



Minutes for April 30, 2024

RSC Representatives present: Anne Slugg, Chair (Sudbury), Emma Lord, (NPS), Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Matt Brown (OARS), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Marlies Henderson (BillERICA), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Tom Sciacca (Wayland)

RSC Representatives absent: Ron Chick (Framingham), Dan Cook (Carlisle), Laura Mattei (SVT), Frank Richichi (Bedford), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt)

Welcome and March Meeting Minutes

7:00 pm Ms. Slugg opened the meeting. Ms. Lord volunteered to take meeting notes until Ms. Dugan could join. Ms. Henderson said that she had emailed corrections for the March Minutes pertaining to the Shawsheen River as a water supply source. She motioned to approve the March Minutes with those corrections. Ms. Hempel seconded, and the Minutes were approved 8-0.

River Ambassador Update

7:05 pm Results are still not available from MassDEP's Nyanza 2023 fish tissue mercury sampling. Ms. Brown attended the Cooler Concord event on April 20th with help from Ms. Hempel and Julia Khorana. Ms. Brown and Mr. Cook also attended the "Route to Sustainability Carlisle". This was a large and popular event. Ms. Brown spoke about the work she has been doing with the Warner's Pond subcommittee. She has spoken with Concord Land Conservation Trust and Concord Conservation about woody material in the river and about removing it. Concord DPW said they could help but they don't have the money to do it at this time.

Warner's Pond Dam Subcommittee

7:25 pm Ms. Dugan entered the meeting. Ms. Hempel said that due to staffing changes there has been a delay in getting her Q&A column published in the Concord Bridge. The subcommittee is working on a narrative to use during various dam removal meetings in Concord. In the next month they expect to choose a finalist to produce the dam removal promotional video.

2024 RiverFest

7:34 pm Ms. Lord said that the RiverFest working group is planning events to run from July 6-28. This year's Riverfest events have been reduced to 4 weeks because it was difficult to maintain momentum for promotion and advertising during last year's 6-week Riverfest season. A variety of events will be offered over different days and times so that people can attend multiple events. The planning is still in process for many events. Several arts, literature, and children's events are planned for Saturday, July 20th at the Old Manse. Ecology and wildlife events are planned for Saturday, July 27th at Great Meadows. Multiple paddling events and walks are being planned. Ms. Henderson will lead 2 events. Mr. Sciacca is planning a history paddle and photography walk. Ms. Khorana, Ms. Brown, and Ms. Lord are working to get the RiverFest brochures finalized by the end of May and printed for distribution in June. Mr. Hammond asked when the "RiverFest This Weekend" yard signs should be displayed. Ms. Lord thought they would be helpful during the weeks before the July 20th and July 27th events. Ms. Hempel suggested taping removable "July 6th-28th" dates for this season to those signs.

7:39 pm Mr. Brown said that OARS is hosting an event on April 30th to celebrate World Migratory Fish Day. OARS will also have a "3 Rivers Report Card" celebration on June 6th which will include a swim at the Bedford Boat Launch. The swim is meant to highlight the improvement in bacterial levels in that section of the SuAsCo.

7:42 pm Ms. Lord referred to an email she sent to Council members about staffing and programming changes that Farrington Nature Linc would like to make to their Community Grant. There was general discussion that these changes made the grant more top heavy in staffing than the RSC usually funds for Community Grants, but there were no objections to the requested scope changes. Ms. Lord commented that the grant was an opportunity to support a new partner.

Mr. Brown asked if the RSC would fund a targeted grant for clearing debris from the rivers. Ms. Brown said that Concord has its own specific tree clearing protocol which involves the Conservation Dept, DPW and the Recreation Dept. Mr. Sciacca said that the RSC once made a grant to Wayland. The Town couldn't figure out how to handle it. Some citizens hired a contractor to do the work and paid him out of their pockets. The Town later reimbursed the citizens. Everyone decided a permit was not needed because they were careful to only cut above the waterline and not disturb any stones on the bridge. Mr. Fadden remembered a river blockage downstream of the USGS gage in Framingham which was affecting the readings. That clearing was completed promptly because the federal government does not need local approval. He said there is a lot of discussion when a Conservation Commission doesn't own the water or doesn't have a resource on the water. They have their own ground underneath. Questions arise about whether they need to be involved if you don't disturb the bottom of the stream. Framingham had a generic Order of Conditions which was restricted to small branches but that has expired, which makes river clearing difficult for the DEP. Ms. Slugg said the RSC had spent time trying to create a policy for the SuAsCo but decided that it was best to leave the clearing to local towns. Mr. Sciacca thought that volunteers could use small, battery powered chainsaws to break up smaller branches in the river. The devices can be used with just one hand and they do not use oil, which is important for water quality.

Updates

8:01 pm Ms. Lord gave an update on the Carol Getchell Trail improvements, which were designed in consultation with The Horsley Witten Group. She met Mr. Chick and staff members from Framingham and the US Army Corps of Engineers for a walkthrough of planned improvements. The work will be done over this summer and fall. It will include replacing all the boardwalks and bridges on the trail and then building observation decks and platforms that overlook the river. This work directly resulted from an RSC grant for the initial design work. Ms. Lord said that Framingham officials were very appreciative of the RSC's contribution to this project.

8:03 pm Ms. Slugg asked if there were other updates. Ms. Henderson wondered if the RSC had a GIS map of the SuAsCo where people could mark problem areas such as downed trees or a questionable dock when they found them. Mr. Brown said that OARS will launch a new website in June which will have maps that allow for some of that functionality. Ms. Hempel asked what technology OARS was using and if people browsing the website could mark those problem areas themselves. Mr. Brown said that OARS' map uses only Google and does not involve layering. He said that he and his team would discuss enabling users to pin problem sites but he was not sure how reliable information from the public would be.

Ms. Hempel said that she was interested in learning more because the Concord Trails Committee is investigating how the public could mark a GIS map to alert the Trails Committee to hotspots of invasive species they find on their walks. Ms. Henderson thinks that the AMC might have that capability. She also said that she is having trouble getting on CISMA's schedule for her annual invasive species clearing at Bartlett's Landing. Ms. Lord said she would follow up with CISMA to see if Ms. Henderson can make a scheduling request as an individual. Requests are more often made by officials from Weed Warrior member towns or organization.

8:10pm. Ms. Hempel asked if there was still room in the RiverFest schedule for more events. She knows someone who would be interested in leading walks along some little-known Concord trails which have river access. Ms. Lord said there was still time to add events and asked Ms. Hempel to email her some ideas.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 pm

Minutes respectfully submitted by Emma Lord and Christine Dugan