

CRJC Headwaters Subcommittee

Minutes

Thursday May 15, 2014

Conte Refuge Visitor Center, Rte 105 Brunswick, Vt.

Present

Kevin McKinnon, Colebrook

Ken Hastings, Columbia

Bill Schomburg, Columbia

Gary Paquette, Stratford

Edwin Mellett, Northumberland

Tom Caron, Canaan

Brendan Whittaker, Brunswick

Mark Maghini, USFWS

John Lanier, guest

Art Couture, guest

Tara Bamford, NCC

Chairman Ed Mellet opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

Nulhegan Basin Update - Wildlife Refuge Manager Mark Maghini

Mark welcomed the Subcommittee to the Center and provided an overview of the Conte refuge, explaining that it is the only watershed-wide refuge in the country. It was established in 1997 to conserve, protect, and enhance Atlantic salmon, American shad, bald eagles, osprey and other native species. Research and education, and providing opportunities for wildlife oriented recreation are other important purposes. Nulhegan is part of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail. Mark explained that many projects such as land management for wood cock habitat restoration and education depend on partnerships with other organizations. Local schools are involved in educational projects when grants are available. Mark would like to see more environmental education. Headwaters members can help by connecting teachers who might be interested and partner organizations. A draft comprehensive conservation plan will be available for review and comment by the end of this summer.

The Nulhegan Basin unit of the Refuge is 26,605 acres. It is bordered by the state's West Mtn lands and private timber lands with an easement to allow some continued recreation. These are formerly Champion paper company lands. Essex Timber company, formed for this project, later sold the private lands to Plum Creek.

## Art Couture – Colebrook

Art purchased the horse farm next to the airstrip. He is concerned about the severe riverbank erosion occurring along the 30 ft high bank. The Subcommittee reviewed the maps and photos and explained that erosion is a normal process on the bank on the outside of a bend, and slowing it down is a complicated and expensive process. Several suggestions were made for possible sources of technical assistance including NHDES, NRCS, Extension and RC & D.

## Fishing regulations –

Tom Caron has had communications with Dianne Timmins at NH Fish & Game and Joe Norton at TU on behalf of a group of Pittsburg residents interested in more protection for spawning trout from Murphy Dam to the bridge as you enter Pittsburg. The season is now Jan 1 to Oct 15 and many breeders have been observed being taken early in the season when the water is low. More restrictions up to May 15 would help maintain the fishery. This might include catch and release and barbless hooks Jan 1 to May 15.

Bill Schomburg has also been suggesting a change - to catch and release – at Lyman Falls. Catch and release currently starts 200 feet below that in North Stratford.

It was mentioned that studies have shown that catch and release needs to be coupled with barbless hooks to be a benefit.

Tom mentioned that with catch and release between First and Second Lake and the trophy section fly fishing only, this is the only section bait fishermen can use.

Tom said a on-line petition is going to be started regarding the proposed change. Subcommittee members agreed to discuss the possibility of writing a letter supporting the change at the next meeting.

## RR Bridge Update

Bill Schomburg and Tara heard from John Regan at NHDES that the legal department is making a determination regarding penalties for the St Lawrence and Atlantic. The contact is Kerry Barnsley. Tara will draft a letter to ask what the process is, what considerations and evidence, and to recommend that they talk with nearby residents and Bill.

## Cone Brook Restoration - Ken Hastings

Ken gave the context of the Cone Brook issues – fall spawning rainbows have been documented there and wild young ones identified. The brook's headwaters are frequently logged and recently a clearcut contributed to washouts from a microburst. Ken had planned to do a riverbank restoration project with his students and had lined up equipment, but a rain event on April 15 changed the site. The snow pack melted all at

once when 70 degree weather followed a cold spring. Boulders, cobbles up to 4 feet deep and trees are now blocking the channel, moving the brook 30 feet into a field. The material originated where 240 yards of a road washed out above Blue Mtn Variety. The culvert was too small and easily blocked. The road washed out 6 – 8 feet deep. Ken suggested 15 mile falls mitigation fund might be a source of money to build a new bridge.

Ken also showed pictures of bridge damage at Lyman Brook. The bridge with the creosote-dripping ties was undercut 60 yards above the junction with the Connecticut River. Several ties fell out.

Both bridges are state-owned. Ken's goal now is to see the culvert on Cone Brook replaced with a bridge, and the Lyman Brook bridge rebuilt with a longer span rather than the current deflector wing. This could be a \$1.3 million project. Following that the Cone brook channel will need to be rebuilt. The Subcommittee discussed a letter to Dianne Timmins supporting use of the 15 mile falls mitigation fund to replace culverts with bridges where needed and decided to hold off until the next meeting.

### Updates

Gary reported that CRWC has raised the money needed to match the engineering grant to look at the erosion at Smarts Mill/Bissell Brook by the rail trail. Gary noted that the brook is continuing to move and the April 15 event eroded another area. Gary also informed the Subcommittee that he and his wife are planning to leave the area and he will need to resign at that time.

Tara handed out Recreation Plans and asked that members take copies to their town office and library as well.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

## **TASK LIST updated May 2014**

### Tara

Stay in touch with Ben Copans about water quality monitoring.

Look into possible funding sources for local education and outreach, such as helping towns post educational materials on town websites and distributing educational material to town offices. Transcanada grants as possibility?

Put discussion of possible fishing regulation change for Murphy Dam to bridge as enter Pittsburg on next agenda (see May 2014 minutes).

Ask Dianne Timmins and Joe Norton to next meeting to talk about fisheries habitat projects.

Draft letter to DES about penalty consideration re RR bridge (see May 2014 minutes).

Put possible support for 15 mile funds for Cone Brook and Lyman Brook bridges on next agenda.

### Kevin

Follow up with Ron Rhodes about possible CRWC assistance with Riverwalk.

### Brendan Prusik

Reach out to contacts in Headwaters towns to let them know of the opportunities to serve as members.