



SuAsCo RSC Minutes for March 25, 2025

RSC Representatives present: Marlies Henderson, Chair (Billerica), Emma Lord (NPS), Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Matt Brown (OARS), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Tom Sciacca (Wayland)

RSC Representatives absent: Ron Chick (Framingham), Dan Cook (Carlisle), John Drobinski (Sudbury), Laura Mattei (SVT), Frank Richichi (Bedford-Alt), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt)

Guest: Brian Murphy

Welcome and February Minutes

7:05 pm Ms. Henderson opened the meeting. She asked for edits to the February Minutes. Mr. Sciacca had two corrections. Ms. Hempel motioned to accept the February Minutes as amended, Ms. Brown seconded and the motion passed 8-0.

River Ambassador Report

7:08 pm Ms. Brown gave an update on her River Ambassador activities over the past month. She worked with Ms. Lord and Ms. Henderson to arrange an RSC-sponsored talk by Robert Thorson on May 3rd at the Concord Public Library. The talk is titled "Discord on the Concord: River Ice Breakup and the Revolution of the Seasons". She and Mr. Chick attended the 2025 Annual Cisma Spring Meeting where Tom Flannery from DCR gave an excellent presentation on aquatic invasive species in the watershed. OARS has begun its Strategic Plan Update. Ms. Brown will be working with their Policy and Advocacy Subcommittee. She visited a few of the SuAsCo's boat ramps to do some trash removal and restocked river maps. She and Julia Khorana will be at the North Bridge from 7-11 am for the April 19th North Bridge ceremony. They will be checking to see that boaters are wearing life jackets and will offer assistance if necessary.

The town of Concord is leading an effort for an MVP Grant for a SuAsCo Water Resources Collaborative. The idea is that there is a better chance of funding if many towns join together. Ms. Brown and Ms. Henderson attended a meeting that discussed establishing a framework and started thinking about the issues involved.

The Talbot Mills project team is still waiting to receive a Section 401 Certificate for the Talbot Mill Dam removal. The next Conservation Commission hearing will be on May 12th. A Notice of Intent has been issued for hand removal of invasive water chestnuts in Carlisle's Greenough Pond, which is directly adjacent to the river. Ms. Lord submitted a letter of support from the RSC for that project after a Carlisle representative appeared at the RSC's February meeting to discuss the situation.

A public forum on Warner's Pond will be held at the Concord Town Hall on April 3rd. Ms. Hempel and Mr. Cook will attend and are putting together a fact sheet. The purpose of this meeting is to gain public input for the Task Force. Ms. Hempel said that the RSC's Warner's Pond video was very nearly complete. After one small correction it will be ready to present and to distribute.

7:20 pm The MCI Concord Advisory Board had a kickoff meeting on February 25 which was attended by 25 or 30 people from different organizations. The Board has set up 3 subcommittees and has started public outreach. Ms. Brown reminded the Council that there is 1,500 feet of frontage on the MCI property and another 1,000 feet of frontage on another parcel. There is a Concord CPA Warrant for a project to rehab the fields at the Thoreau School which is on the Assabet River. Phase One of Concord's Gerow Park improvements has been completed. Future plans could include a boat dock/launch or fishing pier. Ms. Brown shared a short video

produced by the architects involved with the Assabet River Multi-Use Bridge & Trail Project. The video was made to help visualize what the bridge and buildings would look like.

Ms. Brown and Mr. Sciacca located the swale at the Wayland field that might be contributing to crumb rubber runoff from the turf field into the river during flooding events. Ms. Koch and Wayland's Conservation Administrator also inspected the area. Ms. Koch wants to observe the swale during a rain event. She said that a clean-up of the field and wetlands would start on March 25th. Mr. Sciacca said that some money for more clean-up will be discussed at Wayland's Town Meeting on April 7th.

OARS-RSC Recreation Events

7:34 pm Mr. Brown shared a slide on OARS' 17th Annual Wild and Scenic Film Festival starting on April 23rd at the Maynard Fine Arts Theater. OARS will launch its first ever Concord River Race on May 4th. There will be 3- and 6-mile races and a Kids race. This is also the date that OARS will launch its 86 Mile Challenge which will be a season long challenge for people to paddle all 86 miles of our river system. Ipswich and the Charles River Association have organized a small Lobby Day at the State House on April 3rd. Mr. Brown will represent the SuAsCo there as well as at the more established Lobby for the River on October 8th.

Environmental Topics

7:40 pm Ms. Henderson moved on to the Environmental Topics discussion. Ms. Lord said that she had sent a letter of support to Carlisle for the water chestnut management plan discussed at the RSC's February meeting. That same letter can be customized to support other towns that are doing water chestnut removal.

7:42 pm Ms. Henderson introduced Brian Murphy, who will soon be appointed by Bedford's Select Board to replace Mr. Hammond, who has to step down from the Council due to health reasons. Many Council members spoke appreciatively about Mr. Hammond's contributions to the RSC for nearly 20 years.

Updates

7:51 pm Ms. Henderson asked Mr. Fadden to give a Framingham update. He said that work is continuing on the south end of the Carol Getchell Trail. It looks reasonably sure that the CPC grant for design and permitting of the middle section, which will join the north and south sections, will be approved by the City Council.

7:58 pm Ms. Lord said that she, Ms. Henderson and Ms. Brown recently met with Monty Lewis, the RSC's website designer and administrator. They discussed upgrading and updating our website which has not changed much over the past 12 years. The update will include more functionality, content updates and the ability to post news and announcements. She thinks this will involve moving to a higher-level website hosting platform. She anticipates that the updates could start in the next six weeks.

Ms. Hempel said that Concord is involved in a concerted effort to remove invasive buckthorn and garlic mustard which is choking their river banks. That effort will continue through March 30th

Draft FY26 Budget & Partner Grant Review Continued

8:04 pm Ms. Lord reminded the Council that at our last meeting the federal government was working under a Continuing Resolution (CR). Congress passed a new CR on March 14th to get us through the end of the current fiscal year, which is Sept. 30th. She said it looks like the RSC will have flat funding at \$210,000 for this year. FY 2026 will start in August.

8:08 pm Ms. Lord discussed the RSC's Draft FY26 Budget and Workplan which included funding for: Financial Administration (\$9,524), Website Maintenance and Administration (\$540), Mass Rivers Alliance membership (\$250), RSC Storage (\$540), Internal Projects: Education and Outreach & Recreation (\$30,000), Internal Projects: Science and Stewardship (\$8,000), Outreach and Education Projects (\$6,000), Community Grants (\$36,226). It also included Major Partner Grants: Mass Audubon (\$35,000), SuAsCo Cisma (\$8,940), SVT (\$3,900), OARS (\$40,000), Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust (\$14,030).

Ms. Lord said that some money goes towards paying our sampling expenses for the Dragonfly Mercury Project (DMP), which we will be doing again this year. Some funds are for general education and outreach projects. She thought the RSC could fit various projects into some of these categories once we decide on our priorities. Mr. Sciacca said we could think about allocating extra money for environmental monitoring from the Midwest. He thought we could measure mercury deposition in the marshes more directly than the DMP.

Ms. Brown said that RSC-funded work for OARS includes water quality testing and other special projects on an as-needed basis. Ms. Lord said that we do have the flexibility to contract for someone else to do the work we would like done. She said that our expenditures would be close to \$210,000 if we fully funded all five of our Partner Grant proposals as well as the other categories on our Draft Budget and Work Plan.

8:15 pm Ms. Lord asked Mr. Brown if he had any comments before he left, ahead of the Council voting on Partner Grants. He said he was starting to think about the most beneficial contractual studies that OARS could provide for the RSC. He could talk to members of OARS' Science and Policy Committee and wondered about creating an RSC Subcommittee to explore ideas.

Mr. Sciacca said that the original SuAsCo river plan found that the Sudbury River was actually nitrogen limited, which is very unusual for freshwater wetlands. He thought nitrogen monitoring in the Sudbury River could be interesting. Mr. Brown said that chloride is a big topic at OARS because the current literature is based on fish tolerance in terms of chloride. Newer research is finding that macro invertebrates and other creatures that aren't fish have a much lower tolerance for chloride than we thought. The slight increases we are seeing due to road salt and other issues are likely to have a larger effect on our rivers than previously thought. Ms. Henderson thought that discussing chemicals in the river water could be an agenda item for our next meeting.

8:21 pm Mr. Brown left the meeting. After a short discussion there was consensus that all the Partner Grants deserved funding. Ms. Hempel motioned to fully fund all five Partner Grants, Ms. Henderson seconded and the motion passed 8-0.

8:30 pm. Ms. Henderson moved to adjourn, upon hearing no opposition the meeting was adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan