



SuAsCo RSC Minutes for April 28, 2026

RSC Representatives present: Marlies Henderson, Chair (Billerica), Andrew Petit de Mange (NPS), Ron Chick (Framingham), Dan Cook (Carlisle), Jonathan DeKock (Carlisle-Alt), Christine Dugan (Lincoln-Alt), Carlene Hempel (Concord), , Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Laura Mattei (SVT), Brian Murphy (Bedford), Ross Tucker (Lincoln), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), Angela Taveira-Dick (Bedford-Alt)

Absent: Bill Fadden (Framingham-Alt), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt), Vacant (Commonwealth)

Also attending: Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Ellie Sablak

Welcome, vote-in new members, and March Meeting Minutes

7:01 pm Ms. Henderson opened the meeting. She said that Mr. Drobinski had stepped down as the RSC's Sudbury representative. The first agenda item was to vote in several new members of the RSC since that practice had been overlooked for some time. After some discussion it was agreed that a vote was not required by the RSC bylaws. Mr. Petit de Mange said that it was a common practice across other PWSR Councils and Mr. Tucker thought it was a welcoming approach.

7:09 pm Ms. Henderson said that she would like to entertain a motion to accept as members the RSC: Dan Cook, Jonathan DeKock, Carlene Hempel, Stephanie Koch, Brian Murphy, Andrew Petit de Mange, Angela Taveira-Dick, and Ross Tucker. Mr. Chick moved the motion, Ms. Hempel seconded. The motion passed 10-0.

7:11 pm Ms. Henderson asked if there were any comments or questions about the March Minutes besides her own which had been previously submitted. Several people moved to accept the Minutes as presented and the motion passed 10-0.

River Ambassador Update

7:14 pm Ms. Brown said that we are now at Level One drought status. She said that the Mass Ready Act, formerly the Environmental Bond Bill, has passed. It includes a drought management amendment allowing the state to declare an emergency and implement statewide regulations during drought conditions. There were over 300 amendments, including the authority for towns to restrict or ban anticoagulant rodenticide. Money is set aside for resiliency, such as culverts and dam removal. The bill still requires passage by the House and needs to be signed by the governor.

7:15 pm Ms. Brown said that Mr. DeKock had learned that the Route 225 bridge between Bedford and Carlisle will be fully replaced. She recommended that the RSC monitor this project and provide early input as well as comments to the expected Section 7 review.

7:16 pm Concord's Town Meeting began on April 27th. A conservation bylaw establishing a Conservation Fund was approved. The April 28th Concord Town Meeting vote on the Community Preservation Act was expected to include \$500,000 for the fund and \$240,000 for a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over the Assabet River. In reply to a question from Ms. Mattei, Ms. Brown said the new bylaw would give flexibility to the Conservation Commission so that if a property that is on the Open Space and Recreation Plan comes up for sale the

Conservation Commission, after consulting with the Select Board and others, will not have to wait for Town Meeting to approve use of the \$500,000.

7:18 pm Ms. Brown and Ms. Hempel are serving on the Warner's Pond Management Committee, which is developing an adaptive management plan that will include a conceptual pond model, a consultant RFP, and public outreach. Ms. Hempel is leading the public outreach planning. Lincoln's Town Meeting approved a Dark Skies zoning bylaw amendment and agreed to allow the Town to regulate and restrict the use of anticoagulant rodenticides. Wayland's upcoming Town Meeting will address the Heard Farm tree preservation project, herbicide treatment at Dudley Pond, and a management plan for Dudley Pond.

7:20 pm Ms. Brown said that a car had rolled into the Sudbury River near Sherman's Bridge in Wayland and was recovered. She noted that all emergency responders showed considerable care for river protection. Mr. Sciacca added that the car had floated downstream about 200 feet and that the town had oil booms available and ready to deploy, although they weren't needed. Ms. Brown said Wayland has received \$1.4 million from FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to rehabilitate the Snake Brook dam which impounds water along Snake Brook to form the Old Wayland Reservoir. The project includes stone wall renovation, gatehouse repairs, and spillway upgrades. Sudbury's upcoming Town Meeting will consider water chestnut removal and herbicide treatment at Hop Brook; it will also consider spending \$270,000 to improve accessibility at Hop Brook Marsh Conservation Land and the SVT-owned Memorial Forest property through a connection to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

Website Update

7:39 pm Ms. Sablak presented an overview of the updated RSC website. Key updates include a new banner featuring a drone photograph of the Sudbury River taken in Wayland, updated links and content throughout all sub-pages, a new photo gallery for the RiverFest page, a restored dam removal sub-page (which was previously hidden) featuring relevant content on Warner's Pond and the Talbot Mills Dam, updated Wild and Scenic Rivers information reflecting 226 designated rivers nationwide as of 2026, and an active land acknowledgment statement page. Ms. Sablak said the RSC membership page would be kept current as new members are added, and that meeting agendas and approved Minutes are organized by year on the website. Ms. Brown's monthly Ambassador reports are always added. Ms. Sablak said that the Contact Form destination is currently unclear; she will investigate that issue with Monty. Mr. Petit de Mange said that if the form still routes to Emma Lord it should be redirected to him. Mr. Chick wondered if anyone who accessed our website through their phone could see the web page translated into their native language. Ms. Sablak said that Monty did test that feature using Spanish and it worked. She thought other languages would take longer to load.

Community Grants Discussion

7:57 pm Mr. Chick said he had spoken with Mr. Petit de Mange about the approximately \$90,000 in rollover funds which need to be allocated. He suggested setting up a community grant opportunity for each of the eight RSC member communities in which they would be able to apply for \$10,000 in community grant money. Mr. Petit de Mange commented that Mr. Chick's idea was that these grants would generate more interest in community grants, and that there is a role for RSC representatives in this plan. He informed the Council that a full accounting of available funds, including what remains through October and what begins in the new fiscal year, should be available from SVT in May. Several members appreciated Mr. Chick's point that increasing the amount of funding would also increase enthusiasm in member communities for both applying for the grants and advertising them.

Small Grants Funding

8:09 pm Ms. Brown reviewed the Council's procurement policy, which requires open competition for grants over \$10,000, while amounts between \$1,000 and \$10,000 may be approved by the RSC. Requests under \$500 are handled informally without needing a vote. She said that an annual Zoom subscription could be considered since there have been problems using OARS' Zoom account for our monthly meetings.

8:10 pm Ms. Brown said that Julia Khorana was asking for \$350 to support her annual solstice celebration at the Old North Bridge. The event will include music, crafts, and seasonal activities. The total event funding is about \$800. Ms. Khorana has received grants from the Mass Cultural Council and the Appalachian Mountain Club. She is requesting \$350 from the RSC for music and craft supplies.

8:11 pm Mr. Cook said that he and Mr. DeKock have been coordinating an educational talk on dam removal in Carlisle, focusing on two dams at the cranberry bog, one of which is deteriorating. They would like to build community support for an eventual dam removal. The proposed speaker, Nick Nelson, is a fluvial geomorphologist from Cambridge with experience in dam removal and river restoration. The talk is tentatively scheduled for June and will be promoted at Sustainability Day, Old Home Day, and other community events, with a hybrid in-person/online format. The estimated cost is \$350 for advertising plus an honorarium for the speaker.

8:14 pm Ms. Brown proposed a RSC group membership to the River Management Society, a national organization to which many other Wild & Scenic partners already belong. The cost is \$300. Benefits include access to training webinars, including an upcoming Wild & Scenic 101 session on April 29th and a Section 7 Determinations training on May 6th. The membership is for 8 people. Those individuals can change for each training session.

8:19 pm The Council agreed informally to fund these small asks. There were no objections.

River Ambassador contract renewal

8:21 pm Ms. Henderson opened a discussion on Ms. Brown's contract renewal and noted that the contract had been circulated by email before the meeting. Mr. Petit de Mange said that the budget for this position had already been approved and did not need a vote. He explained that holding a vote on the contract, despite the expenditure already being authorized, was consistent with past practice.

8:23 pm Mr. Chick moved to renew the contract, Ms. Hempel seconded and the vote passed 9-0.

Community Updates

8:23 pm Ms. Henderson reminded all representatives to check river crossing signs in their towns and report to Ms. Brown on whether signs were present and what their condition was. She will track them in a spreadsheet.

8:25 pm Ms. Henderson said that as a member of Billerica's Historic Districts Commission (HDC) she is now a party in the litigation of the removal of the Talbot Mills dam and is therefore limited in what she can share publicly. She said the public record shows that the case is in active litigation and that the Select Board voted in November not to defend the Historic Districts Commission's denial. On March 12th the HDC was served with a lawsuit by the dam's owner and did not respond for a long time. On April 21st two lawyers were added to the HDC, which adds an accumulating legal cost to taxpayers. She said that the Lowell indigenous consultation was deferred for follow-up offline with Mr. Petit de Mange.

8:31 pm Ms. Brown said that the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs has assigned an undersecretary to appoint a representative from an appropriate state agency (DER, Fish & Wildlife, or DCR) for each of Massachusetts' four Partner Wild and Scenic rivers, or potentially one person will cover all four groups. Mr. Petit de Mange will follow up on this if it is not resolved by the next meeting.

8:33 pm Mr. Chick reported that the Framingham Mayor's Office has requested an invitation list for two upcoming ceremonies: a tentative event on May 14th at 4:00 PM, and a fall grand opening ceremony upon completion of the middle section of the Getchell Trail boardwalk, which should be completed by the end of summer. Mr. Chick made presentations on the boardwalk to Framingham's Council on Aging and its Disability Commission. The Disability Commission Chair toured the trail and is interested in placing an accessible picnic table at the first observation platform. Mr. Chick and Ms. Brown briefly discussed signage placement at the Trail.

8: 35 pm Ms. Brown said that there is no record yet of a Notice of Intent application for Sherman's Bridge. Mr. Murphy asked what the RSC could formally request when the Route 225 bridge project reaches the input stage. Ms. Henderson recalled that for the Route 3 bridge, the Council successfully requested decorative elements, and that for Route 4, boat access was requested by the Army Corps of Engineers but ultimately fell through due to inaction by MassDOT and Billerica.

8:39 pm Mr. Cook and Mr. Murphy thought the RSC should provide a clear, organized statement of priorities and requests for when it needs to comment on bridge and other infrastructure projects. Ms. Brown noted that Mr. Petit de Mange will write the official Section 7 letter when the time comes, and that participating in public outreach meetings, as was done for Sherman's Bridge, has been an effective way to influence the process. Ms. Henderson said that she would email Mr. Petit de Mange asking what the formal process is for the Route 225 bridge and how the Council can be the most proactive.

Officer Elections and Roles

8:41 pm Ms. Henderson announced that nominations for Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer will be held at next month's meeting and encouraged members to consider running. Elissa thanked Ms. Henderson for her continued service and expressed hoped that others would step into leadership roles. Mr. Tucker suggested sending an email to the full membership explaining the election process, including who currently holds each seat, whether they intend to stay, and how to put one's name forward so that newer members are not navigating this for the first time during the meeting itself. Ms. Henderson and others agreed that this was a good idea. She noted that the bylaws specify a two-year limit for officer positions, but acknowledged that in practice, some officers have served longer with the Council's approval.

8:47 pm Mr. Cook moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Chick seconded and the motion passed 9-0.