



Minutes for the April 27, 2021 meeting

RSC Representatives present: Anne Slugg, Chair (Sudbury), Emma Lord (NPS), Larry Buell (Lincoln), Ron Chick (Framingham-Alt), Christine Dugan (Lincoln-Alt), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Alison Field-Juma (OARS), Linh Phu (USFWS), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), David Witherbee (Concord)

RSC Representatives absent: Mary Antes (Wayland-Alt), Amber Carr (SVT), Marlies Henderson (Billerica), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Joseph Piantedosi (Bedford-Alt), Trek Reef (Billerica-Alt)

7:06 pm **Minutes**

Ms. Slugg opened the meeting. She asked for comments on the March minutes, adding one correction submitted by Ms. Henderson. Mr. Buell motioned to approve the minutes as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

7:05 pm **Community Grants**

Ms. Lord said that the revised quote for Wayland's interpretive sign exceeded the amount of the RSC's grant. Wayland has reduced the sign from 36"x 48" to 36 x 24". The money saved by creating a smaller sign will go towards an additional sign to be posted at Heard Pond. The remaining balance for the additional sign will be funded by a Wayland source. Council members had no objections to this change. Ms. Lord will tell Wayland they may proceed with creating the second sign.

7:10 **Riverfest**

Ms. Lord updated the Council about this year's Riverfest. She said that currently ~17 open air events, including a dance recital, several paddles and walks, and a live animal presentation are being planned. We will not distribute brochures but will print post cards and half-sheet flyers that will include a website link to all events. In-person events will require pre-registration. Ms. Lord would like to see all event planning finalized by mid-May so that the postcards and flyers are printed in time to have them distributed in local communities from mid-May through early June.

7:15 pm **Internal projects**

Ms. Slugg asked that all town representatives think about possible locations to place SuAsCo interpretive signs in their communities, adding that we can include tributaries and major boat put-ins as suitable places, as well as potential sites both upstream or downstream of the WSR. She asked that representatives get photographs of existing signs. This would ensure that the new signs could readily tie into town-specific conservation language and content. The signs would be site specific. Mr. Sciacca said that one possibility for an interpretive sign in Wayland would be along a new walking trail by the river which should open by this summer or fall. He recommended that other representatives think ahead to 2021-2022 for interpretive sign locations if they are aware of any current changes near the river being planned in their communities. Ms. Lord suggested postponing further discussion of the other two internal projects while we concentrate on getting proposed sign locations collected over the next 4 weeks. Representatives can explore from whom they would need to get permission to post signs, if they choose to use them.

7:35 pm **Instream flow discussion**

Ms. Lord said that the RSC has set aside \$25,000 for a possible flow study. Ms. Field-Juma recently attended a UMass sponsored webinar on environmental stream flows which included a discussion on a range of possible approaches to modeling flow. She sent a request to the presenter asking if we can obtain SuAsCo data from him since he has collected data on Massachusetts rivers. She is now waiting for his reply. Ms. Field-Juma suggested that the RSC look at studies which have already been done and see where the gaps are. She noted that we could contract someone to compile what we do know from other studies, then agree upon what information we don't presently have that we would like to pursue in future years.

Mr. Fadden noted that if there is a drought this year, the flow will probably be greatly reduced. He said that the MWRA is supposed to release a minimum number of gallons from the reservoirs this summer. If they do, then he believes we might not need a flow study in 2021. He voiced concern over whether the gauge at Danforth Street is properly calibrated. A discussion followed about how the MWRA takes its lead from the DCR on releasing water and yet the DCR does not control the river level. Ms. Slugg wondered if the RSC might reach out to a supervisor at MWRA or MA DCR. Ms. Lord said she could see if the MWRA or MA DCR would agree to a daytime Zoom meeting with the RSC as night meetings are difficult to arrange with them.

7:55 pm **Mosquito Management**

May 15th is the deadline for municipalities to opt-out of the state's aerial spraying of pesticides. Ms. Phu said that opting out may not apply if the state declares an emergency or public health risk. She shared a link to a state document which discussed possible exclusions: <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/04/02/exclusion-rights-faq.pdf>. She said that it isn't clear if the state is spraying adulticide or larvicide. She spoke about the cyclical nature of EEE outbreaks, saying that birds are a vector. Infected birds gain immunity. When those older birds die off then only younger birds with no immunity remain. She said that the state sprayed too late in 2019 and had to spray adulticide. They learned from that mistake and sprayed earlier in 2020. She said that 2021 could be the tail end of this particular EEE cycle. Ms. Field-Juma wondered about the impact of adulticide on fish populations. Ms. Phu said she was not sure about adulticides but she had done some research on larvicides on amphibians. Non-generalists were impacted more than generalists. Mr. Buell said that Lincoln is creating a letter to be mailed to all residents soon which will give helpful tips for mosquito avoidance. Lincoln has only had aerial spraying once in many years, though it did have some backpack spraying near recreation and school fields two summers ago. Ms. Slugg said the Sudbury's Health Director has expressed faith in the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Commission. Framingham has dropped granular BTI but has not sprayed yet. Mr. Witherbee said that Concord has put BTI in catch basins and has treated school grounds. Ms. Field-Juma said that the Mosquito Control Boards are being lobbied diligently by advocates for pollinators and organic farmers, among others. Ms. Phu said that there is no spraying allowed on the Refuge. She said that only one or two species of mosquitos are of concern and those are most likely to be in Atlantic White Cedar spots or other specific locations.

8:15 pm **Other Updates**

PFAS in Wayland: Mr. Sciacca said that the Massachusetts regulations for PFAS are 20 parts per trillion. Levels around 20 have been found in the Happy Hollow wells in Wayland and near the high school turf field. PFAS levels were measured one year ago. They were in the low teens and then increased slowly, reaching a high of 29, which is just marginally over the limit. The Massachusetts DEP is enforcing this

limit strongly. Mr. Sciacca said that the PFAS levels in the North Wayland wells are also rising and he believes there is a strong likelihood that there are PFAS chemicals in the river. He noted that development around Happy Hollow could be responsible for the PFAS levels in the Happy Hollow wells but he is uncertain as to why the North Wayland wells, which are surrounded by wetlands, also have rising PFAS levels.

Talbot Dam: Ms. Field-Juma requested that the RSC submit a letter to the DER in support of their Proposal for Priority Project Designation of the Talbot Mills Dam Removal. Other parties in support of this proposal include the owner, NOAA, the USFWS, and the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries. The Council unanimously agreed on the importance of this proposal. Ms. Lord said that she would work with Ms. Field-Juma on wording the letter.

Ms. Field-Juma attended CISMA's Aquatic Invasives Management subcommittee spring meeting where plans for water chestnut removal for this year were discussed. Municipalities were unable to carry out removal efforts last summer due to COVID restrictions. Lincoln and Concord, among others, have already begun planning for water chestnut removal.

The April PWSR Newsletter: Ms. Lord said that the April 2021 PWSR Newsletter will be focused on the SuAsCo. She, Ms. Field-Juma, and Ms. Slugg all contributed content to that issue.

Ms. Slugg wondered if any Council members had further thoughts on the 2021 changes to the NPDES General Permit. Ms. Field-Juma said that the EPA has streamlined the permitting to handle its backlog. She believes that this will be fine as long as stringent requirements remain in place. She noted that three of the water treatment plants in our watershed, which used to have their own permits, will be folded into one permit. Mr. Sciacca said that Wayland's water treatment plant discharges within 50 feet of the river and is permitted for 52,000 gallons per day. The plant does not release nearly that much water daily. It was overbuilt to allow for future development in the area.

8:56 pm

Ms. Slugg adjourned the meeting.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan