

Minutes for January 31, 2023

RSC Representatives present: Anne Slugg, Chair (Sudbury), Emma Lord (NPS), Dan Cook (Carlisle), Sam Corbin (SVT), Christine Dugan (Lincoln-Alt), Bill Fadden (Framingham-Alt), Alison Field-Juma (OARS), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Marlies Henderson (Billerica), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt)

RSC Representatives absent: Ron Chick (Framingham), Trek Reef (Billerica-Alt), Frank Richichi (Bedford-Alt), Linh Phu (USFWS)

7:01 pm Ms. Field-Juma opened the meeting. She offered a correction to the November Minutes and asked if there were other edits. There were none. Ms. Henderson moved that the Minutes be accepted as amended, Mr. Sciacca seconded, and the Minutes were approved 11-0.

PWSR Meeting on the Wekiva WSR

7:08 pm Ms. Field-Juma asked Ms. Lord to speak about the Partnership Wild and Scenic River (PWSR) Gathering which was held on December 7-9 on the Wekiva River in Florida. The Wekiva River meeting included NPS staff among the 35 attendees representing 14 of the 16 PWSRs. Ms. Lord and Mr. Chick represented the SuAsCo. The event included a day and a half of in-person meetings and an afternoon river paddle on the Wekiva. The NPS staff from the DC office shared updates and worked with breakout groups. Ms. Lord said that the event was a great opportunity to talk to representatives from other PWSR rivers about some of the challenges, opportunities, and successes that groups are having on their rivers, as well as to network and share information. Ms. Lord said that the York River in Maine and the Housatonic River in Connecticut were designated as Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers in December 2022, bringing the total number of PWSRs to 18.

7:18 pm Ms. Field-Juma opened a discussion on the 2023 River Ambassadors positions and on the 2023 Riverfest series. Ms. Lord said that the Riverfest working committee now favors having the Lead Ambassador work a longer term than the Assistant Ambassador, who would work only from June through August. The current budget for the River Ambassadors program is \$30,000. Funding may need to be increased if the Lead Ambassador serves a longer term position, potentially part-time year round. She asked if the Council wanted to move forward with having the Lead Ambassador serve a longer term. Julia Khorana, formerly the Development Director for OARS who has helped with Riverfest planning in the past, is interested helping with planning for this year's Riverfest. A discussion followed on the Ambassadors' outreach opportunities at events such as local farmers' markets and Mass Audubon's Riverschool outings.

7:37 pm Mr. Sciacca moved that we expand the River Ambassador program into October, Mr. Cook seconded. The motion passed 11-0. Ms. Lord asked how the Council felt about having Ms. Khorana help with Riverfest planning. She noted that Ms. Khorana has developed many helpful relationships and has historical knowledge of past Riverfest events and our partners. There was general agreement that Ms. Khorana would be a good fit.

Intersex Fish Study Update

7:42 pm Ms. Slugg stepped in as Chair for the meeting. She summarized progress made over the past month on developing an Intersex Fish Sampling Study to be completed this summer. She reminded the Council that this study fell under the Watershed Studies category created for this year's budget. Some Council members had a call earlier in 2022 with US Geological Survey (USGS), the agency which will do the sampling and testing. Ms. Slugg asked if the Council wanted to approve sampling sites on the Sudbury River which were suggested by Mr. Sciacca. She said that USGS has worked with Mass Wildlife to do electroshock fishing at various other sites in the state. USGS will provide a list of vendors from which the RSC will purchase the necessary equipment and sampling materials for this project, a step which would result in a substantial savings for the RSC. The sampling would be carried out in May 2023. In response to a question from Mr. Cook, Mr. Sciacca gave some background on the project. He explained that a small sample of 4 large mouth bass from the Sudbury River had been examined as part of a 2008 USGS intersex fish study. Three of the 4 fish had intersex characteristics. That indicated that they had been exposed to endocrine disruptors. Over the years the Council had agreed that an updated and more involved study would be useful to the SuAsCo. Ms. Slugg noted that USGS has agreed to freeze fish tissue from this year's sampling, which would be available for mercury analysis later. She said USGS has also been doing PFAS testing and that could be additional data we could add to our study if we asked for that analysis as well. Ms. Field-Juma shared a link from OARS on multiple studies of this sort:

<https://www.oars3rivers.org/threats/water-pollution/edcs/studies>.

7:52 pm Ms. Field-Juma asked who would design the study and write up a report on the sampling and the analysis. Ms. Lord said that all the sampling and analysis would be done by USGS, who would be partnering with Mass Wildlife to obtain the samples via electrofishing. She said that interested Council members and River Ambassadors could observe the work done on the river. Mr. Cook raised the issue of whether federal funding for endocrine disruptors might be available. Ms. Lord shared a 2022 RSC Community Grant funded study carried out by Massachusetts Environmental Research Alliance, Inc. on PFAS testing in the Sudbury River:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NNqXQ8UY9HxEc8PVtvpUg2BxNaPAfRiy/view?usp=sharing>

RSC Website – Multi-lingual Options

8:01 pm Ms. Slugg said that she and Ms. Lord had spoken with Monty Lewis, the RSC's web designer, about adding a translation service to our website on a trial basis. They thought that Portuguese and Spanish would be the most relevant languages to add. Ms. Lord gave a translated SuAsCo webpage to a fluent Portuguese speaker who thought that although the translation was not perfect and that some terms were too literal, on the whole it was acceptable. Attempts by website visitors trying the translation service would be tracked. This would help the RSC determine if the translation service would be a useful addition. Ms. Field-Juma said that a Chinese language could also be considered as she has noticed many Chinese speakers at family events that OARS sponsors. The Council agreed to proceed with the trial translation feature for 3 languages.

Draft Workplan and Budget for 2023-2024

8:17 pm Ms. Slugg said that partner proposals will be considered at the RSC's February meeting. The content of the proposals and the amount of funding our partners will request was unknown. Once received the partner proposals will be circulated to Council members well in advance of the February meeting. Ms. Lord said that the RSC should have a budget of \$210,000 for the next fiscal year. She suggested some placeholder numbers, which included \$2,200 for RSC Administrative costs; \$3,500 for Internal Projects concerning Education and Outreach; \$15,000 for a Watershed Study; \$12,500 for Riverfest and \$40,000 for Community Grants. The amount budgeted for partner proposals will be determined after the February meeting.

Updates and Other Topics

8:26 pm Mr. Sciacca said that Wayland is building a Council on Aging/Community Center on a mixed use parcel close to a former hazardous waste site that Raytheon tried to clean up. The site overlooks the Sudbury River. The new building will be located 100' from the river. A trail, possibly made of stone dust, and an overlook area are being considered. A

Wayland resident has asked if the RSC would write a letter in support of the project. After a Council discussion on the advantages and disadvantages associated with the project, such as building a trail within 200' of riverfront versus the advantages of making the river accessible to more people, Ms. Lord said that the Council would need more information before it made a decision on whether or not to support the project.

8:41 pm Ms. Field-Juma reminded the Council that she would be speaking about rivers on March 3rd at a Water and Music concert in Concord that the RSC funded through a community grant. She encouraged town representatives to get involved with the Lobby for the River Day on March 15th which is being organized by Mass Rivers Alliance. She said that state legislators are more interested in hearing from their own constituents than from river lobbyists. She noted that OARS has a new Ecological Restoration Coordinator whose primary work will be on dam removals, invasives management, and climate resiliency. OARS also hired a new Director of Development and Community Engagement.

Ms. Slugg said that MIT Sea Grants has been very helpful to the RSC with past projects and is requesting a letter of support from the Council to obtain Congressional funding. The Council was in favor of sending that letter. Ms. Henderson asked for an update on the Talbot dam removal. Ms. Field-Juma said that the contracting for an engineering design for deconstruction of the dam is being finalized, getting design services ready for permitting is in progress, permitting is expected to begin in late spring or early summer, and a date for an informal meeting with the Billerica Conservation Commission is still being decided. She offered to speak at a Billerica Planning Board meeting if that would be helpful.

9:01 pm Ms. Henderson motioned to adjourn, Mr. Cook seconded and the motion passed 11-0

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan