared to address.

Elizabeth reported on other outreach activities and miscellaneous updates:

- The debut showing in the Nashua River watershed of the NPS video celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act will be held on April 22nd, Earth Day, at a site to be determined. Jamie will be one of the speakers at this event.
- A NH-customized information sheet/flyer was prepared for the recent NH walk. Elizabeth suggested that a similar flyer should be prepared and customized for each town, which could then be made available at the upcoming public forums. She asked each representative to work with Al and her on the flyer for their town.
- The short video being made by Max McCormick of NorthPoint Productions for our website and showing on the towns' local access channels is nearing completion. In the video Bill Wilkinson, Lucy and Jamie speak to various aspects of the Plan and value of designation. Elizabeth and Wynne, with input from Al and Lucy, have been working closely with Max on developing the script and collecting visuals for the video, as previously agreed to by the Committee. Elizabeth also asked Drew Kellner to review the script to assure that it would be as well received by the NH audience as the MA audience. The video is scheduled to be completed by March 1st so it can be available to the NH towns during the two weeks prior to their ATMs.
- The Groton Alternate, Tim Newman, has been unable to attend our meetings due to conflicts with his schedule and, therefore, has formally withdrawn from this position. Elizabeth reached out to the Groton Selectmen to have a new alternate appointed in accordance with Groton's appointment process. In addition to Stacey Chilcoat - a longtime resident of Groton, well-known conservationist, and NRWA Environmental Education and River Classroom Director - three other Groton residents have expressed interest. Elizabeth noted that the Alternate would have to be someone who could come up to speed very quickly so that she/he could speak at the public forum or ATM if necessary. She asked if, in addition to Lucy, anyone else would be interested in participating in the phone interviews which need to be conducted before the end of the week so a recommendation can be sent to the Board of Selectmen for consideration at its March 5th meeting. Nadia Madden offered to participate. The Committee members approved this approach and did not believe it was necessary for them to approve the candidate recommended by Lucy, Nadia and Elizabeth.

In closing, Al asked the Town Representatives to let him know when their public forums will be held so he can finalize the schedule and make sure there is proper staff coverage.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Next meeting: March 15th 7 – 9 PM at the NRWA's River Resource Center.