

Upper Valley Subcommittee  
of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions  
Joint Meeting with Mascoma River LAC  
Monday – January 23, 2017  
Lyme Town Office, New Hampshire

**Draft Minutes**

Present:

Alice Creagh, Hanover  
Susan Mackenzie, Lyme  
Carl Schmidt, Orford  
Jim Kennedy, Hanover  
Tara Bamford, CRJC, staff  
Bill Bridges, Thetford  
Chris Balch, Orford  
Ron Rhodes, CRWC  
John Mudge, Lyme  
Rick Kirn, VT F& W  
Will Eldridge, VT F & W  
Don MacMeekin, MRLAC  
Michael Mezzacapo and guest, MRLAC  
Linda Matteson, Thetford  
Melissa Horwitz, Norwich  
Lynn Bohi, Hartford  
Bill Chabot, MRLAC

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 by Chairman Jim Kennedy and introductions made.
2. Rich Kirn, VT Fish & Wildlife, and Ron Rhodes, CRWC, presented Updates on Aquatic Habitat Restoration. Rich works in the White, Ompompanoosuc, and Waits tributaries of the Connecticut. Below is a summary of the information presented by Rich:
  - The biological consequences of steam crossing structures, include: loss of habitat for the length of the culvert, effects on stream above and below, and as barrier to movement.
  - Fish need access to different types of habitat at different stages of their lives and in different conditions, as well as to repopulate.
  - Previous culvert sizing/design did not allow for passage of sediment and debris - it accumulated above and scoured below.
  - The Vt standard now is bankfull width. (NH standard is 1.2 bankfull width.)
  - The law now requires culverts to be passable by aquatic organisms.

- Aquatic Organism Passage Assessments showed statewide in Vt only 6% are passable, 40% impassable and the rest something in between.
- Most are less than 50% bankfull width.
- The information is all on the ANR maps in the Natural Resource Atlas.
- Some biological assessments have also been conducted.
- A low tech approach to improving perched culvert situation is to create a dammed pool below to raise the water level.
- Another is to put baffles in the culvert, but these tend to catch things and come out.
- Culverts need to match the grade of the stream and we have tended to put them in flat.
- Culverts should be buried or have open bottoms so substrate is in it.
- Culverts sized right and placed correctly will typically have lower maintenance costs.
- Culverts should be 4x bankfull depth.

Ron Rhodes explained that his role with CRWC is projects. One recent bank stabilization project was on the Waits River in Bradford where root wads were added to improve habitat. They were all connected to each other to keep them in place. Another project Ron showed was on Eastman Brook in Piermont where a brook that was eroding a farm field was given a recreated streambed with a vegetated buffer planted with, .e.g, willows and alders. Ron reported that a project on Great Brook in Lebanon will be coming this summer. He also talked about doing buffer plantings in Orford with the Conservation Commission, and work on the Bellavance Farm in Bradford this year. Knapton Farm in Piermont is another project he has been involved with where blown out culverts were replaced with a fish passage structure.

Ron explained that the funding for these projects comes from a variety of sources such as NRCS and the Connecticut River Mitigation and Enhancement Fund. He does the grant writing for landowners, the work needed to get any needed permits, and helps line up the match. Ron reported that in conjunction with the Long Island Sound TMDL there is \$10 in the NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program, of which Ron can access some for technical assistance such as engineering, design and permitting.

Other work Ron is involved with are dam removal projects (8 in the works), invasives removal, and the annual Source to Sea clean-up. This year's is planned for September 22/23. CRWC will help find a location for interested groups who don't have one identified, and provide trash bags, gloves and t-shirts.

3. Other topics of mutual interest were discussed with the Mascoma River LAC. They reported that there is an application for a new FERC application on the Mascoma River from Great Boston Hydro. The proposed project would include a new dam in downtown Lebanon and changes to the Mascoma Lake dam. Jim mentioned Trout Unlimited's past efforts to have low depth release at the lake dam to provide cold water for fish. That dam is owned by the state. The new dam would be just above the US Route 4 crossing by Whitman Press.

Tara and Jim reported on their request to have CRJC invite DES Rivers Program staff to come to a CRJC meeting to discuss ways the LACs could have more meaningful input into the permit review process. It was agreed that it is a common concern among the LACs that they receive uneven

permit material.

Carl reported on the Fisher project where logs were angled upstream and cabled into a deadman in the bank. Root wads were not used. Some plantings were able to be done in December but major plantings will be in the spring. Jim said this is an example of a project where he feels the review steps were in the wrong order. The applicant went to DES and then came to the Subcommittee with final plans. This was too late for concerns to be responded to or for local knowledge to be incorporated into the plans.

4. The minutes of September 19, 2016 were approved as corrected by motion of Creagh/MacKenzie.

5. Permit Reviews - There were no new permit applications. Jim reported that there was one reviewed between meetings by him and Alice in Hanover on Lyme Road. No river access was involved.

6. TransCanada's FERC relicensing for Wilder Dam was discussed. Some members said they have been participating in CRWC stakeholder meetings and in CRJC FERC workgroup meetings. Tara reminded the group of the difference and that Subcommittee members don't officially represent CRJC when at CRWC's stakeholder meetings. She also explained that CRJC's FERC working group was appointed by CRJC to make recommendations to CRJC.

It was noted in discussing the Preliminary Licensing Proposal (PLP) that there is language in various places referring to the TransCanada's voluntary operating procedures for ramping rates and maximum elevation under normal conditions. It was voted by motion of MacKenzie/Bohi to include in the forthcoming comments on the PLP that the now voluntary limits should become mandatory in the permit as a minimum.

Sue said the maximum surface water elevation is 385 now. Jim felt it would be hard to support a request for a lower figure.

The town meeting resolution that is being proposed in Charlestown and is being proposed by the Mt Ascutney Subcommittee was discussed. Some members may bring it to their towns as individuals.

7. The next meeting was scheduled for February 20 at the Lyme town office.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Tara Bamford.