



SuAsCo RSC Minutes for July 28, 2026

RSC Representatives present: Marlies Henderson, Chair (Billerica), Andrew Petit de Mange (NPS), Ron Chick (Framingham), Dan Cook (Carlisle), Jonathan DeKock (Carlisle-Alt), Christine Dugan (Lincoln-Alt), Bill Fadden (Framingham-Alt), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Laura Mattei (SVT), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Brian Murphy (Bedford), Ross Tucker (Lincoln), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt), Angela Taveira-Dick (Bedford-Alt)

Absent: Vacant (Commonwealth), Vacant (Sudbury)

Also attending: Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Ellie Sablak

Welcome and June Minutes

7:00 pm. Ms. Henderson called the meeting to order and asked for corrections to the June minutes. There being none, Mr. Sciacca moved to approve them; Mr. Munro seconded, and the Minutes were approved unanimously. Ms. Henderson noted that the main agenda item was the RSC's carryover funds and turned the meeting over to Mr. Petit de Mange.

Budget Overview and the Carryover Funds Working Group

7:09 pm Mr. Petit de Mange explained the available Community Grant funding and how the working group approached spending decisions. He shared an updated FY26 budget and a FY27 budget showing Expected Obligated spending and Remaining Funds. The updated FY26 Community Grants funding showed an increase from \$36,226 to \$149,148 because several pools of unspent funds have been added over the past few months. The increase included carryover dollars from previous years: unspent money from community grants; unspent money from outreach, education, science and stewardship projects; and unspent money from the River Ambassador budget. Of the \$149,148 total, roughly \$87,000 had already been obligated. This includes about \$35,000 in community grants approved last winter (OARS's yearlong River Celebration, Mass Audubon, The Wayland Post, Concord Land Trust) and several smaller grants, leaving about \$62,000 unobligated.

7:12 pm To that unobligated \$62,000, the Carryover Funds Working Group added the FY27 budgeted Community Grant allocation of \$44,560 and projected unspent balances in other budget lines based on trends from previous years. These included the River Ambassador program, which is usually budgeted at \$30,000 annually but typically spends \$15,000 to \$20,000; the \$8,000 allocated for science projects, of which only small amounts are ever used as well as projected unspent funds in other categories including education, outreach, and research. The working group accounted for the RSC's standing annual commitments to major partner organizations: Mass Audubon, SVT, CISMA, Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust, and OARS for water quality monitoring. This left a total of about \$166,000 available to the subcommittee.

7:15 pm Mr. Petit de Mange said it might not have been clear that we were combining all funding sources into a single pool rather than tracking them separately. This was necessary to expedite spending since all work must be completed by next April, with all bills paid by the end of June. Ms. Mattei asked why the fiscal year ends in June rather than September. He said the rules changed midway through the current five-year cooperative

agreement, shortening the fifth and final year to just six months, with three months to pay remaining bills before a new agreement begins. This effectively reduces the agreement to four and a half years. This is the first time the RSC has experienced the new shortened fifth-year process.

Carryover Funds Working Group Presentation

7:22 pm Ms. Hempel explained that the working group wanted to move away from funding the same projects year after year and from relying on outside groups. Instead, they would like to encourage new, innovative, and interesting ideas. The working group would like to bring more people to the river and promote a river system accessible to all. She said that Mr. Petit de Mange wrote the criteria for disbursement: that the project expands accessibility, supports the management plan, and can realistically be completed and paid for by June 30.

7:25 pm The working group recommended five projects. The first is an **ADA-accessible dock at the Bedford Boat Ramp with an estimated cost of \$80,000**. It would include a modular, prefabricated ADA-compliant kayak/canoe launch to replace the existing structure at the Bedford Boat Ramp. The project would require approval from both the USFWS and the town of Bedford, as well as a Chapter 91 permit. The second project is a **self-serve kayak rental station at the Bedford Boat Ramp with an estimated cost of \$40,000**. It would be an eight-kayak rental unit operated through the third-party vendor Rent.Fun. The third project is a **Sherman's Bridge pedestrian walkway feasibility study with an estimated cost of \$15,000**. The funding is for an engineering study to evaluate a proposed cantilevered walkway attached to Sherman's Bridge. Mr. Sciacca is the project lead. The grant would be made to the Wayland DPW. The fourth project is to provide accessibility to the **Carol Getchell Trail in Framingham with an estimate of \$9,000 for Part 1 of Trail Tenders training and \$15,000 for phase-one invasive species removal as Part 2**. This was submitted by Mr. Chick to fund Appalachian Mountain Club training for volunteer trail stewards and an initial phase of invasive species management to keep the trail accessible. The fifth project is an **ADA accessibility map with estimated funding of \$5,000** proposed by Mr. Sciacca, which will include a map highlighting existing accessible points along the river system and modeled on OARS's existing Boater's Trail maps.

7:37 pm Ms. Hempel outlined alternative proposals if any of the first five projects cannot move forward. These included a literary review seeking to capture the river's literary significance in a short book, with an estimated cost of \$20,000. Another possibility is creating a series of stream gauges that could be tied to the USGS data system. If that was successful the RSC could partner with area schools such as Concord-Carlisle High School's Rivers and Revolution program. Lincoln is requesting a canoe for the Conservation Commission and interns so that they could volunteer for consistent water chestnut pulls.

Discussion on Working Group Presentation

7:39 pm Mr. Sciacca said the RSC's two previous attempts to obtain ADA river access failed. He thought the Bedford Boat Ramp was the most promising site identified in 25 years because the site is large and the ramp has a gentle slope. The working group will pursue permitting for two months before reevaluating the project.

7:45 pm Mr. Tucker asked who would be responsible for managing the permitting and other tasks needed to move the proposed projects forward. Mr. DeKock said that he had suggested the ADA dock and would do a lot of the work along with the Bedford representatives who would push it through committees. He has written other NOIs and could write one for this project. Mr. Tucker emphasized the importance of having someone to take responsibility for each project. He offered RSC support to anyone taking on these new responsibilities.

7:50 pm Ms. Brown, drawing on her experience as a conservation agent and commissioner, estimated four months for the NOI and Conservation Commission approval and up to nine months for the Chapter 91 permit. She recommended using a professional engineer for the NOI rather than in-house work. Ms. Koch said she had visited the Bedford site with members of the working group. She said there is a similar ADA dock at the Oxbow Refuge, so these docks have been approved at other Refuges. She said the concept aligned with Refuge accessibility goals, but she will need the final sign-off from her supervisor.

7:54 pm Mr. Petit de Mange said the working group planned to purchase the dock if they could find a willing partner (USFWS or Bedford) to receive and hold the dock and materials even if the installation couldn't be completed within the RSC's timeframe because of the permitting.

7:58 pm Mr. Murphy spoke about the kayak rentals. The working group needs support from the landowner, either USFWS or the town of Bedford. He and others are meeting with the Town next week. Rent.Fun will manage the installation and ongoing maintenance. Ms. Brown thought a NOI or an RDA could be required.

8:04 pm Ms. Henderson supported the Sherman's Bridge project. Mr. Sciacca said the grant would go to the Wayland DPW, which would manage the engineer and the construction.

8:05 pm Ms. Henderson asked about expenses for the Getchell Trail proposal. Mr. Chick said AMC charges \$600/day for Trail Tenders training, including on-site equipment storage. The Framingham CPC cannot fund maintenance, and the trail requires ongoing upkeep to meet accessibility standards. Greenbrier, poison ivy, glossy buckthorn, and knotweed are the primary problem plants. Ms. Brown questioned whether invasive work fit the Council's accessibility goals, noting that greenbrier is native and protected and that the work would likely recur annually. Mr. Chick clarified that greenbrier would be trimmed, not removed, under the existing Conservation NOI for safe passage, while buckthorn and knotweed would be removed. Ms. Mattei asked if he had an itemized breakdown of the \$9,000 training request; Mr. Chick had no exact figures available.

8:18 pm Ms. Henderson noted that the fifth project, an ADA accessibility map, must be completed by April 1. It has two access points that have not been created yet. Mr. Sciacca said the map would identify and promote existing accessible sites, modeled on OARS's Sudbury and Concord River Boater's Trails, and could expand as new access points open.

Contingency Projects

8:22 pm Ms. Henderson asked if anyone wanted to discuss the contingency plan. Mr. Sciacca proposed a research project to highlight the literary significance of the rivers and their connections to authors including Thoreau. Richard Smith and Ron McAdow were suggested as potential authors. Ms. Hempel said an RFP would be issued should the project go forward. Mr. DeKock proposed stream gauges as another potential use of remaining contingency funds, noting that they could provide useful river-level information at access points.

8:34 pm Ms. Henderson said she had submitted a proposal to the working group concerning the Billerica Canal Museum's move from 71 Faulkner Street to 2 Old Elm Street. The move is imminent and the volunteers are elderly. She asked the Council to consider up to \$20,000 in contingency funds to hire a curator to oversee the move. Ms. Hempel and others thought the request needed a defined scope and budget and suggested that Ms. Henderson submit a proposal through the standard community grant process.

8:38 pm Mr. Tucker noted that other proposals, including a Lincoln feasibility study request, had been submitted to the working group but were not presented at this meeting. Representatives were being asked to accept the subcommittee's judgment without knowing what else had been submitted to and considered by the subcommittee. He recommended that the RSC have a fuller discussion of the remaining proposals if contingency funds become available. Mr. DeKock said that the working group had discussed a contingency plan: if a leading project could not go forward the RSC would redirect funds to a next-priority use, such as dam-related work or additional engineering studies.

Vote to Authorize Subcommittee

8:50 pm Mr. Tucker moved that the Council authorize the Sunny Working Group to pursue the five options as presented, with the understanding that the full budget would be available for the full project. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hempel. The motion passed unanimously.

Wetlands Regulation Update

8:53 pm Mr. DeKock noted that MassDEP has proposed amendments to Wetlands Protection Act regulations that may affect invasive species removal and trail maintenance work within riverbank areas. The public comment deadline is in early August. He offered to draft comments on the aquatic invasives provisions and asked if another member could address trail-related provisions. Ms. Henderson said this would be coordinated through email.

Abbreviated Ambassador Report

8:55 pm Ms. Brown gave a brief report. The region remains in Level 3 drought with most towns, except those served by the MWRA, under mandatory or recommended watering restrictions. She shared photos of the Yankee Doodle Path where Phase 1 is under construction. The Concord River sits at about 111' elevation, versus the roughly 119' where the road enters from Carlisle, making construction more difficult there than on the more gradually sloped Bedford side. The Concord Conservation Commission has a filing for an irrigation withdrawal request from Nashawtuc Country Club and a preliminary resource area delineation filing from the Fenn School. Ms. Brown attended the Gerow Park grand opening. She paddled the pond and found it significantly degraded by fanwort and milfoil despite effective water chestnut control. She also biked the Bruce Freeman and Mass Central Rail Trails, noting historical signage at Hop Brook on both trails and a scenic detour near Wayland with views of Heard Pond. She closed by sharing photos from a recent dragonfly mercury sampling project which Mr. Petit de Mange and Ms. Sablak also attended.

9:02 pm Ms. Henderson announced that the next meeting would be held on August 25, with a full River Ambassador report, financial report, and website update. Mr. DeKock moved to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Mr. Petit de Mange, and the meeting was adjourned.