



Minutes for September 24, 2024

RSC Representatives present: Marlies Henderson, Chair (Billerica), Emma Lord (NPS), Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Matt Brown (OARS), Ron Chick (Framingham), Dan Cook (Carlisle), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Laura Mattei (SVT), Tom Sciacca (Wayland)

RSC Representatives absent: John Drobinski (Sudbury), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Frank Richichi (Bedford-Alt), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt)

Welcome and September Minutes

7:00 pm Ms. Henderson opened the meeting. She suggested several corrections to the July Minutes. Mr. Sciacca motioned to accept the Minutes as amended, Mr. Chick seconded, and the vote passed 9-0.

River Ambassador Report

7:05 pm Elissa Brown reported that she did some water sampling in the middle and lower parts of the Assabet River and some bacterial sampling on the Concord River and at River Meadow Brook in Lowell. She joined Mr. Chick and Ms. Henderson in a meeting with Mass Fish and Wildlife and some City of Framingham trail stewards about proposed improvements to the Carol Getchell Trail. She visited the dam removal area at Monatiquot River Restoration Project in Braintree with representatives from Mass River Alliance, Charles River Watershed Association, DER, and National Marines and Fisheries. She showed a slide of the downstream area that had been underwater a year ago but that is now a diverse vegetative area filled with native plants. The project has been in the works for 17 years. Ms. Brown joined an invasive species removal event behind the Assabet Co-op in Maynard which was organized by Laura Mattei. She said the volunteers, including the high school's Green Team, removed a tremendous amount of knotweed. Ellie Sablak and Ms. Brown went to see the kayak rental lockers at Ice Housing Landing. They also investigated local areas including the Two Brothers Rocks in Bedford and the Assabet River Blue and Green Trail in Acton. At the Acton dam they ran into Mike Coates, the owner of Acton Hydro who was working on his hydro plant. It still has its original workings from when it was converted to electric in 1938. He hopes it will eventually produce 175 kw/hour. She saw a boat left at the Wayland ramp. She alerted Mr. Sciacca, who called the DPW. The boat was removed by the next day. She and Ms. Sablak collected trash from the Carlisle fish spot, the Bedford ramp, Lowell Street ramp, and the Wayland ramp. The sofa found in July in the Sudbury River is still there. She hopes that it will flow downstream with the Spring tide and come to rest someplace where we can get to it. She did some outreach with Green Acton, which has been working with OARS on Phosphorus, Temperature, and Conductivity Studies in Nashoba and Fort Pond Brooks. She said they have found tremendous salt input from upstream, especially as you get closer to Route 495. Ms. Brown has been attending Warner's Pond Subcommittee meetings. She said that public sentiment is moving towards taking no action on the dam removal. Ms. Brown met several times with the nonprofit Friends of Woodlands and Waters that is working with the USFWS to reinvigorate activities at the Assabet River NWR, which will be the new headquarters for the USFWS after the Weir Hill building is torn down. She and Ms. Sablak created RSC business cards and badges for Council members who requested them. She showed images of other possible RSC branding ideas to consider in the future, including T-shirts, hats, and personal flotation devices.

Warner's Pond Subcommittee

7:28 pm Ms. Lord said that the Warner's Pond Subcommittee started working in August with Reel Quest Films to create a video about the benefits of removing the dam at Warner's Pond. This month the film crew conducted an interview with Matt Brown and took some B-roll footage to show how difficult it is to paddle at the pond under current conditions. There will be two additional interviews later. She said that there does not seem to be wide support for dam

removal or dredging because Concord is under severe financial constraints. If the dam removal does not pass in 2025, the idea will probably be brought up again. It will be helpful for the RSC to have a video ready for that possibility.

Strategic Plan Review

7:33 pm Ms. Lord incorporated all suggestions she received from Council members about the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan into a shared online document. She asked for any additional comments. Mr. Sciacca thought that repairing Stone's Bridge should be added as a major RSC accomplishment. The project was first suggested by Mr. Fadden and Mr. Sciacca 15 years ago. It has taken RSC determination and leadership to overcome multiple hurdles to get that work done.

7:38 pm Mr. Brown thought that organizing the Strategic Plan, with its many goals and objectives, into a simpler format would make the updating easier. He suggested creating thematic clusters of goals. He also suggested noting which goals would be the RSC's responsibility and which ones would be completed by its Partners. Ms. Henderson suggested creating a Subcommittee to consider those changes. Mr. Sciacca said that the Strategic Plan has always been organized around our Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV's) with subheadings under those. Ms. Lord said that the current Strategic Plan is a lot to digest. She thought that a Subcommittee should be formed to revise the document by removing items that have been accomplished, adding new goals, and stating specific actions and who will accomplish them.

7:44 pm Mr. Brown said that the Metrowest Conservation Alliance (MCA) is also working on a Strategic Plan now. He thought the MCA's and RSC's Strategic Plans could have much in common. He wondered if some RSC members would consider attending the Nov. 19th Fall Meeting when the MCA's Strategic Plan will be on the agenda. Mr. Brown said that the MCA will be doing a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. He thought that if RSC representatives were part of that process the two organizations might find a lot of overlapping interests. Ms. Mattei thought that having RSC representatives at the MCA's meetings could help integrate river issues into the MCA's Strategic Plan and bring the RSC's goals to a broader audience.

7:57 pm Ms. Lord asked, for those RSC members who would like to attend, about the MCA's timeline for completing their Strategic Plan. Mr. Brown said the process will run from this November to next April.

8:02 pm Ms. Henderson asked about the Freedom's Way Heritage Landscape Inventories mentioned in the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan. Ms. Lord said that it was a cultural and historic landscape inventory initiative by Concord, Lincoln, and Sudbury in the early 2000's that does not seem linked to the Mass Natural Heritage Program. There is no plan to keep it in the revised Strategic Plan.

8:05 pm Mr. Cook said that the Talbot Mills Dam removal will impact issues such as the arrival of migratory fish and the need for protecting conservation land from flooding. A discussion followed on the ORV's that will be covered by the Talbot Mill dam removal and how they would be treated in the Strategic Plan. Ms. Lord asked the Council members to send her any additional thoughts on the Strategic Plan and she will include them in the Subcommittee's review. Ms. Henderson and Ms. Brown agreed to join that Subcommittee.

Other/Updates

8:09 pm Ms. Lord referenced the **Final 2023-2024 Partner Grant Reports** from OARS, SVT and MAS that were circulated by email to Council members. Mr. Brown and Ms. Mattei agreed to give their Partner presentations to the RSC in November. Ms. Lord will ask the RSC's other Partners if they can present their updates at the November meeting.

8:12 pm Ms. Lord said that the RSC will be accepting **Community Grant proposals** until October 8th. Submitted grant applications will be circulated to RSC members by email. They will be discussed and voted on at the October meeting.

8:13 pm Ms. Lord said that the October 21-23 **Partnership Wild & Scenic River (PWSR) Gathering** will be held at Jay Peak in Vermont. NPS staff will attend and representatives from all 18 PWSR's are invited. Ms. Brown, Ms. Henderson and Mr. Chick expressed interest in attending.

8:16 pm Ms. Lord said that NPS River Ranger activity booklets are used at RiverFest and for outreach and education. She mails SuAsCo specific **River Ranger badges** after she receives completed booklets. She needs to place an order soon for about 200 badges. She will have a final cost for those to be approved at the October meeting.

8:18 pm Ms. Brown said that next year **Concord will be celebrating the 250th anniversary of its founding** with a year of special events. There has been interest in a community paddle. Launches from the South Bridge Boat House, obtaining access to launch boats from private property, or starting at the Old North Bridge with a fife and drum corps have all been discussed. No one has yet stepped up to organize the paddle. Ms. Lord said the RSC should be involved somehow and suggested a RiverFest event. Mr. Brown said that several OARS staff members are now trained to be Paddlesports Safety Facilitators. They intend to plan a paddle for Concord's 250th anniversary.

8:25 pm Mr. Brown said that the **Talbot Mill Dam removal** permitting process is beginning to wind down. The 401 and 404 permit applications have been submitted. Monitoring plans for sediment and for invasive species still have to be provided. There will probably be one more meeting before the Memo of Understanding can be written for the historic review process. The next step is to develop a site contract with one or both landowners at the dam's access points. Both sites are challenging due to the complexity of the construction design and the fees the owners are asking. Construction is expected to start between late summer and early winter of 2025.

8:40 pm Mr. Chick said that **Framingham** has been applying herbicides for water chestnuts in the Sudbury River since 2018 but did not need them in 2024. He estimated that 5 canoes worth of water chestnuts were pulled this year. The Framingham CPC chose a winning bid for accessible boardwalk construction on the Carol Getchell Trail. That work should begin this November and be completed by next March. A bid to design a staircase from the Stapleton School to the Carol Getchell Trail should go out to bid next week after being held up until an easement could be located. Mr. Chick said he will soon request an RSC letter of support for a CPC application to fund the design of a boardwalk at Farm Pond.

8:45 pm Mr. Brown said that **OARS** was awarded a National Park Foundation grant to help pay for its paper maps and to do some additional wayfinding for trails and river trails in the Wild & Scenic portion of the river. The Sudbury Foundation is providing grant money to create a Rain and Pollinator Garden. That garden will have a storm water return system similar to an ocean-based solution. OARS has onboarded its Youth Education Coordinator, a TerraCorps Service member. OARS has been making progress on its school-based Water-Wise Workshop program, its Equitable Access Program, and its River Recreation activity team.

8:47 pm Ms. Henderson said that **Billerica's September River Cleanup** was re-scheduled for next week due to rain. She thanked Ms. Lord for writing a letter of support for Billerica's Open Space Plan and thanked Mr. Sciacca for reviewing it. That Plan is now under state review.

8:49 pm Mr. Sciacca said that the work on **Stone's Bridge** is going well. Encouraged by Mr. Fadden, Mr. Sciacca contacted the Town's project manager to ask about scheduling a tour of the work zone. He will send out an email if the tour gets scheduled so that RSC members can view the progress. He said the Wayland Conservation Commission is fighting with the Town over the turf field which is releasing crumb rubber into the river marsh. The School Dept. is not acting on this problem and the Town administrators are concerned about the amount of money it could take to fix it. The Conservation Commission previously said that it would appreciate support from the USFWS. Mr. Sciacca will reach out to Ms. Koch since she is familiar with this problem. It was agreed by Council members that the USFWS in Sudbury is overworked and understaffed now.

8:59 pm Mr. Sciacca motioned to adjourn, Mr. Cook seconded, and the vote passed 9-0.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan