CRJC Begins a New Year

Fiscal Year 2013 has been an active one for the Connecticut River Joint Commissions (CRJC). CRJC has increased its membership and improved its engagement in issues that affect the Connecticut River and its watershed by:

- Working through its five local river advisory committees to update the regional recreation plans,
- Establishing a workgroup to follow and comment on proposed legislation in Vermont and New Hampshire that affects the watershed, and
- Establishing a workgroup to follow and comment on activities related to the relicensing of TransCanada’s Wilder, Bellows Falls and Vernon hydroelectric dams by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

This year Commission meetings offered a series of educational presentations:

- Coos County Forester Brendan Prusik spoke on the Upper Connecticut River Watershed Invasive Species Management Area.
- Bob Baker outlined the North Country’s response to the proposed Northern Pass Project.
- Mark Mattson of Normandeau Associates explained Vermont Yankee’s fisheries research.

The CRJC Executive Committee also met seven times during the fiscal year.

Regional Recreation Plans Updated

CRJC’s five Local River Subcommittees reviewed their 2008 Regional Recreation Management Plans, part of the Connecticut River Corridor Management Plan. Subcommittees updated the plans to reflect the progress that has been made in the past five years. The new Recreation Plans will be available as print publications and online via CRJC’s website: [http://www.crjc.org](http://www.crjc.org)
**Local River Subcommittee Activities**

Twenty-three new members were welcomed to CRJC’s five Local River Subcommittees this year.

**Headwaters**

The Headwaters Subcommittee met four times to review permits and discuss river-related issues and initiatives, such as bank erosion, water quality, recreation, and control of invasive species. In addition, a meeting was held with VANR’s Watershed Management Division to assist with the development of a plan for addressing priority issues in the Upper Connecticut River.

The Headwaters Subcommittee continued to press NHDES to resolve the problem of creosote dripping from a railway bridge in Columbia; the railroad ties were replaced in late summer 2013.

**Riverbend**

The Riverbend Subcommittee met four times. The Subcommittee assisted VANR’s Watershed Management Division with the identification of priority issues to be addressed in that agency’s plan for the Upper Connecticut River watershed.

The Subcommittee met with the Connecticut River Watershed Council’s new North Country River Steward about assistance available for landowners and others through that organization. Subcommittee members also attended workshops and public meetings dealing with stewardship of the River and its watershed.

**Upper Valley**

The Upper Valley Subcommittee held five meetings to review and comment on permits. Subcommittee members also attended public meetings related to the FERC relicensing of Wilder Dam and discussed local concerns.

The Subcommittee sponsored a riverbank erosion field trip on member John Mudge’s family property to view erosion and erosion control projects up close. Special thanks to Marc White of Orford, the Subcommittee’s long-serving Chair, retiring this year.

**Mt. Ascutney**

The Mt. Ascutney Subcommittee conducted five meetings to review permits and follow the FERC relicensing of Bellows Falls Dam.

The Subcommittee sponsored a well-attended educational workshop on septic system maintenance in April, with presentations by the Granite State Designers and Installers Association.

**Wantastiquet**

The Wantastiquet Subcommittee met four times. They welcomed several new members, reviewed permits and invited Bruce Lawrence to speak about the Brattleboro Wastewater Treatment Facility’s operations.

The Wantastiquet Subcommittee also followed the FERC relicensing of Vernon Dam and began preparations for a fall 2013 Source to Sea cleanup event, in partnership with Connecticut River Watershed Council.

**Public Outreach**

CRJC staff continued its periodic email newsletter to keep CRJC members, subcommittees, and the public informed of meetings, events and announcements. The publication also reaches those with a general interest in CRJC activities and the mailing list had over 200 subscribers as of June 30, 2013. This has been particularly useful for sharing information about the federal (FERC) relicensing of hydropower dams along the Connecticut River.
**CRJC Special Projects**

**NH Shoreland Standards Focus Group**
CRJC co-sponsored a focus group discussion in August with NH Rivers Council and the Mascoma River Local Advisory Committee to discuss how the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act could be improved to better protect rivers and tidal waters. The NH Legislature passed amendments to the law in the 2013 legislative session.

**Campsite Work Project at Fiddlehead Island**
CRJC partnered with Connecticut River Paddlers’ Trail, Vermont River Conservancy, Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust and Connecticut River Watershed Council to coordinate a volunteer work project to improve the campsite on Fiddlehead Island in September. Trash was removed as part of the Watershed Council’s annual Source to Sea Cleanup, and many campsite improvements were made, including a privy designed to float when floodwaters inundate the island. Special thanks to Noah Pollock for leading the volunteer project.

**Involvement with FERC Relicensing**
CRJC has been following and commenting on the federal relicensing of TransCanada’s hydroelectric facilities at Wilder, Bellows Falls and Vernon Dams. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s (FERC) integrated licensing process takes roughly five years and started in fall 2012. CRJC attended public meetings and stakeholder meetings to learn about and provide feedback on TransCanada’s proposed studies on the environmental resources affected by project operations.

On March 1, 2013, CRJC filed comments with FERC, raising issues of local concern and requesting a robust hydrological analysis that uses a watershed approach, LiDAR topographic data, and future precipitation events based on projections that take into account climate change. The comments are available on line at:


In June, CRJC established a workgroup of Commissioners and interested citizens to review and comment on revised study plans.

**Connecticut River Byway Way-finding Signs**
CRJC, with Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission acting as Project Manager, continued to work with Byway Waypoint Communities to install way-finding signs for travelers looking for information and points of interest. Waypoint Communities serve as welcome centers in Brattleboro, Hartford, Rockingham, St. Johnsbury, Wells River, Windsor, VT and Claremont, Colebrook, Haverhill and Lancaster, NH. The project is expected to be completed in FY2014. Support for this project came from the FHWA National Scenic Byway Discretionary Grant Program through VT Agency of Transportation.
Welcome to New Commissioners
Elaine Levlocke, Rick Walling, Chris Thayer, Brendan Prusik, Jim McClammer and Tara Bamford

Vermont
Connecticut River Watershed Advisory Commission
Michaela Stickney, with Richmond Hopkins alternate
Chris Campany, Brattleboro
Thomas Kennedy, Ascutney
Peter Gregory, Woodstock
Alison Low, St. Johnsbury
Beverly Major, Westminster
Gary Moore, Bradford
Gayle Ottmann, Quechee*
Brendan Whittaker, Brunswick
Tara Bamford, Thetford
* notes outgoing Commissioners

FY 2013 CRJC Officers
Rebecca Brown, President
Chris Campany, Vice President
Thomas Kennedy, Secretary
Mary Sloat, Treasurer

Financial Report

CRJC Revenue - July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013
- Donated Services & Contributions: $5,769.00
- Book Sales: $84.00
- Federal and State Grants: $76,493.00

CRJC Expenses - July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013
- Contractors: $57,821.00
- Office Management: $19,079.00
- Fundraising: $2,460.00

Auditors: Schiffman, Dattilio & Liepmann, P.C.
Lebanon, NH