

SuAsCo RSC Minutes for June 17, 2025

RSC Representatives present: Marlies Henderson, Chair (Billerica), Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Matt Brown (OARS), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Laura Mattei (SVT), Brian Murphy (Bedford-Alt), Tom Sciacca (Wayland)

RSC Representatives absent: Ron Chick (Framingham), Dan Cook (Carlisle), John Drobinski (Sudbury), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Emma Lord (NPS), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt)

7:06 pm **Welcome and May Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Henderson opened the meeting. She said that Ellie Sablak has started working a few hours a week on social media for the RSC as well as coordinating with Monty on website updates. She will continue to work with us during the summer season. Ms. Henderson asked for a motion to pass the May Minutes. Mr. Sciacca motioned to approve, Mr. Brown seconded and the motion passed 7-0.

7:12 pm **River Ambassador Report**

Ms. Brown said that she continued to work with OARS' Policy and Advocacy Subcommittee on its Strategic Plan Update. That piece is nearly done. OARS will work with their consultant to draft the final Strategic Management Plan. She met with Concord's Stormwater Engineer to review the Town's reports on Concord's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System. She learned more about what other towns are doing to reduce the impact of stormwater on our rivers. She has done some WQ monitoring with OARS. She was assigned an area in downtown Maynard where there appears to be some contribution of sewage into the Assabet River. There is a targeted study to find where that sewage is coming from. Ms. Brown also gave a presentation to the Concord Climate Action Network on water quality in the Concord River.

7:16 pm Ms. Brown shared a table on the Concord reaches from Nyanza's 5-Year Mercury in Fish Tissue Update. Mercury concentrations ranged from .5 to 1.2. The EPA's remediation goal is .48. We are still seeing impacts from Nyanza on mercury in fish tissue. The complete report looks at the watershed and the Sudbury River, all the way to Egg Rock, which is the final extent of contamination from the mercury. She said that she tried to circulate the report electronically to Council members but it is too large. Ms. Lord will circulate the introduction and conclusions when she receives the report. From now on the Nyanza mercury updates for fish tissue will be published every 10 years.

7:22 pm Mr. Sciacca said that about 15 years ago when the EPA investigated the effects of Nyanza they looked at the wide flood plain in Wayland. The EPA thought that roughly half of the mercury they were detecting in the river in Wayland was from Nyanza and about half was a result of airborne deposition of mercury from the coal fired power plants in the Ohio Valley.

7:26 pm **Wayland Cell Tower Balloon Test**

Verizon has proposed installing a cell tower at the Wayland Rod and Gun Club. The company agreed to a balloon test to determine if the cell tower would be visible from the Sudbury River. Mr. Sciacca and Ms. Brown attended that test. They watched from view points including Stone Bridge and Hot Dog bridge on the aqueduct as the balloon was raised 127 feet in the air. It was not visible from either bridge.

7:27 pm Ms. Brown reminded the Council that the RSC is co-branding with local groups this summer instead of organizing RiverFest. When the Concord Land Conservation Trust asked the RSC to co-sponsor a walk in

Wright Woods, which abuts Well Meadow and Fairhaven Bay, Ms. Brown attended. She gave a short introduction to the SuAsCo and spoke about that section of the WSR. There were about 30 participants. She then said that Concord's Warner's Pond Subcommittee's recommendation is to create an adaptive management plan. They will present a recommendation to Concord's Natural Resource Commission (NRC) that a new committee should be created and that a consultant should be hired to determine a series of specific actions to control the invasive species in the pond and manage the pond for the future. The NRC will then decide whether to endorse this recommendation. The Select Board would appoint new committee members and money would have to be provided for the work. This recommendation does not appear to be allowable under the Community Preservation Committee. The Select Board would have to treat this plan as a line item for the NRC. She said that funding for the plan is uncertain.

7:30 pm Ms. Brown ordered some hats and mugs with the RSC logo. She cannot make a large number of sweatshirts at Concord's makerspace, but she would take individual orders from RSC representatives. She said that she had a successful tabling event at the Acton-Boxboro farmers market where she talked to lots of people, including state Sen. Jamie Eldridge, about our rivers. She has asked for a table at the Billerica, Wayland, Carlisle and Framingham farmers markets and at Concord's Ag Day.

7:35 pm Ms. Brown said that Julia Khorana is organizing an event at the Old Manse for June 21st and has included Ms. Brown in the planning. There will be a picnic, floats, crafts and games with participation from Musketaquid and Art for All. It was not possible to organize an evening paddle. Ms. Brown said that she will be leading a walk at Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge for Concord's Fowler library. Participants will have read the book "Great Meadows" ahead of time and will discuss it on that walk. Ms. Brown will talk about the history of Great Meadows and its relationship to our scenic river. She may lead another Fowler walk at Brewster Woods in the fall. Looking ahead, she expects to join several water chestnut pulls on the Sudbury and Concord Rivers and one at Greenough Pond in Carlisle.

RSC Financial Report and Potential Expenditures

7:41 pm Ms. Brown said that the RSC has a 5-year contract with the federal government to receive funding of \$210,000 for each year of the contract. The RSC does not spend all that money every year. Any unspent money can be rolled over to the next year. We currently have \$101,000 that needs to be spent before our contract expires in August 2027. This money has no restrictions. Ms. Henderson asked for suggestions on how we could best spend that \$101,000. Mr. Sciacca thought that we could use it for the Talbot Mill dam removal if federal money that we expected to receive is withheld by the current administration. Mr. Brown said that an immediate need could be using those funds to appeal Billerica's Historical Commission decision not to approve the dam removal. That No vote could potentially delay the permitting and design stage for up to a year. It could also involve legal fees. Ms. Henderson suggested that we offer to match what the dam owner spends on this. Mr. Brown said that the dam removal project could also receive money if the Dam and Seawall Grant proposal is approved. He does like the idea of spending RSC money on the dam removal appeal because there is an opportunity to recoup legal fees if we win the appeal. Ms. Henderson said she would check to be sure that this is an appropriate use of our funds. Ms. Brown said we could also consider our lack of data on pharmaceuticals and PFAS in the water as a study subject. Mr. Brown suggested opening a special RFP for this new funding which would make the process more fair and transparent. Ms. Brown thought we could put out an announcement to other organizations that do water quality monitoring.

Updates and Other

7:56 pm Mr. Sciacca said that Wayland just opened its new Council on Aging/Community Building. There is a display area inside that is currently about Native Americans. That display space is meant to be a rotating exhibit. He said that if anyone had the creative ability to create a display on the Wild and Scenic River it would very likely be accepted because the building itself is located on a peninsula which juts into the river.

8:04 pm Mr. Murphy said that FEMA has recently updated its data for some floodplains in Bedford. Ms. Henderson noted that there is a new MEPA filing for the Hanscom AFB expansion project that the RSC will have to comment on.

8:09 pm Mr. Brown said it is a very busy time for OARS. They have done their first water quality sampling event of the season. They trained more staff and volunteers for the WQ monitoring. OARS worked on its second water chestnut pull of the season. There will be several more of these, including in Carlisle and Sudbury. He spoke about an individual who will attempt to complete OARS' 86-Mile Challenge in 48 hours to raise awareness and funds for OARS and river connectivity. Ms. Henderson has arranged for a media opportunity at the Talbot Mill dam. The River Rats paddles have started. OARS hopes to run one from Ice House Landing. There will be roughly one paddle per week for the rest of the summer.

8:11 pm AmeriCorps won its first legal hurdle and is hiring back some staff. Their funding will be low. They will not take any new applications. It is possible that existing AmeriCorps partners will be able to hire service members for the 2025-2026 cycle. OARS was awarded a grant for expanding some of its bacteria monitoring over the next three years. Those locations may include tributaries in Lowell, Maynard, and Stowe.

8:16 pm Ms. Henderson sowed milkweed in the improved parking lot area at Great Meadows in Billerica where she and other volunteers recently worked. She is waiting on a Weed Wrench to be provided from Billerica's Conservation Commission to help with pulling Glossy Buckthorn.

8:18 pm Ms. Brown said that Concord's Assistant Natural Resources Director has moved on to a different position and their Land Steward is currently serving in the National Guard. The NRC has been reduced to one staff member. Due to financial constraints there are no interviews scheduled yet to fill the Assistant Director position. Ms. Brown is not sure if it is appropriate for the RSC to comment on the staffing shortage but as a Concord resident she will write a letter to the Select Board expressing her opinion that this situation is untenable. One person alone cannot handle permitting, land stewardship activities along the river and other work such as developing a trail along the Assabet River Bluff. Ms. Brown is writing up Orders of Condition as a volunteer. Ms. Henderson said she would talk to Ms. Lord about writing a letter to the Select Board. Mr. Sciacca asked if Concord could advertise for a temporary contractor. Ms. Brown said that Ms. Kaye did put out a request for a 6-month contractor to help with wetlands delineation and is reviewing those applications.

8:22 pm Mr. Sciacca motioned to adjourn, Ms. Mattei seconded and the motion passed 7-0.