

Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers Wild and Scenic Committee Minutes
Thursday, October 15, 2020 – Berkshire Town Hall

Attendees: Jacques Couture, Carol Hickey, John Little, Cynthia Scott, Wendy Scott, Dan Seeley, Ari Lattanzi, and Lindsey Wight attended in person; Russ Ford, Jim MacCartney, and Jeff Parsons joined via Zoom.

Introductions; call to order: Meeting called to order at 6:33pm; we introduced ourselves, and welcomed Ari again.

Review of the September minutes: Thanks to those who could attend the Committee Paddle in September – we enjoyed a lovely ~2 mile paddle upstream from the Chase Dam at River Rd in Troy. JL motioned to accept the minutes from the September meeting; WS seconded; minutes were approved as written.

River Community Grants/Storm Impacts Grants: The Franklin County NRCO produced the second edition of the Nature Guide to the Richford Playground, which was created with participants in the Notch Day Camp during the grant project “Stream Scientists 2.0”. The Guide is available online and in the local libraries. Lindsey will send the PDF to the Committee.

Westfield removed sediment from a field on Loop Rd and stabilized an access road bank that had been eroding into the river. They also replaced a culvert on Cemetery Rd (Storm Impacts Grant), and will use the extra funds we granted for our Storm Impact towns to help fund another culvert project on Balance Rock Rd.

Other Projects: MRBA received a grant to do design work for Longley Bridge Rd, just downstream of the work that the town is undertaking. UMATR is providing some match for this project – the design work should happen this winter; MRBA will be seeking construction funds.

Administrative: We have begun a new fiscal year (FY21). Lindsey gave an overview of the budget and asked if we should prioritize one or another of our ORVs for this year’s River Community Grants. Extra points in the metric – weighted for cultural? It would be good to give ideas/example projects: Lindsey will request this as homework for the November meeting.

Along these lines: JP has been exploring the underwater world of the river in Lowell; finding old logging booms and chains and sawblades – signs of some of our cultural history; it would be neat to explore this more (a likely grant application). Richford is also rich in logging history.

JP also suggested offering some grant funds for Japanese knotweed eradication on private lands. With the MRBA, JP mapped knotweed in the upper watershed (W&S towns) and has found: lots of knotweed after the river returns from Canada, mostly along the entire Trout, but Troy and Westfield are doing well – would be nice to target isolated spots of knotweed, to get landowners, conservation groups/commissions to take on controlling the knotweed – could we promote knotweed control with the River Community Grants (allocate a couple thousand for these projects?), offer landowner stipends so they can purchase materials like metal mesh, black plastic, or herbicide injection?

MRBA will apply for a grant to do spread prevention: getting volunteers out to assess reaches, doing some trials of different (non-chemical) control methods (mesh, carpet/plastic*, intensive grazing, cryogenics), and doing education and outreach. Two event ideas: early spring – cut back the stalks and harvest for making ice cream, then later (fall?) – bonfire with dried knotweed, make knotweed paper. UMATR would be a great partner in this effort – should we alter the E&O funds that we had earmarked for test strips (which we’re realizing may be ineffective in a school setting) to do more knotweed control and outreach, and possible stipends? Committee

says yes, but with caveats: needs to be simple and clear for landowners to apply (and implement), and outreach should include our Canadian partners. The Committee is also willing to write a LOS for the MRBA's grant application.

*landfill liner is strong stuff – may work better than gardening plastic. Also, the Lamprey river did an eradication project in 2008 (there's a report on their website) and has ongoing control efforts. Injection of herbicide discussion – Jeff will share a scientific article about this method.

Ari has been doing educational programming with schools using the rainfall simulator and the test strips – she reports the ineffectiveness of these as a classroom tool. DIY turbidity tubes may be a more engaging classroom tool. Temperature monitoring may be better (teaching that temp is important to fish), and then stream walks – assessing what we see (erosion, invasives, etc.); these may work best for homeschoolers. She is seeking ideas for winter programming, so get in touch if you have any thoughts!

Looking Ahead: Ari has been taking an Abenaki language class. It would be good to highlight Abenaki place names and animals along our rivers. She also went to an Indigenous People's Day celebration and got contact info for several tribal members in the area. She will be talking with them to identify what opportunities may be out there for collaborations and possible land acknowledgements. Ideas: Circle of Courage (traditional drumming) could travel to schools; could do a virtual program? Presentation of Life On The River – what was that like? WS says there are some materials out there that focus on this. Land acknowledgements at events; have the tribe be a partner in our outreach. Canoe trips that involve regional groups of Abenaki – cultural representatives? Important that we reach out to the tribe to see what they would like to do; establish and maintain a relationship. Also: we should be sure to send these groups our River Community Grants information (highlighting that they must be used in our region).

Events: Ari has also been compiling event ideas. Multiple snowshoe events (outdoors, small groups, face coverings): wildlife tracking, trees identification, other. Also winter water quality testing? Spring: clean-ups and naturalist paddles that will highlight/introduce using iNaturalist to explore your world. Summer: Solstice On The River Challenge? Multiple events, encourage people to use the river as much as possible/in as many ways on the Sunday of Summer Solstice? It may be time to morph the Gathering – perhaps it could be wrapped into this Challenge? Would be good to do a visioning session for this – either as full Ctte, or perhaps a subctte? Ari also suggested partnering with the VNRC for the Wild & Scenic Film festival as a way to bring attention to our Wild & Scenic Rivers - maybe we could help sponsor the event.

Smaller summer events could include: a full moon paddle, our youth paddle trips, a fishing derby? Also the aforementioned knotweed events. Let's go over these more during the November meeting and set some dates.

Upcoming: River community Grants and Storm Impacts Grants: Lindsey will develop drafts for the coming round and send them out in advance of the meeting; we will finalize them at our November meeting.

Other/Public Comment: JP shared a video of spawning brook trout that he took today! He also has some lovely photos that we are welcome to use for UMATR purposes.

Upcoming meetings: November 19 at the Westfield Community Center?

Wrap up and Adjourn: DS motioned; CS seconded; meeting adjourned at 8:08pm.