



**Sudbury, Assabet and Concord
Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council Meeting
July 31, 2018**

RSC Representatives present: Sarah Bursky, Co-Chair (NPS), Ron Chick (Framingham-Alt), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Alison Field-Juma (OARS), Marlies Henderson (Billerica), Gail Hire (Concord), Eileen McGourty (USFWS), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), Kate Tyrrell (SVT)

RSC Representatives absent: Mary Antes (Wayland-Alt), Elissa Brown (Concord), Jim Meadors (Lincoln-Alt), Joseph Piantedosi (Bedford-Alt), Karen Pelto (MA DEP), Anne Slugg-Chair (Sudbury),)

Guests: Christopher Mason from Mason and Associates, Inc. and Sue Flint from OARS

This meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Sarah Bursky.

Special presentation – Mason and Associates

Ms. Bursky introduced Chris Mason as one of the consultants who conducted research on the RSC's 8 member towns as part of the Conservation Update. Mr. Mason focused on the bylaws and regulations from each town which impact the SuAsCo watershed area. Mr. Mason said that he focused on regulatory protections for watershed areas that drain into the scenic portions. The tributaries were outside the scope of his study.

He noted that SVT's 2015 update of unprotected land inventory was helpful. He collected laws and bylaws from the RSC's 7 towns and one city. He looked at zoning on river side properties, natural resource constraints, MS4 and other stormwater regulations since 1995. He reported content in this section town by town. He GIS registered zoning maps, adding buffer zones to all wetlands. Because buffer zones differ by town he said it is possible that not all buffer zones were drawn correctly on the new watershed map. Unprotected land and conservation ownership are denoted on this digitized watershed map.

Mr. Mason reported that he found good regulatory controls by each town, frontage lots were mainly in permanent conservation, and that Wild & Scenic values are generally well protected. He said that the challenges for the future include water quality impairment, invasive species, and increasing recreational use. Some redevelopment was constrained by historical considerations. He suggested the RSC think about the carrying capacity for Concord's increasing ecotourism.

Mr. Mason's recommendations include: Continued land acquisition, Invasive species control, promoting the SuAsCo's ORV's and the RSC as an institution and stakeholder, getting Conservation Commissions involved in the RSC plan, giving presentations to town planning boards so that the rivers are integrated into town plans.

Discussion: Ms. Field-Juma brought up climate change. She said that flow, water use, water use efficiency, and wastewater regulations could all use some attention and that all member towns could use less groundwater. She showed a DEP map where net depletion of groundwater for August was shown in red. She said that towns should enforce their wetland laws and that flood plain protection needs to be stronger. She said that Massachusetts is a nondelegated state and that it should have a discussion on point source discharge.

Ms. Hire asked Mr. Mason if the town laws were being enforced. He said that was difficult to tell. He looked at some metrics such as how often town commissions and boards meet and whether all towns had a conservation coordinator, but acknowledged it was difficult to enforce. Assessing enforcement would make sense as an action item in the Plan.

Ms. Henderson said that a subdivision is being planned in Billerica. The developer must set aside a percentage of land which the town has an option to buy for 3 years. There is a limitation on how much clearing can be done but subdivision ordinances and regulations are not updated often.

Special Presentation - OARS:

Ms. Flint began a presentation about OARS' baseline monitoring program. She said that OARS appreciated its RSC funding for this program because it is difficult to get funding from other sources for something which is important but not innovative and not intended to be. She showed maps of OARS' water quality sampling sites and wastewater treatment plant sites where phosphorus is removed over time. She said that it is important to have more than 10 years of data for TP, ortho P, and NO₃. She presented charts showing that the years 2000 and 2012 were break points on the upper Assabet for better phosphorus removal. She said that summer nitrates show a slightly rising threshold for eutrophication. OARS is just getting updates for this summer's total phosphorus for the lower Concord River. TP in the water column decreased in both the Assabet and Concord Rivers.

One data use for this monitoring program included commenting on the draft NPDES permit for Hudson's wastewater treatment plant. The River Report Card will include OARS' WA data and WQ index.

Ms. Field-Juma discussed the importance of science based advocacy, citing an Assabet River TMDL study that was used to argue for more stringent limits. She said that OARS data is used to lobby for better laws. OARS consulted with EA on the state's Drought Management Plan. Staff members participate in DEP workshops on WQ monitoring and standards. They testify before the state legislature, co-sponsor an annual legislative breakfast, testify at municipal hearings, and submit comments to individual towns. They partner with SVT, CISMA, the Mass Rivers Alliance, TNC, Mass Audubon, League of Women Voters, Conservation Departments, and more. She said that the state is beginning to use OARS data when determining which water bodies from the 303d list should be cleaned up first.

Discussion: Ms. Hire asked why is ecoli is not part of OARS water quality monitoring. Ms. Field-Juma said that would need a specific program after the first rainfall. Wastewater treatment plants have been pretty good at treating for ecoli. Rivers can test clean one day and then catch a pathogen the next. OARS would need to invest in more monitoring and then focus on a few spots. She said that it is riskier to swim after a big rainfall because sewers overflow.

Mr. Sciacca said that hearing the OARS presentation made him consider looking at nitrogen in the Sudbury River. He last looked at it 15 years ago. Ms. Field-Juma said that with climate change comes flooding, especially on rivers and this is as big a problem as drought.

Mr. Chick said that we should consider sampling for nitrogen and phosphorus upstream of the dam on the Sudbury River .

Ms. Field-Juma referred to an OARS drone study which flew over the Saxonville impoundment. The study will help determine if OARS can monitor water chestnut growth.

Business:

Ms. Bursky said that she would not ask for Riverfest comments due to the lateness of the hour but requested that representatives email their comments to her while their memories were fresh. She noted that the annual paddling outing would replace our August meeting. She stated that we would be doing a review of the Conservation Plan in September and that members would then deliver the final document to their towns, meeting with interested parties such as Selectmen and Conservation Commissions.

At 9:08 pm Ms. Field-Juma motioned for adjournment, Mr. Sciacca seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan.