



Sudbury, Assabet and Concord
Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council
January 24, 2017 Meeting Minutes

RSC members present: Mary Antes (Wayland Alt), Elissa Brown (Concord), Sarah Bursky (NPS), Cindy Delpapa (State), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Alison Field-Juma (OARS), Marlies Henderson (Billerica), Jim Meadors (Lincoln), Karen Pelto (State), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), Anne Slugg, Chair (Sudbury), Kate Tyrrell (SVT)

Representative not attendance: E Eggleston (OARS-alt), R Hammond (Bedford), L Herland (USFWS)

Also attending: Christine Dugan (Lincoln- Rep elect), Robin Stuart (MAS), Christa Collins (SVT)

Meeting called to order at 7:04 pm by Chair Slugg with a welcome to the new Billerica representative Marlies Henderson. J Meadors reported he will be stepping down as representative for Lincoln to become the alternate and Christine Dugan will soon be appointed as the Lincoln RSC representative. Members thanked Jim for his many years of service.

S Bursky gave a brief overview of the objectives of this evening's discussion with W&S partners. The partners were invited to talk strategically about their priorities and future work. The intent is to identify shared priorities. The February meeting will focus on deciding next year's RSC priorities and share the list with our partners.

November minutes: Corrections include M Henderson's name misspelled and minor typos needing correction. Motion made to accept the minutes of the November 24th, 2016 meeting with minor corrections, (Brown/Field-Juma). MSV.

Financial report: B Fadden provided copies of financial report, (also sent electronically). The report details spending from the last two quarters and a chart with a breakdown of the community grants awarded to date. B Fadden proposed putting the report on the web site with the meeting minutes. K Tyrrell gave a summary of the NPS five year cooperative agreement (CA) cycle. A question was asked about the dispensation of any remaining funds at the end of the 5 year CA. K Tyrrell opined that, ideally, there would be no funds left. Some concern was expressed over spending down the \$15,000 allocated for additional flow research by the end of this cycle.

Community Grants: Recap of Riverfest approval from December: At December meeting consensus was reached to allow a trial of allocating Riverfest 'special event' funding of up to \$2,500 from the Community Grant budget. This funding could be used by Musketaquid as they requested funds to support a cardboard boat race to be held during this upcoming Riverfest. S Bursky made inquiries to Musketaquid regarding the questions raised by RSC members during the November grants discussion and reported Musketaquid secured a source of recycled materials for the boats. The question about insurance and liability has been addressed and will be accounted for in the funding agreement. Motion made to allocate

up to \$2,500 from Community Grant funds for a Riverfest event with this year's funding going to Musketaquid to support their cardboard boat race, (Brown/Tyrrell). MSV.

Discussions with partners on 2016-2017 priorities

- Mass Audubon Society (MAS) RiverSchools – Robin Stuart, School and Group Programs Coordinator, was pleased to report the RiverSchools network is still going strong after 10 years and expanding in Wayland, Weston and Hudson. Framingham schools work with the MAS Broadmoor Sanctuary. In Lowell RiverSchools is an after school program with a focus on Merrimack River stewardship in concert with Congresswoman Tsongas. R Stuart reported this is the last year of Nyanza funding for the program. The Nyanza monies allowed MAS to expand their work to include teacher training and activities through the whole school year.

The new MA science standards mesh well with RiverSchools' focus on bringing students to the river to undertake stewardship activities and learn about rivers and their related resource areas. RiverSchools works with 3rd graders and their teachers in Hudson. One example of the students' stewardship activities extending beyond the classroom was a letter writing campaign, part of their persuasive writing unit, to town leaders, the governor and the President expressing their concern about trash along the river in Hudson. The students received replies to all three letters and this response generated a real sense of empowerment. The students are also learning their actions impact others downstream. The program is striving to have the students understand conservation is not exclusively a white middle class activity. A developing goal of RiverSchools is to broaden into a citizen science project where the data collected by the students is made more widely available. Hudson wants RiverSchools to be a core curriculum thus allowing for year-round activities.

MAS would like to expand to more schools including SuAsCo Wild & Scenic communities but there are hurdles. Developing a program in a school requires finding and partnering with a classroom teacher or curriculum specialist who trusts and wishes to work with MAS. This has proven to be an impediment in the SuAsCo Wild & Scenic towns. Work in the Billerica school system faded when their partnering teacher left the school and MAS was unable to find another teacher willing to support RiverSchools. A similar fate for the program in the Concord schools. Maynard schools are happy with just classroom work thus forgoing the impactful field experience component. A potential hindrance to working with some towns is RiverSchools, based out of Drumlin Farm, needs to be respectful of other Audubon sanctuaries serving a given community.

The main costs for the RiverSchools program are staff, which has had to accommodate an increase of 25% in the minimum wage, transportation for the critical field component and curriculum development which requires extra teacher hours. Equipment is also a cost. The majority of the RSC funding is put toward buses so the students can visit the river.

- Sudbury Valley Trustees- Christa Collins is director of SVT's land protection program. C Collins provided a map excerpted from SVT's priority plan showing both protected parcels and lands identified as high priority for protection to meet conservation goals with an emphasis on climate resiliency. SVT's priority planning work used a range of data sources to rank properties. Many parcels on the western side of the watershed and a fair percentage of riverfront lands have been protected with several large acquisitions still desirable.

The prioritization work has identified the need to focus protection and acquisition on tributaries of the Sudbury, Assabet and Concord Rivers. SVT will likely focus on outlying tributaries to help mitigate and/or buffer anthropogenic impacts. For example, SVT is excited about protecting the headwaters of Elizabeth Brook in Harvard where they are working with the Harvard Land Trust to protect lands highlighted as top priorities in the SVT plan. SVT is also working on larger initiatives, (given the efficacy of bundling parcels compared to parcel by parcel acquisition) to aggregate parcels in areas with high biodiversity. Action Item: C Collins offered to send an enlarged priorities map of Billerica to M Henderson.

RSC funding is used to support staff and appraisals. Acquisition funds generally rely on state monies or grants. Nurturing projects, answering questions and working with potential sellers requires a great deal of staff time with RSC funding proving critical to this essential work. RSC funding is not used for land management though SVT has applied for small/Community grants for the occasional special project. In response to a question about why people agree to sell or preserve their land, C Collins explained many long term landowners, especially if the land has been in the family for generations, feel an obligation to the next generations to protect the land and the character of their community.

- OARS- A Field-Juma presented for OARS. Big picture is the state's improved economy has meant a steady increase in development pressure leaving the watershed squeezed more each year. This year's drought highlighted the competition for the same resource. For potable water most communities do not have an alternative water source while some use the MWRA system. OARS anticipates some loosening of the regulations- adding another pressure.

OARS scientific research is aimed at uncovering the source of the problem and advocating for the watershed. Funding on-going programs is challenging, using a large chunk of RSC funding for their water quality program has allowed OARS to maintain the program over the years. DEP is now accepting water quality data collected by watershed groups including OARS.

OARS values the ability to be nimble and jump on topics when they arise, (e.g. this summer's drought). This summer brought things OARS would like to pursue including the cyanobacteria bloom in Fairhaven Bay. OARS would like to monitor conditions more as the situation is likely to become more problematic. OARS would also like to look more at how we communicate our data such as issuing a report card with grades. These devices generate press and an opportunity to get the word out. OARS is looking for funding elsewhere for this work. Another interesting project is consultant Geosyntech's efforts to better monitor stream flow in order to better manage flow. Final thing is to continue water chestnut research with Cornell by collecting water chestnuts to send to Cornell for their research.

Funding issue- related work is hard as most funders do not fund policy work. Much of the RSC funding is used to cover staff costs and lab fees. OARS advocacy efforts included this year's drought, the need for the Commonwealth to look at their drought plan and having discussions with advocates about measures to help ease drought conditions by reducing human demand. There has been a great deal of discussion at state level on how to manage wastewater (NPDES) permits. River advocates wish to be more pro-active on how the state manages water pollution. New this year is an OARS and SVT hosted legislative breakfast, on 24 March, to engage, teach and

bring legislators along. OARS' water chestnut work was funded by CISMA (Nyanza funding) and resulted in a plan to manage water chestnut. CISMA plans to vote on adopting this plan in the near future. OARS asked people for their opinion on the most important issue needing to be worked on. First was monitoring, followed by advocating for better water pollution control, third was water management and fourth water chestnut control. Question was asked of A Field-Juma to explain the scale of activity between Wild & Scenic versus watershed-wide. A Field-Juma explained OARS' work is watershed wide but there are definitely some communities where more work is done and/or needed. OARS would like to work with communities along the Concord River.

- Next Steps: S Bursky noted the RSC monies are an unrestricted source of funding for the programs thus able to provide on-going support for existing work. RSC thanked the RSC partners for coming, sharing their work and discussing their priorities. The discussions will inform the coming year's priorities as well as the RSC's strategic plan and management plan updates.

New business:

- Drought Management Plan: The state is preparing to revise the existing Drought Management Plan. EEA is hosting a meeting, at the Charles River Watershed Association's office, to hear from watershed organizations and environmental groups. MA Rivers Alliance posed three questions with the intention of gathering input from individuals and groups prior to the meeting. S Bursky requests reps send to her their thoughts on the MA Rivers Alliance query so she may voice the input at the meeting with EEA. One area raised for further discussion was the lack of restrictions on private wells which allows lawn watering from these private wells in time of drought. T Sciacca volunteered to attend meeting with S Bursky. Action Item: S Bursky will resend the email from MRA and Reps should respond ASAP.

Community Grants: Hudson revised their request, based on RSC feedback, for \$6,000 for River Schools support. Question was asked about timing of the funding and if it might not all be spent by the closing of current CA. Most costs will be incurred in September but some funds are needed in spring 2018. One concern was the community being out of the W&S segment and also the sustainability of the project. One aspect of the request may be a one-time endeavor, the teacher profession development, but the remaining funding needs are on-going. Question was raised about curriculum ownership and with reps recognizing Audubon's ownership. T Sciacca requested the school be informed the RSC will not entertain a future request for this same work. Motion made to fund the Hudson's request for \$6,000, (Slugg/Brown). MSV with 3 abstentions.

B Fadden requested all town representative send him a list of road crossing sign needs. This includes badly faded signs and river crossings with no sign.

Meeting adjourned at 9:13 PM.