

CRJC Headwaters Subcommittee
Draft Minutes
September 13, 2012
Columbia Town Hall

Present:

Tom Caron, Canaan
Allen Coats, Stewartstown
Ken Hastings, Columbia
Kevin McKinnon, Colebrook
Ed Mellet, Northumberland
Gary Paquette, Stratford
Larry Rappaport, Colebrook
Bill Schomburg, Columbia
Tara Bamford, North Country Council, staff
Ben Copans, VANR, guest speaker
Mike Lynch, guest
Joe Daley, guest
Brendan Whittaker, CRJC

1. Housekeeping

Chairman Ed Mellet opened the meeting at 7:05 PM and everyone introduced themselves.

The meeting summary of April 24th was reviewed and accepted by all by motion of Hastings/McKinnon.

By motion of Schomburg/Paquette, all voted in favor of reelecting Ed Mellet as Chair.

By motion of Hastings/Schomburg, all voted in favor of Bill Schomburg to serve as Vice Chair.

2. Ben Copans, Watershed Coordinator for VANR Watershed Management Division, reported on the process for his agency's development of a plan for the Upper Connecticut River watershed. Ben displayed a map and handed out a draft list of priority issues. He explained that he is meeting with groups like the Headwaters LRS to gather information on issues and priorities as a first step in plan development.

Ben reported that E.coli data for much of the Connecticut River is ambiguous because levels vary dramatically with weather events. It is considered to be only a swimming hole issue. High levels of E.coli are considered to be an indicator of manure or human waste rather than wildlife. More sampling is needed before strategies can be implemented. Ken Hastings reported that sedimentation has impacted several tributaries in the northern portion of the watershed. Dianne Timmins' (NH Fish & Game)

study of the Upper Connecticut was suggested as a resource. Colebrook's sampling at and nearby the WWTF outfall was suggested as an additional data source.

Ben explained that phosphorous has had more attention in Vermont than nitrogen because of work on Lake Champlain; phosphorous is more of an issue in lakes than rivers. Phosphorous has not been a problem in Connecticut River reservoirs. Vermont is being asked to reduce nitrogen from WWTF to help clean up Long Island Sound, but there may be cheaper alternatives to achieve the reduction. More information is needed on how nitrogen moves. Brendan noted that most of the nitrogen is coming from lawns in Mass. and Conn; USDA has been working with farms to reduce nitrogen from manure up here.

Ben reported that the Vermont legislature directed ANR to put together a report on shorelines.

Regarding invasives, Ben reported that Didymo is in both the Connecticut and Passumpsic Rivers, but there is not yet any Eurasian milfoil documented in the Vermont portion of the Connecticut River watershed.

It was discussed that Trust for Public Lands is buying a floodplain property in Northumberland - 90 acres at the mouth of the Upper Ammonoosuc- and also another parcel on the Vermont side.

Other input provided included:

- BMP's need to address farms on tributaries, not just mainstem.
- Dennis Brook/Pond/Wheeler Stream should be considered for addition to high quality waters list.
- Dave Conant, a geology professor at Lyndon State College, mapped aquatic plants about 10 years ago in the River and on the islands. It was mentioned that license plate grants might be one source of funding for a follow-up inventory.

1. Housekeeping con't

The membership list was reviewed and inactive members discussed. Ed Mellet will keep working on Northumberland. The selectboard may put a notice in the paper. Pittsburg needs to replace Lisa Savard as she is moving in the spring. Tom Caron will talk to a fishing guide he knows. Bob Ward may be moving back to Dalton. Everyone was asked to keep Tara posted as they hear from and talk to inactive members and potential replacements. Larry Rappaport mentioned the importance of having a quorum to be effective.

3. Permit Reviews

Mike Lynch described his recycling facility which is in the permitting stage for the old North Stratford mill site - 77 Ayer Road. He explained that all of the activity will eventually be inside as the site gets cleaned up. It will include metal, paper (which will be baled there), plastic and rigid plastic. The 2 metal piles that are outside will be inside.

Mike said that water hasn't historically gone inside the building during floods, even during 78/79. The floor is 3-4 ft above the ground.

Related discussion took place regarding Mike Lynch as a potential Headwaters member, junk collecting on the islands which are not owned with the mill anymore, Mike's discussions with Beno Lamontage about potential funding to connect the mill to the railroad if there is interest in the future, and the high track fees that make trucking cheaper.

A wetlands permit application by NHDES for repair work on the Lake Francis boat ramp was reviewed. The work is planned for this fall when they do the drawdown. It was agreed that NH Fish and Game review will be adequate in addressing any concerns they would have.

A shoreland permit application by Durkis was also discussed. This is for expansion of a camp on Lake Francis. There were no concerns. The question was asked whether Transcanada should have been notified. It was clarified that the State of N.H. owns Lake Francis and the state owns and operates Murphy Dam, and that only the water rights are leased to Transcanada.

4. Updates

Tara reported that the next CRJC meeting will be in Pittsburg on Sept. 17. By consensus it was agreed that the creosote dripping from the railroad bridge in North Stratford is currently the highest priority issue for the Headwaters LRS to bring up at the meeting. Bill Schomburg reported that the oversaturated beams have been dripping creosote into the river for 4 years now. Both Bill and Ken Hastings have observed that the drip or seep increases in hot weather. Diapers were put on to catch the creosote but they fill up and leak and don't get changed. Creosote ties aren't used over the river anymore but these may be bridge beams rather than ties. NHDES Tracie Sales has been keeping Bill and staff informed on his communications with the NHDES enforcement division and with the St Lawrence & Atlantic RR. The RR representative reported that the diapers would cost \$40,000 to replace and replacing the ties would cost \$210,000 to \$250,000. By motion of Schomburg/Hastings it was voted to recommend that the ties be replaced as soon as possible. Bill Schomburg, Ed Mellet (if not working) and Larry Rappaport each said they plan to attend the CRJC meeting where this could be brought up. Sending a letter to NHDES, EPA and CRJC was discussed. Brendan cautioned about going to the top prematurely about this type of issue.

5. Other Business

It was discussed that the upcoming CRJC meeting includes a presentation by Bob Baker about the proposed Northern Pass transmission line. It was reported that in 2010 Headwaters voted to write in opposition to the transmission line now known as "Northern Pass." Larry Rappaport wrote the letter. Larry Rappaport also sponsored a bill

opposing use of eminent domain by private utilities. Larry reported that the “361 Commission” is studying the use of state rights of way for transmission lines. This would include abandoned rail lines and consider the possibility of burial. It was reported that with the use of new technology electrical lines could also be buried a few feet from the gas pipeline. By motion of Schomburg/Rappaport it was voted to reassert Headwaters LRS’s December 2010 position against Northern Pass as proposed.

Bill Schomburg updated the group on the rebar and spikes coming out of the old dam near Lyman Falls State Park. Some was pulled out with the help of NHDES, VANR and CRWC. They come out of the concrete as it deteriorates. Bill cautioned that a sign is needed to warn boaters of the danger ahead and indicating where to portage.

Brendan Whittaker brought up an issue regarding the easement for canoe loading near the mouth of the Nulhegan. A trash barrel was put there but no one seems to empty it. He is concerned that the sign that names all of the project partners including CRJC makes CRJC look responsible for the mess. The group concurred that there shouldn’t be a sign.

6. The next meeting was scheduled for December 13. Kevin offered to see if the Colebrook town office will be available.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15.

Respectfully submitted by Tara Bamford.