



Sudbury, Assabet and Concord
Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council
February 28, 2017 Meeting Minutes

RSC Members present: Anne Slugg (Chair Sudbury), Mary Antes (Wayland-Alt), Elissa Brown (Concord), Sarah Bursky (NPS), Cindy Delpapa (state), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Alison Field-Juma, Jamie Fosburgh (NPS), Libby Herland (USFW), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Jim Lagerbom (SVT-Alt), Karen Pelto (state), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), Kate Tyrrell (SVT)

Representative not in attendance: M Henderson (Billerica) & J Meadors (Lincoln-Alt)

Also in attendance: Amber Carr (MAS/CISMA)

Meeting called to order at 7:03 pm by Chair Slugg followed by introductions.

January minutes: Motion made to approve the 24 January, 2017 meeting minutes, (Field-Juma/Brown). MSV.

CISMA and RSC support: Amber Carr, representing CISMA, explained the Nyanza funding, used to both support her work as the organization's coordinator and fund project work, is coming to an end. The CISMA's spring meeting, (14 March at the Assabet River Refuge) will explore ways to move forward with reduced funding. The members will consider options for the continued coordination of the organization and what is important to the CISMA. Members will be asked to brainstorm about alternative funding and nontraditional avenues of support.

The CISMA has used past RSC Partner funding to support the small grant program and the modest costs of hosting meetings and the website. The last year, RSC Partner funding was asked for and provided to support the CISMA coordinator time to apply for grants. Unfortunately this effort did not result in funding as the grantors were disinclined to fund an on-going organization. With the exception of this one time coordinator support, RSC Partner funding has not been used to support the coordinator but funding for this critical part of the CISMA would be appreciated. CISMA has great participation from their members but much of this depends on having a coordinating force in place.

A Carr was asked if any of the CISMA project work might be couched as infrastructure and be eligible for the anticipated federal infrastructure money? This is hard to know at this time but would be unlikely. A Carr was also asked if CISMA has ever received funds from member towns? The CISMA members have discussed applying for Community Preservation Act funds. This option, along with direct funding from member communities, will likely be discussed at the upcoming meeting. A Carr was thanked for taking the time to attend the RSC meeting and provide the RSC with information and updates on the CISMA.

Community Grant Request: The MA Rivers Alliance (MRA) has been involved in drought issues and the state's discussion on revisions to the drought management plan. MRA contacted S Bursky about applying for \$1,000 from the SuAsCo W&S Community Grant to research effective public messaging about the need for water conservation. There is currently slightly less than \$1,000 of remaining Community Grant funds. Representatives discussed the request including whether the organizations the MRA cited in their application have made it clear they want this information. A Field-Juma confirmed these organizations do want this information. Michelle Craddock, the flow specialist at MA Div of Ecological Restoration, provided a few suggestions to focus the research including: asking Massachusetts towns what water conservation messages did and did not work in their communities, ask communities what state help is needed, and what their frustrations were with the state during this past season's drought. A Field-Juma offered the opinion that input from other states would be informative. Motion made to approve up to \$1000 in Community Grant funds to MA Rivers Alliance to research effective public messaging about the need for water conservation and to provide MRA with the suggestions made during the discussion, (Sciacca/Herland). MSV.

Conservation Plan Update : The date and time for the planning retreat has been sent via email, (14 April). The Retreat sub-committee, (M Antes, E Brown, K Pelto, S Bursky and facilitator) has been diligently planning and preparing for the retreat. The committee has created a survey to gather information on a range of topics including priorities and what people view as the strengths of RSC. The survey is ready to be sent to RSC representatives, W&S towns, (select boards, DPWs, Conservation Committees, planning departments etc.) and select individual involved in river issues. The anticipated outcome of the retreat is to develop a strategic plan and a 'one pager' information sheet to explain the RSC and its mission. The timeline is to draft the strategic plan over the spring/summer and finalize by the autumn. The retreat sub-committee will be inviting select partners to the retreat and welcomes suggestions on who would be valuable to have attend.

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1. A Slugg will email a reminder to RSC reps to send names, (with title/role and email address) once they have reviewed the survey, to A Slugg and S Bursky of those people they feel should be included in the pre-retreat survey.*
- 2. Reps are asked to consider who might be willing to commit to the retreat and send suggestions to S Bursky.*

Budget priorities: A Slugg provided a written work plan/budget breakdown covering the past few years and a proposed 2017/18 budget. The RSC's five year cooperative agreement (CA) is coming to an end in August and a new CA is needed. A Slugg's aim for this evening is to develop budget allocations for the RSC internal needs and to support our major partners. J Fosburgh explained how the budget numbers were derived and explained the federal government is running on a 'continuing resolution' through April. The NPS anticipates being swamped in May when the continuing resolution ends. It would be wise to have the CA agreements in place before the agency becomes exceptionally busy in May.

Representatives brainstormed on potential projects and focus areas:

1. Increased river access and on the water recreation has been mentioned for years.
Recommendation made to identify a vendor/ service to host weekly boat cruises (motorized boat) to show how unique and important a resource the river is for the area. Possibly reach out to the

Concord boat livery about subsidizing a weekly trip. It was also recommend the RSC should consider including an educational talk or other outreach as a part of the trip.

2. Make it known the rivers are swimmable bodies of water. Billerica has an informal sand beach. In Concord the Lowell Street boat area is increasingly used as a swimming area. The Bedford Rte 225 boat ramp would be a nice beach area. This issue needs and deserves study on the best mechanism to determine and advertise the safety of the river for swimming.
3. Follow-up on the MA River Alliance work to implement drought messages and advance water conservation measures.
4. Promote winter/ year round recreation opportunities, (e.g. ice skating).
5. Prepare for the reissuance of the Assabet wastewater permits.
6. Study the option of drawdowns to control invasive water chestnut in impoundments.
7. Get pro-active about access sites and improving existing access sites currently in poor shape.
8. Form more committee to look into other pro-active work.

Reps discussed the fate of the currently allocated mussel study funding which needs to be spent by the end of August and if there is an opportunity to use this money for a flow related study this summer. Consensus was to determine if it can be spent on flow or reallocate the funds soon. People with suggestions for what to do with this funding please let A Slugg and S Bursky know your idea(s).

Have a total of \$100,000 in funding for the upcoming year. T Sciacca felt it was important to keep up the partner funding but less important to maintain the community funding because no one entity is depending on the grant funds. Many felt the community funding should be decreased because there is more partner work to be done related to NPDES permits. Others mentioned the diversity and success of the community grant funded projects. It was recommended the RSC consider this year's funding allocations in the context of the real possibility future funding will decrease.

Motion to approve the 2017/18 budget with allocations as follows: RSC Financial Administration- \$2,200, RSC Administration- \$1,000, RSC Community Grants- \$25,200, Riverfest- \$5,000, Partner Funding- \$65,000, MA Rivers Alliance dues- \$100, RSC signage- \$1,500, (Hammond/Tyrrell). MSV.

River signage: B Fadden provided a printout of signage needs for river crossings. The intent is to identify all river crossings in the Wild & Scenic towns to allow the RSC to decide preferred locations and where signs are likely to be approved for installation. Once this is done the appropriate number of signs can be ordered. B Fadden asks town reps to send him any changes, (please use track changes) as soon as possible including recommendations on where to have or not have a sign. The next step will involve town reps working on necessary approvals. A suggestion was made to include signage for river access points with the signs also facing toward the river or on bridges to accommodate on-the-water users. Any additional ideas should be sent the B Fadden. Decisions on locations will be made when the cost per sign is more concrete.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. *Any ideas on a use for the \$15,000 allocated to a flow study should send them to A Slugg and S Bursky.*
2. *Town Reps will review and edit as needed, (please use track changes) the river crossing lists sent by B Fadden and provide their thoughts on where to have or not have a sign.*

Riverfest: A 'save the date' email was sent and a kick-off meeting will be held soon. The League of Women Voters (M Antes) has already begun soliciting River Steward nominations. The process is much the same as in the past where notices are sent to local media outlets asking for nominations. RSC reps are enthusiastically encouraged to identify worthy individuals from their towns and send in a nomination, (nomination materials will be sent to reps). Once the nomination period is closed, S Burksy will convene a committee to select the 2017 River Stewards.

Chair Slugg asks reps to consider involving local businesses in a Riverfest activity. For example she has asked a local yoga studio to host a river-side class.

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1. M Antes with S Bursky will send out the River Steward nomination request to the RSC.*
- 2. Town reps are asked to identify and nominate worthy individuals from their community.*
- 3. Town reps are asked to invite local businesses to become involved in Riverfest.*

New business: L Herland was pleased to announce the US Fish & Wildlife Service has officially acquired the 5.8 acre 'Raytheon property'. Nyanza funds helped cover some of the closing costs. The parcel includes the bottom of the canoe access site.

L Herland invited everyone to a dedication event for Red Maple Trail on 13 May @ 11:00 am and also highly recommended reps visit this trail to view the new boardwalk. Nyanza funds paid for the observation tower, the pathway and the boardwalk.

L Herland announced she will be retiring 30 September from the US FWS.

E Brown shared the good news that the town of Concord bought October Farm, (80 acres). RSC was recognized for their contribution to the acquisition.

B Fadden suggested the upcoming meeting with the USGS (15 March) be open to all interested parties. Concern was expressed about a larger crowd hampering a focused discussion with the USGS though a two part meeting would allow outside entities to hear the USGS presentation but leave time for the discussion with RSC after the presentation. S Bursky will get back to reps about inviting others.

DeCordova has a new art installation with MA Rivers and B Fadden will circulate the announcement.

A Field-Juma was pleased to announce OARS will again host a W&S Film Festival. It is 29 March in Maynard and tickets are going quickly. A Field-Juma asks reps take and post flyers in their towns.

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1. S Bursky will provide update about opening the USGS meeting to others.*
- 2. B Fadden will circulate the MA Rivers Alliance announcement about the DeCordova river and art event.*

Meeting adjourned at 9:04 pm.