

SuAsCo RSC Minutes for May 27, 2025

RSC Representatives present: Marlies Henderson, Chair (Billerica), Emma Lord (NPS), Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Matt Brown (OARS), Ron Chick (Framingham), Dan Cook (Carlisle), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Brian Murphy (Bedford-Alt), Tom Sciacca (Wayland)

RSC Representatives absent: John Drobinski (Sudbury), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Laura Mattei (SVT), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt)

Welcome and March Minutes

7:00 pm Ms. Henderson opened the meeting. She asked for a motion to approve the April Minutes. They were approved unanimously.

Recap from PWSR Partners Meeting

7:02 pm Ms. Lord said that the May 14th PWSR meeting was attended by 81 people. Staff changes and retirements were discussed. Jamie Fosburgh announced his retirement. It was recommended during that meeting that all invoices that could be paid should be paid as soon as possible due to uncertainty concerning the federal budget. She has submitted our anticipated \$210,000 budget for the coming year. Congress has not yet agreed on a budget for next year so we do not know what our budget will be. Ms. Henderson asked about the 5-year funding cycle from the NPS. Ms. Lord said that ours will end in April 2027. Mr. Sciacca spoke highly of Mr. Fosburgh's contribution to the design of the Route 3 bridge.

Partner and Community Grant Payments

7:20 pm Ms. Lord said that OARS had submitted its Partner Grant Report and invoice. She asked if there were questions for Mr. Brown. Mr. Sciacca wondered about a finding in OARS' Report of increasing nitrate discharges from wastewater treatment plants that confirmed the plants are a major chloride source. Mr. Brown said that OARS is considering further sampling and analysis of that. Mr. Sciacca moved to accept OARS' invoice and report, Mr. Cook seconded and the motion passed 8-0 with one abstention. Ms. Lord motioned to approve payment of the outstanding Partner and Community grants, Mr. Cook seconded and the motion passed 9-0.

River Ambassador Report

7:29 pm Ms. Brown spoke about the work she did as River Ambassador over the past month. She worked with OARS on their Strategic Plan. She attended the NECKRA race that OARS ran in Bedford. She said the race was a huge success and that she was able to talk to people there about the SuAsCo. She was invited to speak at Concord's library staff day along with OARS, the Concord Conservation Trust and Delia Kaye from the Concord Department of Natural Resources. The staff was excited about the maps and information. They have set up display stands with river information at the main library and the Fowler branch. There are Junior River Ranger booklets at the Children's rooms. She restocked river maps and removed trash at the boat ramps. She joined garlic mustard removal efforts on the Sudbury and Concord Rivers. She visited Centennial Dam in Lowell as part of their fish monitoring effort. She has not seen any fish yet. She worked with OARS on bacteria monitoring.

7:34 pm The MCI Advisory Board is working on a recommendation to the Select Board and then to the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance which actually owns the prison property. That recommendation does mention river access and recreation. The wastewater treatment plant dates back to

about 1975 and is still functioning. Concord would like to take it over. If the Town accepts it as is, the permit can be transferred. If the Town wants to make changes it will trigger changes to the permit. The RSC should keep an eye on what the plant discharges, especially phosphorus.

7:36 pm The Warner's Pond Task Force voted to recommend not doing anything about the dam except to implement a recurring management plan. There will be a final vote on this when their consultant produces a more concrete, recurring plan. A home rule petition to ban Second Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides (SGARs) will be voted on at Concord's Town Meeting. There will be a warrant article to fund a stormwater fund at \$100 per parcel, with that money going to help fund Concord's stormwater improvements. A Community Preservation Committee grant to make improvements to Gerow Park will be voted on.

7:38 pm Ms. Brown shared a photo of a sun shirt with RSC's logo and the words "River Ambassador" which she created using Concord Library's makerspace. This sublimation process only works on polyester T-shirts. If RSC Reps are interested in branded apparel, they should get in touch with her.

7:39 pm Ms. Brown said that Robert Thorson's talk for Concord 250 attracted 20 people at the library, 30 via Zoom and about 70 downloads on YouTube. Ms. Brown will give a talk on water quality and pollution impacts to Concord's Climate Action Committee using OARS' data as well as PFAS and Mercury data from other sources. Julia Khorana is including the RSC in a Concord250 paddling event at the Old Manse on the solstice, which is June 21. Ms. Brown has agreed to do monthly river walks for the Concord Library. She is considering either Great Meadows or Brewster's Woods for the first one.

7:45 pm Mr. Chick asked if the possibility of migratory fish, such as herring, finding their way to Warner's Pond had been discussed during the Warner Pond meetings. Ms. Brown said there was extensive discussion about herring and a fish passage. Fish passage is still possible. A rough estimate is that it would cost one million dollars for that. This could be taken up again after the Talbot Mill dam comes down. A discussion followed on how likely it was that taking down the Warner's Pond dam could be passed at some future time.

RSC Website Content Update

7:44 pm Ms. Lord said that Monty was working on updates to the RSC website. She and Ms. Brown have discussed what content could be updated. Ellie Sablak, our Seasonal River Ambassador for two seasons, is willing to work on the website and do some outreach and education. Ms. Henderson had some ideas for changes to the website which included adding the interactive, virtual RiverFest which is timeless and with which you can look 365 degrees gyroscopically at many points along the river in Billerica.

Outreach and Communications

8:00 Ms. Henderson asked if anyone had a community or Partner update. Mr. Brown said that he appreciated the RSC moving its June meeting to accommodate OARS' annual meeting on June 24 in Stow. OARS is partnering with Framingham Parks and Recreation on a May 29th River Rat paddle. People are signing up for OARS' 86-mile challenge. OARS is looking into possible media interest in one person's attempt to paddle the entire 86 miles of the river in 48 hours. If there is media coverage then OARS will have talking points about river connectivity at the Talbot Mill dam and about wayfinding and educational signage installed with NPS funding at the Getchell Trail where the paddler will turn around on the second day.

8:04 pm Ms. Henderson said Billerica's Board of Health, its Conservation Commission, and its Historic Districts Commission will all discuss the Talbot Mill dam in their May meetings. The Historic Districts Commission may deny the project. Mr. Brown said that the Project Team would appeal that decision to the Massachusetts Historical Commission by using a hardship argument.

8:10 pm Mr. Chick said that Framingham's City Council approved a CPC grant for design and permitting of the middle sections of the Carol Getchell Trail for \$105,000.

8:12 pm Ms. Henderson said that the articles to ban SGARs in Billerica passed. One was a petition to the Court and one was a town-wide ban for it not to be used by the municipality. Mr. Chick asked if there is a

presentation that he could share in Framingham. Ms. Brown recommended two women from Concord who have been active on this topic and they have a stellar presentation. Ms. Henderson recommended a video from Mass Audubon that she would try to share with the group later.

8:14 pm Mr. Sciacca thought that some RSC river crossing signs could need replacement. Ms. Henderson suggested that the RSC create a spreadsheet where town representatives noted any needed replacements.

8:19 pm Ms. Brown said comments were made in the evening's chat about people wanting to order RSC branded sweatshirts or T-shirts. She said if there was money in the budget for swag she would investigate and price of sweatshirt material and hats.

8:20 pm Ms. Dugan asked Mr. Brown if he could speak more about the Bedford boat race and about the status of OARS' TerraCorps staff. He said the race included 60 participants and a lot of different categories. OARS would like to have one or two races a year. He said the Executive Order concerning TerraCorps is being litigated. TerraCorps itself was able to secure funding to pay for all their service members through the duration of this year's service, which is the end of July for OARS.

8:22 pm Mr. Chick asked for more information on OARS' upcoming Framingham paddle. Mr. Brown said that the canoes will be provided by PaddleBoston. Kellogg Park is one of the locations selected by OARS' recreation activity team. This event is listed on Framingham's Park and Recreation website.

8:25 pm _ Mr. Chick motioned to adjourn, Mr. Cook seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

[Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan](#)