



HEADWATERS SUBCOMMITTEE Minutes -April 1, 2009

PRESENT: Bill Schomburg and Ken Hastings, Columbia; Bob Ward, Pittsburg; Kevin McKinnon, Colebrook; Tom Caron, Canaan; Marty Lomasney, Bloomfield; Brendan Whittaker and Adair Mulligan, CRJC
GUESTS: Dave Reilly, Columbia; Carole Bont, North Country Council; John Howe, Pittsburg
ABSENT: members from Northumberland, Lemington, Stratford, Stewartstown, Maidstone

1. Housekeeping - Minutes of the meeting of February 4 were approved on a motion by Bob seconded by Tom. CRJC is moving ahead with publication of the subcommittees' editions of the Water Resources Management Plan, thanks to a VT conservation license plate grant for the Headwaters and Riverbend sections, and a DES Water Quality Planning grant for the Upper Valley and two southern regions from federal economic stimulus funding. Plans will be published this summer. Unfortunately, there are no similar funds to publish the local recreation plan, although it is up on the web.
2. Update on river restoration projects - CRJC has recently won grants from both the NH Moose Plate program and the Tillotson Fund to help with restoration of the riverbank at the Colebrook Business Park, and will meet April 2 with town officials, North Country Council, and Dr. Field to organize the final grant. CRJC expects work on the project to begin as soon as water conditions permit. Ken hoped that sedimentation from construction would not affect 3/4 mile of brown trout spawning habitat below the RR car repair facility. FEMA hazard mitigation funds may also be available to help at the Northumberland Cemetery, and Dr. Field is assembling a design and will work with the town, CRJC, and DES to make progress.
3. US Army Corps of Engineers project: The Corps is working with The Nature Conservancy to create a hydraulic model of the Connecticut River. Adair asked for help identifying landowners in the areas they will need to survey so that they can contact landowners for permission. John Howe said that he has detailed survey data for the area. Carole recommended contacting the towns for tax map info.
4. Permit issues
 - a. Pittsburg: beach restoration on First Connecticut Lake - Bob said that this project is on TransCanada land (owns to 1640' elevation in this area) and that the company would not permit the project. DES did not notify the company about it. The company is now asking landowners around First Lake to put in a concrete block on their side of the property line and attach a floating dock. Agreed to write a letter emphasizing TransCanada ownership and need to consult company, on motion by Bill seconded by Tom.
 - b. RR creosote - As a result of subcommittee complaint, DES has worked with RR which has come up with a new way to treat the ties so they will not absorb excess creosote. This procedure will now benefit rivers all over the state. Bill said he is still getting local complaints about it, and there was a black line across the river ice all winter. He visited the site in March and found puddles of creosote on the ice. The site is just above the mouth of the Nulhegan, where Atlantic salmon are stocked. Adair will consult DES on what to do.
 - c. Final license conditions for Canaan Dam - 30 year license to be issued August 1. Company required to draw up management plans for recreation and riparian vegetation, and the subcommittee will be consulted. Will do a new portage trail with signage around the dam. Ken wants to participate; if takeout is close to where it is now, it would be okay to serve drift boats. Concern about parking for drift boat trailers and whether there is enough room in the right of way for the 1 ½ lane road for parking; otherwise a nearby area might be needed. Tom said that rowboats, canoes, kayaks, and small motor boats launch above the dam for fishing and exploring the Canaan Dam pool. Brendan pointed out problems at the Wyoming Dam portage and need for public toilet facilities in Guildhall, and asked whether similar facilities should be provided at the Canaan Dam, especially because the license will be for 30 years. Tom Caron will check with selectmen on their opinion. Need to be sure it is not an attractive nuisance.
 - d. Proposed hydroelectric development of Murphy Dam - 4 companies have applied to develop hydro at Murphy Dam. DES has asked FERC to allow the state to select the developer. Bob said he didn't know the time frame but that TransCanada's agreement with the state for use of water at Murphy goes until 2015. May be a good opportunity to request an alarm system for downstream landowners and communities; Bob said Tim Carney is still working on this. Will discuss again at next meeting.

5. Connecticut River Byway CRJC has hosted the Byway, an economic development initiative, for a number of years. Mission is to balance the promotion, preservation, enjoyment and stewardship of the valley. Roads on both sides of the river were designated by the states in 1998 and by the Federal Highway Administration in 2007 as a National Scenic Byway. The hope is draw attention of residents to remaining historic buildings, beautiful views, rail history, and farming heritage of the valley, among other “assets,” and give an economic reason to protect and preserve these features. Scenic Byway grants are available for land protection and historic building preservation.
 - a. Current CRJC activities: 15 heritage itineraries will be created, 10 for driving and 5 for bicycling, with printed guides and guides that can be downloaded from the web. Adair will check with members as they are being designed, and asked for comments on the byway web site, which will be substantially upgraded. CRJC is preparing information for visitor center staff to help them answer traveler questions and encourage responsible visitor behavior; Adair is drawing much material from the subcommittee’s recreation plan, including how to avoid spreading invasives. CRJC has a grant to purchase a video player for the Colebrook visitor center.
 - b. Viewed scenic inventory done for Lyme, Orford, Piermont, and Haverhill with a CRJC grant. Members thought such a map of the Headwaters area should be displayed at the Colebrook visitor center.
 - c. The regional planning commissions conducted an extensive study in 1998 of each byway town, inventorying tourism-related features and each town’s capacity for protecting byway assets. Discussion ensued about the condition of the byway roads in the area. Route 3 between W. Stewartstown and the steel bridge in Pittsburg needs to be entirely dug up and redone. There have been accidents there, and a guard rail is needed near the river. Carole said that North Country Council is doing a Route 3 corridor study in phases, and wants to give DOT an idea of what towns feel is weak. NCC is now working on the Whitefield to Stratford stretch. Part of the question is how to encourage economic development through road projects, such as in Stratford. Adair said that the byway itineraries could emphasize Stratford. Pricing is old and some projects have been proposed here for years. Brendan said that the largest non-interstate road rebuilding project in Vermont last year was on VT 102 as far as his driveway, and that the Bloomfield to Canaan stretch will be done this summer with economic stimulus funding.
 - d. Each town’s representative reported on current historic features and preservation needs. Adair will share the list with North Country Council.
6. Announcements and local issues/concerns
 - a. Bill asked about dock permits for the Groveton paddling event. Adair will send information.
 - b. Brendan raised the Plum Creek purchase of Essex Timber’s 85,000 acres of conserved lands in the Northeast Kingdom, noting they brought their own foresters to the region. Plum Creek’s timber contracts require a certain number of acres for timber growth, and is planning to develop much of its land in Maine, so has bought this conserved land. Company is now consulting with the state and Vermont Land Trust; Brendan expects that cutting will be heavier than under Essex and the company will likely purchase Lyme Timber land in Pittsburg/Clarksville too; announcement due May 15. Members approved a motion by Bob seconded by Bill to ask CRJC to send a letter of introduction to Plum Creek to point out that the company will have responsibility for water quality in the river’s headwaters and to inform them of the subcommittee’s existence, the recreation and water resources plans, and the new atlas.