



MT. ASCUTNEY REGION RIVER SUBCOMMITTEE

Minutes -April 7, 2009

PRESENT: Kurt Staudter, Springfield; Ted Putnam and Jan Lambert, Charlestown; Margaret Perry and Tom Herson, Rockingham; Susan Anthony, Windsor; Bob Woodman, Claremont; Nancy Franklin, Adair Mulligan, CRJC

ABSENT: Cornish, Weathersfield, Hartland

PUBLIC: Kay Carriere, Windsor

1. Housekeeping - Minutes of the meeting of February 10 were approved on a motion by Ted seconded by Jan. Adair gave Kurt a copy of the CD holding the recording of the meeting, for distribution through public access TV. 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 Mt. Ascutney region 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. Announcements and local issues/concerns
 - a. NH DES has begun to look at the issue of pharmaceuticals in surface waters and groundwater. Federal legislation about the issue is in Congress. Margaret said that her staff has now been told to mix medications with moist coffee grounds before disposal in the trash rather than flushing.
 - b. Kurt said that the new Exit 7 Park & Ride lot had been built with no apparent means to manage stormwater and has been moved very close to the riverbank by Vtrans. Adair will inquire.
 - c. Bellows Falls Dam - members observed shooting water coming out of the dam by the stanchion bays, and asked if the wood is deteriorating and should be repaired. Tom and Kurt reported that there are large changes at the dam, including replacement of three power transformers and addition of two new ones, plus footings for a new tower next to the river. Members asked why the Subcommittee had not been notified or consulted. Adair will inquire.
 - d. Route 12 from S. Charlestown to Walpole - Jan reported that NH DOT has asked for community involvement.
 - e. Commissioners' activities - Nancy reported that the Atlas will be published next month and that CRJC is raising funds to assist Colebrook with a major riverbank restoration. This will involve the first use of engineered log jams in NH.
3. Tri-State Connecticut River Targeted Watershed Initiative: water quality monitoring will take place from Memorial Day through September. Volunteers needed; mileage is compensated. Adair will send out more information. Training session at Sumner Falls on May 20.
4. Middle Connecticut River Important Bird Area - Adair reported on habitat conservation meeting for town officials on March 27. Kurt noted that he has seen much eagle activity this year, and Margaret said the eagles near her are building a nest again. Nancy noted that such predatory birds help control voles and fruit eating birds.
5. Connecticut River Byway
 - a. CRJC has hosted the Byway, an economic development initiative, for a number of years. Mission is to balance the promotion, preservation, and enjoyment 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.
 - b. 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; Adair is drawing much material from the subcommittee's recreation plan, such how to avoid spreading invasives.
 - c. Kay Carriere of the Scenic Byway Council reported that the Windsor welcome center will open in May and will host a farmer's market on Sundays.
 - d. Viewed scenic inventory done for Lyme, Orford, Piermont, and Haverhill by UVLSRPC with CRJC grant.
 - e. 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 with reports from each town's representative about current historic preservation and land protection needs. Major needs include how to keep local family-owned country stores like Plainfield's in business, and the closing of the Vilas Bridge between N. Walpole and Bellows Falls, even to pedestrians.