



## Minutes for January 25, 2022 Meeting

**RSC Representatives present:** Anne Slugg, Chair (Sudbury), Emma Lord (NPS), Amber Carr (SVT), Ron Chick (Framingham), Christine Dugan (Lincoln-Alt), Alison Field-Juma (OARS), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Marlies Henderson (Billerica), Linh Phu (USFWS), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt)

**RSC Representatives absent:** Bill Fadden (Framingham-Alt), Joseph Piantedosi (Bedford-Alt), Trek Reef (Billerica-Alt)

**Guests:** Robin Stuart (MAS), Melissa Hansen (MAS), Paul Kelley (MAS), Kristen O'Brien (CISMA), Christa Collins (SVT), Laura Mattei (SVT),

7:01 pm

Ms. Slugg welcomed the guests and introduced Ms. Stuart as the first speaker of the evening.

### **Partner Presentation: Massachusetts Audubon Society**

Robin Stuart said that Mass Audubon (MAS) Riverschools educators worked with 58 fifth graders at Happy Hollow in Wayland and 92 6<sup>th</sup> graders at Curtis Middle School in Sudbury this year. Due to the pandemic, some fall school work was delayed, MAS staff had to teach remotely, and the usual river trips were cancelled because parents did not want their children on buses. MAS staff handed off materials to the teachers, taught by video in the classroom, and carried out field work. Over the course of the program students learned about the SuAsCo watershed, its wildlife, ecological relationships within the watershed, and climate change. As a substitute for a river trip, Curtis Middle School students spent time at a kettle pond and at Hobbs Brook, which are both close to school property. They looked at aquatic organisms, took specimens, and made scientific observations. Happy Hollow teachers had intended to take a walking field trip to the Sudbury River at the Greenways Conservation Area but the weather made that impossible. Instead, MAS staff collected specimens from the Greenway and delivered them to Happy Hollow. Teachers then set up aquatic and soil stations in the classroom.

In response to a question about working with Framingham students, Ms. Stuart said that MAS staff are working with the afterschool program at Cameron School in Framingham and hope to get those students on a trip to the river before the end of the school year. Mr. Kelley responded to a question on how climate change was taught by saying that greenhouse gases were discussed and that students played a game about the differences in the carbon cycle before and after the Industrial Revolution. The program at both schools concluded with student projects on what they can do to mitigate climate change in their communities. Mr. Chick wondered if MAS staff had considered working with a middle school in Framingham this year. Ms. Hensen said she had reached out to the school but the uncertainty

of whether classes would be taught in person or remotely made the planning too difficult. Ms. Henderson asked if staff could contact the Billerica schools to explain that the Riverschools program is completely developed in case any Billerica teachers were interested. Ms. Stuart said that Mass Audubon hopes to offer a Riverschools program statewide. It would be presented to interested classroom teachers depending on how much time they have to commit and will offer different levels of engagement by teachers. She thought that would be a good solution for Billerica.

#### **OARS Partner Presentation:**

Ms. Field-Juma spoke first about a November 2021 presentation she gave about the SuAsCo to the Lincoln Land Conservation Trust. Among other topics, she discussed the river system, explained which indicators are considered when creating a river Report Card, and touched on the many threats facing our three rivers. She then discussed the ways in which OARS has completed the goals set out in last year's grant proposal. These included monitoring water quality, biomass, bacteria and mercury as well as tracking cyanobacteria. OARS participated in the Dragonfly Mercury Project along with Ms. Lord and other volunteers. She said that of all the larvae collected nationwide in 2020, our local dragonflies were found to be among the most contaminated. Due to extremely wet conditions dragonfly larvae could only be collected from one site in 2021 and that was a new site, Ice House Landing in Maynard. OARS recently created the SuAsCo Climate Resiliency Coalition. It has received financial support from the RSC and the Foundation for Metrowest. Mr. Sciacca and Ms. Lord are participating in those meetings. The Talbot Dam Removal/Concord River Restoration plan which OARS championed was approved by DER. Removing the dam is expected to greatly benefit migratory fish passage. Ms. Field-Juma said that she hopes lessons will be learned from this project that will prove helpful in removing other dams from the watershed. OARS successfully appealed the NPDES Final Permit for the Marlborough wastewater treatment plant. The effluent discharge limits for phosphorus changed significantly from the Draft to the Final permit. OARS was able to use its own data to argue this case. The negotiated settlement will have permit limits return to concentration-based limits, and this will also apply to all other sites on the Assabet. PFAS levels in our rivers are high. The CISMA Management Committee could consider using Michigan's fish consumption guideline for areas with high concentrations of PFAS.

#### **SVT Partner Presentation:**

Laura Mattei spoke about regional collaboration efforts of the SVT, about the support it provides to the Metrowest Conservation Alliance and CISMA, and discussed some of SVT's hosted workshops and meetings, including those for Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness, forest health, and the Native Pollinator Task Force Series. SVT continued its stewardship along the rivers at the Greenways Conservation Area in Wayland. It closed off an eroding trail on the knoll and mowed the north field. SVT is trying to increase the number of pollinators and control invasives on the property. It continued glossy buckthorn control efforts and maintenance of open rare violet habitat at the Elliot Concord River Preserve in Carlisle. At Wolbach Farm they completed cutting and treatment of glossy buckthorn, and cut-stump plus follow-up foliar of buckthorn and bittersweet. Ms. Collins spoke about a flurry of land protection efforts that SVT was involved with over the past year. Those included a partnership with the DCR to purchase the O'Donnell property in Framingham that otherwise would have been developed into house lots. That purchase added 33 acres to Callahan State Park. SVT purchased 19 acres of land at

Chickatawbut Woods in Framingham, that land connects two city-owned parcels and includes a trail link. SVT has had productive talks to purchase Stonefield Farm in Acton. That farm is owned by 3 brothers in their 80's. Everything grown on the farm goes to hunger relief. In response to a question from Mr. Sciacca, Ms. Collins said that all SVT proposals emphasize the importance of land preservation to combat climate change. She noted that RSC funding is critical for all the leg work it takes to negotiate successfully, and sometimes for years, with land owners.

#### **Assabet Bluff Property, West Concord**

Ms. Collins spoke about this land acquisition project which the RSC is supporting. Two adjacent parcels with frontage along the Assabet River are for sale. Together they total seven acres. SVT and the Concord Land Conservation Trust are engaged in fundraising efforts for this purchase. The plan is to have 5 affordable housing units built on approximately one acre, the remaining 6 acres would be transferred to the Town with a CR to be co-held by SVT and the CLCT. The Community Preservation Committee's recommendation to allocate \$700,000 of CPA funds for open space and \$300,000 for affordable housing will be voted on at Town Meeting on May 1, 2022. Ms. Lord said that the RSC could consider contributing to fundraising efforts with money remaining in its budget by the end of July 2022. This discussion will be continued at the next monthly meeting. The RSC will submit a letter of support for this land acquisition.

#### **Updates/Other**

Ms. Henderson said that the Billerica Select Board declined to approve extending town sewer lines to Dudley Road, which is located near Mill Brook and the Concord River.

Ms. Slugg asked for comments on the November 2021 meeting minutes. Ms. Henderson motioned to accept them as distributed, Mr. Sciacca seconded, and they were approved 9-0.

9:15 Ms. Slugg adjourned the meeting

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan