



MT. ASCUTNEY REGION RIVER SUBCOMMITTEE Minutes -November 9, 2009

PRESENT: Ted Putnam, Jan Lambert, Charlestown; Kurt Staudter, Springfield; Tom Hernon, Rockingham; Cordie Merritt, Hartland; Adair Mulligan, CRJC

ABSENT: Windsor, Weathersfield, Cornish, Claremont

PUBLIC: John Broker-Campbell, Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission; Kevin McCaffery, Stantec

1. Housekeeping - Cordie Merritt was warmly welcomed as the new representative of Hartland; a Weathersfield planning commission member has expressed interest; Windsor has been asked for a representative to replace Susan Anthony. Minutes of the meeting of Sept. 29 were accepted. Water Resources Plan is being published in color by Prospect Communications in Chesterfield with ARRA funds. Connecticut River Atlas now available: 30% discount extended to subcommittee members. Councilor Ray Burton and CRJC hosted a tour for Governors Lynch and Douglas of both sides of the river valley from Lancaster to Colebrook on October 7, to highlight scenic aspects and tourism based on natural resources. Legislators from both states, some executive councilors, and media participated. Adair presented Ted and Kurt, the subcommittee's co-chairs, with DES T-shirts celebrating the 20th year of the NH Rivers Program.
2. Commissary Brook - CRJC has attempted to apply for funds to conduct an engineering study to see how to restore this major pollution source, but has been unable to get landowner permission. The Act 250 permit for the site did carry a requirement to allow access for such purposes. (After the meeting, it was learned that the permit had expired on October 1). VT DEC water quality monitoring has turned up contamination by metals. Members are hopeful that something can be done. The landowner is aware of the problem but has not proposed a solution.
3. EPA Tri-State Watershed Initiative and water quality monitoring - Cordie was among a group of volunteers who sampled the river between Wilder, Lebanon, Cornish, and Weathersfield in 2008 and 2009. This area had very few bacteria violations, in stark contrast to Massachusetts, where violations were routine. Website is www.cesd.umass.edu/twi/index.html. Southern Windsor County RPC is doing an innovative stormwater rebate program as part of this initiative.
4. Connecticut River Byway -Federal Byway funds were awarded to place conservation and historic preservation easements on the Mastlands property that is associated with the Cornish Art Colony near Saint-Gaudens, and also for protection of a parcel on the southeast slope of Mt. Ascutney in Weathersfield.
5. Local issues/concerns - Kurt reported continued concern that the aging and deteriorating flash boards at the Bellows Falls Dam are not being repaired before winter, and that the condition of the facility is being neglected. Three bay's worth of flash boards have blown out, resulting in a geyser of water that can be seen from the NH side, and he is concerned that a larger section could blow out. A coffer dam needs to be built to allow replacement of the old flash boards. Ted observed that water level fluctuations seem more extreme in recent years, with a lot of sediment exposed on some days. Members were interested in independent monitoring of operations at the dam.
6. Vermont Basin Planning: John Broker-Campbell announced that the planning group for the Black and Ottauquechee Rivers (Basin 10) will meet on the third Tuesday of each month. Adair noted that members of other subcommittees have participated in these basin planning groups.
7. The New Connecticut River Water Resources Management Plan for the Mt. Ascutney region- Public presentation by Adair to an audience of approximately seven, hosted by the Springfield Library. The presentation was recorded for use by public access TV stations in the area and will be circulated. The presentation will be also available on CD for any members who wish to give it to a group in their own communities.