



Minutes for April 25, 2023

RSC Representatives present: Anne Slugg, Chair (Sudbury), Emma Lord, (NPS), Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Ron Chick (Framingham), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Alison Field-Juma (OARS), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Marlies Henderson (Billerica), Tom Sciacca (Wayland)

RSC Representatives absent: Dan Cook (Carlisle), Sam Corbin (SVT), Bill Fadden (Framingham-Alt), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Frank Richichi (Bedford-Alt), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt)

Welcome and March Meeting Minutes

7:02 pm Ms. Field-Juma opened the meeting. She had one edit for the March Minutes. No other edits were suggested. The motion to approve the March Minutes was approved 8-0.

River Ambassador Updates

7:04 Ms. Brown updated the Council on her Lead River Ambassador activities over the month of April. She visited the new Elliott Concord River Preserve and met up with Dan Cook in Carlisle. She set up site visits with the Wayland and Lincoln representatives to discuss issues important to their towns and will set up meetings with the remaining Council representatives over the next month. While paddling the Assabet River to Egg Rock she noticed several fallen trees in the river. She thinks passage will get more difficult as the water level goes down and wondered who she should contact about situations like those in the future. Ms. Henderson suggested she could talk to local Conservation Commissions or Friends of the Assabet. Mr. Sciacca mentioned a small, battery powered chainsaw that he uses, which is held in one hand and is useful for those situations. Ms. Field-Juma said that fallen trees have been a long-standing problem and are difficult to manage. She said that OARS has been looking for a contractor to help with these situations. Ms. Brown represented the RSC at the Umbrella Arts Center Earth Day activities. Over 100 people attended even though the weather was rainy and raw. Concord Academy students put on a skit, brought a band, and helped younger students with arts activities, including one in which they made small boats from natural materials and launched them from the river. There was also a storyteller. Ms. Lord mentioned that the RSC contributed \$3,500 towards those Earth Day activities. Ms. Brown attended Carlisle's first Sustainability Day, which was also on Earth Day. She said that there was a small crowd but that many people were interested in learning about the SuAsCo. Most of them were not aware of the WSR or where they could launch boats. She made many connections at both the Umbrella Arts Center and at Carlisle's Sustainability Day. Representatives of the Old Manse were interested in possible future collaborations.

Ms. Lord said that she and Ms. Brown talked about designing identifying apparel for the River Ambassadors and possibly ordering some merchandise for members of the River Stewardship Council. They also talked about creating stickers or other small items to give away at table events. Ms. Brown thought the heron image would help with brand recognition.

Sudbury River Fish Study Update

7:21 pm Ms. Field-Juma opened a discussion on the Sudbury River Fish Study. Ms. Lord said that she has been coordinating the logistics for this study with the USGS. Field work is scheduled for June 5th through June 9th. That work will involve USGS and the Ecological Services Center from West Virginia. Mass Wildlife will do the electric shock fishing to gather fish samples. The electroshock fish boat will be put in at the Route 20 Boat Launch. Sampling will occur at one site

upstream where Hop Brook enters the Sudbury River and at one site downstream, probably around the Old Sudbury Road bridge.

Mr. Sciacca thought that the sites would need to be determined based on the water level on the day of the study. He thought that going upstream would be water-level dependent. Heading downstream will pose no problems. The amount of land available at the ramp will be heavily dependent on water level. The team will collect fish samples on the boat and the rest of the work will be done on shore. At that point USGS could use some additional people to help take notes and document procedures. Any chemical or biological processes will be done by USGS. Volunteers are welcome to help after those are completed. Mr. Sciacca asked if the shore work would be done at the Route 20 boat launch. He did not think that would be a good site and suggested two alternatives. Ms. Lord said that she could get more information on the space requirements for the shore work and would contact Mr. Sciacca later. Mr. Sciacca asked exactly what the team would be testing for. Ms. Lord said that she could send him a 2-page write-up she had received. She said that the Scientific Collection Permit needed to work on Refuge property has not been issued yet. Mr. Sciacca asked if looking for microplastics might be on the list for testing. Ms. Lord did not know but said that the RSC would be participating in the Dragonfly Mercury Project again this year. That project may have funding to do some PFAS testing on dragonflies. She said a person from the Dragonfly Study recommended that we do the dragonfly sampling at roughly the same sites as the fish study. They could correlate the data later. Ms. Field-Juma requested that Ben Wetherill from OARS be kept informed of discussions because he was involved with selection of the dragonfly sampling sites in the past.

7:26 pm Ms. Slugg joined the meeting and took over as Chair. Ms. Lord said that Ellie Sablak will be starting as the SuAsCo's seasonal River Ambassador in early June. Referring to an earlier discussion, Ms. Slugg reminded the Council that Emerson Umbrella's community grant also included the cost of creating a float for the Earth Day parade.

RiverFest Series Planning

7:31 pm Ms. Lord shared a spreadsheet on RiverFest event scheduling. She said that Julia Khorana was taking the lead on coordinating the event series and reaching out to potential event leaders. Ms. Lord and Ms. Brown have also been working on the planning. Currently the event series is being called RiverFest Summer 2023, with the expectation that a subtitle will be added soon. Events will run from June 1st through August 12th. There should be events every Saturday and Sunday during that period, with some events added on weekdays. The spreadsheet showed confirmed events and ones for which the dates and times were still being determined. There will be multiple bird walks, some history walks, and a history paddle. The RSC will try to have a presence at the Lowell Family Festival on July 15th. One anchor event will be children's events on Saturday, July 29th at Great Meadows. There will be a fishing demonstration and possibly an archery one. Other children's events, as well as Snake Man's appearance, are being planned. Some music and literature events are being planned for Saturday, August 5th at the Old Manse. A history walk and talk, a Ride for the Rivers, and other events are still being planned. Ms. Lord said that our website designer will post about the events on the SuAsCo website and will work on a printed brochure that can be distributed by early June. Mr. Chick said that he normally offers a paddle in June. He is not available to lead one in July or August. Ms. Lord said that the Council could still advertise his June paddle, it just wouldn't be included in RiverFest. She added that another event being considered is to have a trip leader work with children on completing activities in the Junior River Ranger booklet. Children would be awarded badges upon completion of the booklet. That could be added to the Great Meadows events.

Ms. Field-Juma asked about opportunities to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion into RiverFest. She wondered if there would be a way for people without boats to join a paddle. Ms. Brown wondered if we might reach out to REI,

which is located in Framingham and promotes justice, equity and belonging in the outdoors. Ms. Khorana spoke to Paddle Boston about lending boats for a few events. Ms. Lord said that Ms. Khorana also reached out to South Bridge Boat House about getting reduced rates during the RiverFest series but the owners could not offer those rates. Ms. Field-Juma suggested making binoculars available to newcomers on the bird walks who needed them. Ms. Brown said that a lot of Parks and Recreation Departments are now considering rental kayak lockers which are similar in concept to Blue Bikes. If they aren't aware of these rentals we could tell them about the idea, which is gaining momentum. Ms. Lord asked people that had ideas for potential events to reach out to her, Ms. Khorana, or Ms. Brown. The events will be promoted on the website and through brochures, though she was not sure that our yard signs would work now that we are offering a 6-8 weeklong series. Ms. Hempel suggested creating signs with QR codes that would bring people to the website's list of events. Ms. Field-Juma suggested creating stickers with that QR code which could be placed on all promotional material. Ms. Field-Juma suggested that the list of events be translated into at least Spanish and Portuguese. Ms. Lord thought the QR stickers could be produced fairly quickly.

7:50 pm Ms. Hempel spoke with Margot Kimball, who runs Art for All in Concord, about hosting an art-oriented event in August. She thought she would have an answer on that in a few weeks. Ms. Hempel said that she would try to find a historian to lead a walk on October Farm, which is on the Concord River. She is amenable to co-leading that walk. She also wondered about the possibility of educating RiverFest attendees about various threats to our rivers and steps they could take to help protect the rivers. Ms. Brown thought we could try to add a station on threats facing our rivers to the children's events at Great Meadows. Ms. Slugg said that we could reach out to Lincoln and Framingham about having hands-on demonstrations with the EnviroScapes that the RSC funded.

RSC Organizational Memberships / Workshop Attendance

8:01 pm Ms. Slugg said that Mr. Chick had asked about the possibility of the RSC covering the fee for his attendance at a Framingham Business Council Zoom meeting. Ms. Slugg and Ms. Lord then talked about whether the RSC should join other entities besides Mass Rivers, and whether the Council should set aside money for members to attend, within a certain cost range, workshops or trainings that could benefit the Council. Ms. Lord said that some other river stewardship councils put travel funding, conference money, and workshop fees for members in their budgets. Ms. Slugg thought it would be helpful to make a list of organizations that Council members thought we might want to join. Ms. Hempel suggested a system like the one the Concord Trails Committee uses. The RSC could set aside a certain amount of money, perhaps \$1,000, for outside events. Individuals could propose attending a meeting and must get approval from the Council, they will then report back to the group on what they learned. She thinks this shows appreciation for the Council's volunteers and is a way to recruit new members when the time comes. Ms. Field-Juma said that it never made financial sense for OARS to join the Environmental Business Council as an organization, but attendance at individual sessions were well worth the cost. Mr. Chick said that it depended on whether you thought having a constant presence as a member in order to promote the RSC was worth it so that you could share and present at every meeting. Ms. Slugg said that she and Ms. Lord would discuss the budget and see if the Council could allocate money for outside meetings without taking away from community grants or other projects that will be funded over the coming year. She suggested that members notify the Co-Chairs of meetings they would like to attend so that they can gauge the interest level.

Updates and Other

8:14 pm Ms. Slugg asked for updates from Council members. Mr. Chick said that \$250,000 was awarded by the Framingham Conservation Preservation Commission for upgrading an approximately 1,500 foot section of the Carol

Getchell Nature Trail to ADA standards and for creating 2 observation decks on the river that could also be used for educational platforms for the two schools that adjoin the river.

8:17 pm Ms. Field-Juma said that the USFWS has awarded \$800,000 from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to fund the removal and deconstruction of the Talbot Mills dam. She said that the permitting process should be completed in 12 months. If the permitting process goes well the removal could happen after the summer of 2024. She said that there has been some discussion with Turnaround Films about making a short film about the Talbot dam area, which has an interesting history spanning from the glacial age through Thoreau's writings, the legacy of the mill canal and industrialization, and finally, the dam removal. Funding for the film would have to be obtained.

8:26 pm Mr. Sciacca said that the proposed Rail Trail extension would go over the railroad trestle in Wayland. He would like to see the flow opened up around the trestle. Wayland is now looking at funding a formal engineering evaluation to show that the causeway is a flooding issue for Wayland.

8:30 pm Ms. Field-Juma shared an image of a sign about water chestnuts which was created as part of a Sudbury resident's Eagle Scout project. He has installed one metal sign at the Bedford boat ramp kiosk and started a Go Fund Me page for future metal signs. He has posted paper signs at other boat launches which include a QR code directing visitors to the OARS website where they can access the app for reporting water chestnuts. This will improve OARS' mapping and is helpful in OARS' efforts to organize summer volunteers who pull water chestnuts.

8:35 pm Ms. Slugg said that the RSC's next meeting would be on May 30th. She adjourned the meeting.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan