



**River Stewardship Council  
Monthly Meeting  
May 26, 2020 at 7 p.m.  
Zoom Video Call**

**RSC Representatives present:** Anne Slugg-Chair (Sudbury), Emma Lord, Co-Chair (NPS), Ron Chick (Framingham-Alt), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Alison Field-Juma (OARS), Marlies Henderson (Billerica), Laura Mattei (SVT), Linh Phu (USFWS), Trek Reef (Billerica-Alt), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), David Witherbee (Concord)

**RSC Representatives absent:** Mary Antes (Wayland-Alt), Elissa Brown (Concord-Alt), Jim Lagerbom (SVT-Alt), Joseph Piantedosi (Bedford-Alt),

7:05 p.m.

**Riverfest Update from Ms. Lord**

Ms. Lord spoke about changes in Riverfest events due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of the usual group events there will be virtual events available online. Events will include the Voyage of the Yellow Wellies, a virtual exploration of 40 points of interest along the SuAsCo rivers created for the Umbrella Arts Center and funded by the RSC, information on self-guided paddling trips, and nature presentations. These, and other events still being developed, will appear on the Virtual Riverfest 2020 webpage, which will be available online from Wednesday, June 17 through Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup>.

7:11 pm

Ms. Phu made a correction to the April minutes. Ms. Henderson motioned to approve the minutes with that correction, Ms. Field-Juma seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Riverfest Updates**

Ms. Henderson worked with the Middlesex Canal Museum and Visitor Center to create a visual tour of the Museum and canal, including interior and exterior video footage. One interactive feature will allow online visitors to view past presentations held and recorded at the museum, including one by Ms. Field-Juma. A paddling trip from Billerica to Lowell was filmed for inclusion on the Virtual Riverfest webpage and more videos for Riverfest will be produced.

Mr. Sciacca wondered about the best ways to publicize our first virtual Riverfest. Ms. Phu said that she will publicize the events on a Concord mothers' group which has a membership of 750 people, and that Wicked Local is a good outlet for us. Mr. Witherbee said he will publicize

events on a listserv which includes 120 homeowners in Concord. Mr. Sciacca said it would be good to have a press release distributed to the group so that everyone can personalize it for their towns. Ms. Lord said she would write that first press general press release. Ms. Phu suggested that representatives take 3 approaches: a release for print media, social media postings, and great photos.

In response to a question from Ms. Henderson, Ms. Lord said that the Virtual Riverfest 2020 webpage would expire but that the RSC can keep the links from the event on its own website.

Mr. Chick said that he is still planning to lead a socially distanced river tour and is presently looking to borrow 8 canoes for that event. He will have masks and gloves available for paddlers.

Ms. Henderson said that she still leads boat trips on the Shawsheen, which she limits to 10 participants in their own boats.

Mr. Chick pulled water chestnuts recently and sent photos to Ms. Mattei. He said that this is an ideal time to pull them as they are just breaking through the surface and there is very biomass.

7:20 pm

### **Mosquito Control Bill**

Ms. Slugg submitted comments on behalf of the RSC for two recent discussion items: the Governor Baker's proposed mosquito control legislation and the USFWS Hunting Plan. Ms. Field-Juma said that the mosquito control plan has been completely re-written after an avalanche of public comments were received. That new plan was favorably reported out of committee. It may possibly go into effect this year but certainly by 2021 the state will have an entirely new approach to mosquito control which will take ecological and health impacts into consideration. Ms. Phu said that the state is not allowed to spray on federal land. She has been working with two mosquito control districts since July 2019 to discuss what they will allow. She will look at it when it becomes a health concern according to the federal plan. There will need to be triggers and then will only ever include larvicide, never adulticide, Ms. Phu spoke with a respected entomologist who said that last year's treatment was carried out much too late in the season. She believes that this year the state will be more proactive, will know the monitoring sites, and will know where to spray.

**USFWS Hunting Plan** – All comments have been submitted and the comment period is closed.

### **Dragonfly Mercury Project**

Ms. Field-Juma and Ms. Lord attended a webinar on results obtained since last year's Dragonfly Mercury Project. The project is nationally significant for learning more about mercury deposition. Greatly different concentrations of mercury can be found in the same park. The project is expanding its number of partnerships and has 107 sites across the country. The mercury level found at MMNHP was the 3rd highest found in the study. Higher levels were found in riverine testing sites. Massachusetts only studies mercury in pond and lake fish. Mr. Sciacca said that this data could be correlated with an older EPA study. Ms. Field-Juma said that our river is not representative of Massachusetts rivers because our levels were so high. Mr. Sciacca said that we have comparative information from the EPA. Heard Pond fish and river fish were tested at the same time. No mercury was found in the pond fish.

## **Potter Road/Stone Bridge Road Rehab**

Mr. Fadden said that this bridge was damaged in 1950. Framingham's Conservation Commission believes that the proposed floating dock would impede navigation. Even though he is an Associate Member of the restoration plan, Mr. Fadden is not being kept informed and only recently saw the Plan. Wayland is taking the lead, even though some people think that the bridge is actually located completely in Framingham. Mr. Sciacca said that he is also having difficulty staying informed on the state of this project but believes the it was not possible to submit the permit application and noted that the US Army Corp of Engineers said that it looks to the RSC for advice on the river.

## **CISMA Canoes/Kayaks**

CISMA owned canoes and kayaks were not used either last year or this year. They are now being sold. CISMA entities may also purchase boat trailers. There has been a fair amount of interest from member towns. Ms. Lord said that she will try to get a price list for the items being sold. Mr. Fadden inquired about the future of the boat storage shed. Ms. Phu said it would be a shame to destroy it. For now it will store canoes when appropriate and after that it will store federal equipment.

Ms. Phu said that because of so many people being home due to the COVID-19 quarantine, many more people are boating and jet skiing on our rivers. There has been a substantial increase in motor boating and jet skiing, resulting in huge wakes. She notifies law enforcement officials who issue tickets. They can only issue tickets within the refuge boundaries. When possible, they note the color of boats and photos of boat registrations numbers for boats speeding outside of the Refuge boundaries and offer that information to relevant towns.

Ms. Henderson has also seen an increase in boaters on the Concord River and Mr. Reef has witnessed many kayakers having to wait for the wake from motorboats to fade before they can resume paddling. Mr. Sciacca said that there is no prohibition of motorboats. He thinks the speed limit should be about 5 mph because of the wake. Mr. Phu said regulations call for citations to be written based on speed and wake.

Ms. Phu said that an 18 month position for a transportation fellow for all Eastern Mass Refuges has been announced. The most likely candidate will be a graduate student or already have a graduate degree. Areas of interest for this internship will include increasing access to trails and rivers, diversity of access, and considering public transportation as a way to increase visitors. An 18 month extension is possible. The idea of bike and canoe/kayak shares for the rivers was recently raised. The transportation fellow may be hired in July. That individual will reach out to both the SuAsCo and Nashua Wild and Scenic Rivers, as well as to contacts in Concord. In the fall, a Visitor Services intern will be hired with the goal of increasing the number of visitors on our NPS refuges. Acquisition money for great scrub habitat in the Mashpee area is now available. In addition, \$500,000 in land and water funds for New England and New York is available for scrub shrub habitat.

8:32 pm

Ms. Field-Juma motioned for adjournment. This was seconded by Mr. Chick and the motion passed unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan.