



**Sudbury, Assabet and Concord
Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council Meeting
January 28, 2020**

RSC Representatives present: Anne Slugg-Chair (Sudbury), Sarah Bursky, Co-Chair (NPS), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Alison Field-Juma (OARS), Marlies Henderson (Billerica), Emma Lord (NPS), Laura Mattei (SVT), Linh Phu (USFWS), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), David Witherbee (Concord)

RSC Representatives absent Mary Antes (Wayland-Alt), Elissa Brown (Concord-Alt), Ron Chick (Framingham-Alt), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Jim Lagerbom (SVT-Alt), Joseph Piantedosi (Bedford-Alt), Trek Reef (Billerica-Alt)

Guests: Kristin O'Brien (CISMA), Kim Russell and Robin Stuart, Massachusetts Audubon

7:03 pm

Ms. Slugg opened the meeting with a motion to accept last month's minutes. The motion passed unanimously after two minor edits were accepted.

Partner Presentations

Ms. O'Brien spoke about CISMA work carried out with its 2019 RSC grant. Of the \$10,000 awarded, \$5,000 was used on training for the new Coordinator and transitioning that role from Mass Audubon to SVT. An amount of \$1,041 remains unspent but is earmarked for future small grants. Other expenditures were for improving web security, administrative time spent commenting on conservation related plans for Stow and Natick, and for a high school intern to help with invasives management. Small grants were awarded for pollinator habitat creation and invasive species control efforts in Sudbury (under the Sudbury Weed Education and Eradication Team) and at Wayland's Cow Common Conservation Area (under the Wayland Conservation Commission.) Ms. O'Brien said that in 2019 two invasive species which had never been seen by CISMA workers before were found in a conservation area bordering the SuAsCo watershed. Those plants were Angelica Tree and the Sapphire Berry shrub.

Ms. Mattei reported on work the SVT carried out with its 2019 RSC Grant. It undertook land protection outreach, land stewardship efforts, and research and updating of its SuAsCo Unprotected Land Inventory project, with an emphasis on important riverfront and floodplain properties. The SVT worked on several projects with partners from the Metrowest Conservation Alliance. Outreach and education in multiple towns were the focus of the newly formed Native Pollinator Task Force. Protection of Elizabeth Brook Knoll in Boxborough was completed in partnership with two Boxborough conservation bodies. A Beecology workshop conducted at Wolbach Farm identified the most vigorous survivors of a recent native species planting experiment. A survey for butterflies and bees was conducted at Wayland's Greenways Conservation Area.

As Mass Audubon's RiverSchool educators, Ms. Stuart and Ms. Russell worked with a total of 185 students from 3 different schools last year. These included Curtis Middle School in Sudbury, Happy Hollow grammar school in Wayland, and a few students from Wayland High School. The RiverSchools program has shifted from working broadly with several schools to working more intensively with a few

schools. After 2 years of classroom teaching and working with teachers on curriculum development, last year the Mass Audubon instructors limited themselves to teacher support, carrying out field studies at Great Meadows and Greenways Conservation Area, and creating project-based action teams whose year-end projects focused on climate change solutions. Ms. Stuart said that RiverSchools won the state's Secretary's Excellence in Energy and Environmental Education award last May. The Mass Audubon team will look to engage with new schools next year.

Introduction of Emma Lord

Ms. Bursky has accepted a new NPS position in the Philadelphia area. Emma Lord was introduced as her replacement. Ms. Bursky said that while she is primarily working for the White Clay Creek National Wild & Scenic River, she intends to stay connected to the SuAsCo RSC until our Riverfest events in June. Ms. Bursky and Ms. Lord said that they had spent time recently touring some important SuAsCo sites, such as the new Carlisle trail, Wayland's Stone Bridge, and a few spots in Billerica.

Budget

Ms. Slugg said that we will have \$45,000 more to spend in 2020-2021 than we have had in previous years. She noted that spending for the current year has included fees for community and partner grants, trail work in Carlisle, financial work provided by SVT, printing expenses for Riverfest, and money set aside in the event that a fish restoration opportunity arose. Ms. Slugg asked for ideas on projects towards which we could spend our additional \$45,000 next year. Suggestions included improving our website and hiring an individual to build our social media presence. Ms. Henderson noted that our social media posts currently appear under the umbrella of the Mass. DEP and that it would be preferable to have an independent organizational identity. The importance of installing new and replacement signage this year and next was discussed, as was the possibility of constructing another kiosk. The precise number of signs to be placed this year will be decided at our February meeting.

Ms. Bursky said that she had spoken with the Superintendent of MMNHP about possibly sharing the cost of a MMNHP intern for 8 weeks, after the intern's regular summer season and NPS duties had concluded. This intern would work on a project decided upon by the RSC. The cost would be \$8,000. A discussion followed on the type of project the RSC would choose and whether it should concentrate on the Concord River only or along the entire watershed. A potentially more affordable option of hiring an AmeriCorps intern and sharing that cost with SVT or OARS was considered. Ms. Phu thought any intern who was hired should specifically support the RSC's strategic plan. She thought it would be more cost effective to hire an intern from a student conservation organization, NorthWoods, or ACE. She has had positive experiences with each of those groups.

A suggestion was made that the RSC could commission a serious and multi-phased flow study with a portion of the additional \$45,000 that we will receive next year. Concerns were raised about whether to include the Birch Road wells, about the scope of the study, if it would involve recreational interests, if indicator species would be studied, and whether it should include possible effects of removing the Billerica dam. Ms. Field-Juma said that we should not necessarily just concentrate on minimum flow but might consider necessary flows for ecological reasons such as frog spawning. Ms. Phu brought up flow studies as a factor in habitat and biological restoration. Mr. Sciacca suggested we consider committing to one study next year as the first step in a multi-year project. Ms. Lord suggested a scoping survey from which we would learn more about the questions we want to answer. We could then proceed to get price quotes for the individual segments we chose to investigate.

Ms. Bursky said that recommendations from the grant committee will be presented at the February meeting. Ms. Slugg adjourned the meeting at 9:19 pm.