



SuAsCo RSC Minutes for November 25, 2025

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

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

RSC Representatives absent: John Drobinski (Sudbury), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt), Angela Taveira-Dick (Bedford-Alt), vacant (Commonwealth of Massachusetts).

Welcome and October Meeting Minutes

7:03 pm Ms. Henderson opened the meeting. Mr. Petit de Mange explained that Emma Lord is working part-time now but will be working full-time relatively soon. He said that the Wild & Scenic Rivers Program lost 50% of its staff this year. The remaining staff will be working as a team, depending on where the need is greatest. He will be the point of contact for the SuAsCo, the Westfield River, and the Upper Missisquoi and Trout rivers in Vermont. He said that he would like to visit sites along the SuAsCo and meet with RSC town representatives in person over the next month or two.

7:08 pm Mr. Sciacca asked about National Park Service input for the Section 7 Permit for Sherman's Bridge in Wayland. Mr. Petit de Mange said that he recently met with engineers on that project and will meet with them again in one week. He or Ms. Lord will write the determination.

7:10 pm Ms. Henderson asked Mr. Petit de Mange about the report he will write for the Talbot Mill dam removal. He said that it will be a Section 7 Determination, which is a subsection of the Wild and Scenic River Act that gives us a small amount of regulatory authority.

7:11 pm Ms. Henderson asked for a motion to pass the October Minutes. The motion passed 11-0.

River Ambassador Report

7:12 pm Ms. Brown spoke about her River Ambassador activities over the past month. She said Concord is interested in acquiring the wastewater treatment plant at MCI-Concord. The Town had thought current usage from the farm and police barracks was 100,000 gallons/day. After an Infiltration and Inflow Study showed many leaks, it was determined that actual usage is 30,000–40,000 gallons/day. This gives Concord substantially more capacity and lower long-term infrastructure costs. The Town is considering whether to choose a MA DEP groundwater discharge permit or an EPA permit to discharge to the river. Wayland is looking to develop Wayland Plaza where the old Whole Foods was. This plan includes adding a bit of flood storage capacity by removing some impervious surfaces.

7:14 pm Ms. Brown attended a talk by Kim Kastens on salt and Nashoba Brook. Ms. Kastens' suggestions for mitigating the problem included holding a summit with environmentalists who are concerned with potable water in the area and having DPW staff create a strategy for the whole watershed. The RSC was one of the sponsors for the Beaverland talk by

Leila Philip at the Concord Library. There were about 140 people in the room and over 100 on Zoom. She attended CISMA's aquatic invasive management Fall meeting. Ms. Henderson organized a Fairhaven Bay paddle on November 2nd to check that a resident's seasonal dock had been taken out of the water. The paddlers confirmed that the dock had been removed. Concord issued an emergency dam removal permit to remove a safety hazard associated with an obsolete and failing dam on private property. The dam was on an unnamed tributary to Dakins Brook, which is a tributary of the Assabet. This action restored ecosystem connectivity and natural wetland hydrology to that tributary.

7:18 pm Ms. Brown said Concord Land Conservation Trust is trying to purchase 30 contiguous acres on Spencer Brook, which is a tributary of the Assabet River. The price is \$2.5 million, plus \$300,000 to install a boardwalk. Russ Cohen, once the rivers advocate for the Dept. of Fish and Games before it was integrated into the Dept. of Ecological Restoration, will speak at the Annual Meeting of the Middlesex Conservation District on Dec. 2nd.

Partner Presentations

7:22 pm Mr. Brown spoke about **OARS'** work in 2025 as a follow up to the Partner report it submitted to the RSC. He said that the RSC partially funds OARS' Water Quality program, Natural Habitat protection, Awareness efforts, Recreation activities, and educational initiatives. He shared a slide on Water Quality and Eco Restoration Impact which listed items including OARS' 40 sampling sites, the 400+ samples it has taken over the past year, its 100 culvert assessments completed as well as the three dam removal projects it worked on, and its first Macroinvertebrates Survey. OARS conducted 7 water chestnut pulls with 99 volunteers and cleaned up 7 riverbank sites in September with 60 volunteers. This is the first year that OARS worked with the Excel Conservation Corps, which is a nonprofit group from Boston that takes young adults from urban areas and provides education and on the job training for careers in wastewater treatment.

OARS worked with Trout Unlimited and the Fish & Wildlife Dept on an electrofishing exercise near the Wheeler Pond dam removal site. They tried to determine if there were native trout above the dam and they learned that there were. This confirmed that it was good native trout habitat and supported their case for removing the Wheeler Pond dam.

OARS released its annual Biomass Survey which determines how much biomass is covering several impoundments throughout the watershed. As part of its Awareness efforts OARS wrote a number of Comment letters, provided written testimony, cohosted a Legislative Breakfast with SVT, and hosted its 17th annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival. OARS hosted many Recreational events. It organized its first ever Concord River race. It launched River Rats, which is a river recreational activity team that uses sites in Maynard, Framingham, and Billerica. This was the first year that OARS piloted some in-school and after-school programs. OARS reached 600 children by partnering with 8 summer camps.

7:33 pm In response to several questions from RSC representatives Mr. Brown said that results from the Macroinvertebrate Study have been sent to a lab and will be published later. The Biomass Report is released on an annual basis. OARS uses their culvert studies to work with municipalities applying for culvert replacement and repair. Those studies are not shared with the public at this time. In addition to looking at water flow and flood mitigation in its culvert study, OARS also looks at aquatic species passage.

7:39 pm Ms. Mattei spoke about **SVT's** funding from the RSC for its 2025 efforts for Land Protection, regional collaboration and Stewardship. SVT protected 34 acres of the Ellis Walker site in Westborough. It worked with Ashland to protect a 52-acre property which expanded the Ashland Town Forest-Cowassock Woods area and created over 700 contiguous acres of protected land. SVT also worked with Acton and the Acton Conservation Trust to protect 33 acres of the Moritz Woods. This area is BioMapped as Habitat for Critical Natural Landscape and Local Aquatic Habitat. SVT protected a 10-acre parcel of wetlands in Stowe and 22 acres on a peninsula at Lake Whitehall in Hopkinton. The Hopkinton area is BioMapped for Rare Species Habitat and Aquatic Core Habitat. A grant from another source allowed SVT to do full action planning and strategic planning with MetroWest Conservation Alliance partners. SVT used RSC funds to help install an All Persons Trail at Wolbach Farm. Master Gardener volunteers are helping with native plant areas at the Greenways Conservation Area in Wayland. SVT provides regular invasive plant control at the Elliott Concord River Preserve in Carlisle and hired a botanist to update SVT's violet study there.

Community Grants

7:51 pm Ms. Brown said that the RSC received four Community Grant applications which totaled \$41,000. The RSC had budgeted just \$36,000 for Community Grants but it has other money available if Council members want to fully fund all the grants. The Wayland Post is a new community-sponsored newspaper. It is requesting \$15,000 to help with a journalistic series on the Sudbury River. Farrington Nature Linc in Lincoln submitted a proposal for its leadership program entitled Building Relationships with Local Rivers and is requesting \$3,990. Mass Rivers Alliance is requesting funding for meetings on Stormwater Asset Management and Stream Smart training. Concord land trust is requesting \$13,600 for water chestnut control in the Sudbury River. The Council discussed each grant proposal individually until it was ready to take a vote on funding.

8:34 pm Ms. Mattei proposed voting first on the Farrington grant proposal. Ms. Brown noted that the RSC funded that organization in 2023-2024. She said it was possible that we did not fund them for 2024-2025 because Ms. Lord noted that the RSC does not fund the same project in consecutive years. The Council was not certain how that conversation went at the time and would like to speak with Ms. Lord about this proposal.

8:35 pm For purposes of clarity Ms. Brown summarized that the RSC was considering funding Farrington Nature Linc for the full amount it requested after first checking with Ms. Lord about that vote. The Council will fund the Wayland Post for the full amount of \$15,000 and the Concord Land Conservation Trust for the full \$13,600 it is requesting. It will ask Mass Rivers to amend its dollar amount and to cover funding for just one meeting which must be held in the watershed and will not include catering.

8:41 pm Ms. Henderson suggested using some RSC funds for consultation fees to check that our Land Acknowledgement is acceptable, and to explore a Mishoon Burn Camp to celebrate the planned removal of the North Billerica dam. She also proposed consulting with both Eagle Rising from the Greater Lowell Indian Cultural Council (GLICA) and Strong Bear Heart from the Nipmuc Nation to research local indigenous history within the watershed.

8:45 pm Mr. Cook motioned to allocate \$1,000 for consulting and research into the indigenous history of the area. That motion passed unanimously.

Community Updates

8:45 pm Mr. Brown said that the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) hearing on the Project Team's appeal of the Billerica Historic Districts Commission decision on the Talbot Dam removal is approaching. He suggested Council members send their comments directly to NMCOG. There will also be time for public comments at the hearing.

8:47 pm Ms. Mattei noted that we have not gotten a follow-up from a past grant recipient in Westboro who was testing a new technique to control invasive plant species. She suggested we look at that work again.

8:53 pm Ms. Brown suggested that since there would be no December meeting, the Council take an email vote to approve Mass Rivers grant funding once they have amended their proposal to ask for funding for just one meeting instead of two. That idea was met with agreement from the Council.

8:55 pm Mr. Sciacca said that he had hoped to have a discussion on the proposed work on Sherman's Bridge since we are legally advisory to the National Park Service and because Mr. Petit de Mange will be meeting with the engineers soon. Ms. Henderson said that Mr. Sciacca has been voted as the official RSC representative for this project and that he is authorized to speak for the Council during any of the Sherman's Bridge meetings that he attends.

8:59 pm Ms. Henderson adjourned the meeting.