

**Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes**

**Chester Railroad Depot
April 2, 2009**

Attendance: Carrie Banks, Coordinator; Bob Thompson, Chester; Matt Barron, Chesterfield; Dave Piece, Chester; Bill Babcock, Becket; Meredyth Babcock, Volunteer Coordinator; Jeff Penn, Huntington; John Richardson, Middlefield; Jim Caffrey, Windsor; Jim Dodge, Worthington; Tim Purinton, Riverways; Al Guagliardo, WRWA; Fran Siska, WRWA; Mercedes Gallagher, Becket.

1. **Review of Feb. 19th, 2009 Meeting Minutes:** Under Operations Update>Community Grants, “Chicopee River” was corrected to say “Chickley River.” Since the last meeting, the Stream Team Training date mentioned under the Stream Team Project update has been changed to Thursday, April 16th. In addition, Mercedes G. wanted to be certain the Town lines are added to the watershed map on the website as it was not mentioned in the meeting minutes. Jim C. motioned to accept the minutes as amended; seconded by Jeff P. Minutes accepted.
2. **Treasurer’s Report:** Mercedes G. noted the Committee received a \$50 donation from Dan Call. The Committee signed a Thank You card for Dan and his continued support for the Committee. The balance of the Committee’s account is \$1907.55. Jeff P. motioned to accept Treasurer’s Report; seconded by Jim C. Report accepted.
3. **Operations Update:**
 - a. **Partnership Rivers:** Carrie B. noted no significant changes in finances since the last quarterly report for the Partnership Rivers funds, except that reporting procedures with NPS have changed again. She anticipates receiving a couple of request for reimbursement including for the 1st Riparian Conservation Project & Water Quality Monitoring. However, several budgeted items may not be spent by the end of September as needed and the Operations Sub-Committee will meet to re-evaluate the budget and adjust as needed and appropriate.

Matt B. reported that the House’s FY10 Dear Colleague letter was sent around. Five members of Congress signed from Massachusetts with 20 additional representatives from other states signing as well – an increase in the number over last year. Partnership WSR's received a \$274k increase over '08 funding levels, for a total program funding level of \$1.75million. Although the final allocation for all the rivers has not been finalized, the Westfield River may receive up to \$140,000.

- b. **River Rally:** Jeff P. motioned to expend up to the budgeted \$2,500 to send Bob T. and/or Carrie B. to the National River Rally; seconded by Jim C. Motion approved. The Committee was most interested in finding other rivers who have working relationships with their state highway departments and to find lessons learned and advice on establishing partnerships.
- c. **Committee/Sub-Committee Membership:** The Committee has or anticipates vacancies in the several membership slots and will continue to seek representatives from these towns and organizations. Carrie B. also encouraged members to participate in one of the sub-committees (Operations, Resource Stewardship, Outreach). She will send a list of current members around to everyone as a reminder.

- d. **Community Grants:** The four (or five) community representatives who are pursuing a drainage study for their town will hold a conference call to work on general goals and objectives for the project and then proceed to go out to bid with an engineering firm. Chesterfield will move forward with the grading and minor drainage improvements on the East Branch Trail. No projects have yet to be identified for Cummington, Huntington, Savoy.

4. Stewardship Update:

- a. **Stream Teams:** Meredyth B. reported on Stream Team activities. There will be a Stream Team Training for Walkin the Watershed Surveys on Thursday, April 16th at Stanton Hall in Huntington at 6:30 pm. At least 7 volunteers have signed up so far. There will be a work day at Glendale Falls on Saturday, May 9th. In addition, a trail work day will be scheduled with the East Branch Trail Stewards in May or June. For the West Branch project, the Town Highway Department was going to send info on how much water they calculate runoff the street and they agreed to remove the concrete. She has been able to recruit Derek Rogers to help design and layout plants to replace the concrete. Articles on these projects should be highlighted in upcoming issues of the Springfield Republican and Valley Advocate.
- b. **Riparian Conservation Grants:** Carrie B. has received inquiries on 3 properties. Two are located in Cummington – 131 acre & 82 acre parcels – adjacent to Tower Brook, a cold-water tributary to the East Branch. The parcels include vernal pool, NHESP habitat areas, and wetlands. The 3rd parcel is the Norwich Hill Sanctuary, 60 acres, with frontage along Pond Brook. Jeff P. is working with the Hilltown Land Trust on these and will help pull the information together that will be needed for the Committee to review. Mercedes G. reported that DCR recently acquired 135 acres along Shaker Mill Brook and abutting October Mountain State Forest. She spoke with the DCR Land Protection Specialist who did not realize that section of Shaker Mill Brook was classified as ‘Wild’. In addition, this only protected the south side of the brook and additional parcels, including 90 acres currently up for sale, abut the north side. She suggested the Committee send a letter explaining the ‘Wild’ classification, outlining the Committee’s Riparian Conservation Grant and encouraging expansion of the additional protected areas along Shaker Mill Brook. The Committee felt DCR could be eligible for the funds as DFW and TNC had already submitted a joint proposal for a different project.
- c. **Section 7 Reviews and Report on MassHighway Meeting:** Carrie B. reported on the intra-agency coordination meeting with MassHighway held in Worcester. Attendees included Carrie, Liz Lacy and Jim McCartney on behalf of Wild & Scenic; MassHighway staff from the Environmental Division, Construction Division, Landscape Division and District 1; and Paul Sneeringer from ACOE. Carrie B. felt she had a slightly better understanding of how projects progress through MassHighway and passed around handouts which outline the process and recommendations from MassHighway on who the Committee should be in contact with at various stages in the project and the type of information MassHighway would like from the Committee. A list of recommendations was made at the meeting (see notes attached). In addition, 2 new projects were brought to our attention (Cummington Road in Chesterfield and Bonny Rigg Road in Washington); however, limited info was available and Carrie B. believes the information is inaccurate (e.g. there is no Bonny Rigg Rd in Washington

over the West Branch). The Committee requested some additional information which might be helpful, e.g. what are the public meeting requirements and when do they occur in the process and could the Committee review the RFPs for consultants and contractors. The Committee also suggested hiring a river-friendly design engineer with the Partnership Rivers funds to pull together a guidance document with the language, specs, details and plans to give to MassHighway. Mercedes G. motioned to also send a letter to ACOE requesting that projects occurring along a Wild & Scenic river be listed as an ineligible project for the Programmatic Individual Permit being developed between ACOE and MassHighway; seconded by Jeff P. Motion approved.

George Millar Road: MassHighway requested a site visit to review the current plans and to begin implementing the recommendations coming out of the intra-agency coordination meeting. Tentative date is Friday, April 17th. Liz L. already spoke with Chester Highway Department and they do not see this as a high priority need. Dave P. will send Carrie B. contact information for the homeowner in Chester.

Bridge over Westfield Brook: Jim C. reported that there will be an upcoming public meeting on a bridge replacement over Westfield Brook. Although it is outside the Wild & Scenic river corridor, he sat down with Liz and came up with a punch list item of concerns and issues the Town may want to go over with MassHighway. The existing bridge has a 25' span and the proposed bridge appears to have a 32' span; however, Jim noted that he would estimate moderate flood flows through that area of Westfield Brook at about 38' wide. He met with the Selectboard, Historical Society and homeowner (bridge only serves one home) who do not want a new bridge. The Highway Superintendent also reported that MassHighway had 100% designs for the bridge in 2002 and are now just coming to the town for the public meeting.

- d. **Mussel Surveys:** In 2009, NHESP plans to survey select Connecticut River tributaries in Massachusetts for dwarf wedgemussels, brook floaters, and other state-listed species. The Westfield River is a high priority, especially in light of all the species that occur in the Farmington (which shares many attributes with the Westfield), historic presence of brook floaters in the upper Westfield, and potential presence of dwarf wedgemussels in the lower Westfield. Ethan Nadeau, environmental consultant with Biodrawveristy, has been hired to conduct the surveys from May-October this year. To expand upon the surveys as they will be very limited based on current funding, Ethan had inquired if WRWSAC would be interested in supplementing the budget to increase the number of surveys on the upper part of the watershed. The Committee agreed this was a worthwhile project and sent it back to the Operations Sub-Committee to determine what funds are available in this year's budget with the goal of at a minimum of matching the NHESP funds for the Westfield River.

5. Outreach Update:

- a. **Kiosks:** Carrie B. will try to identify a graphic designer to work with. In addition, informative and interpretative signs for the East Branch Trail may also be included for work this year. Jim C. noted they will upgrade the kiosks at Glendale Falls and Chesterfield Gorge and will redesign them and make them consistent with TTOR's information kiosks.

- b. **Annual Meeting Displays:** Carrie B. reminded the Town Representatives that there are materials available for display at the Annual Town meetings. Contact her to coordinate setting up the display and/or getting copies of materials.

6. Local Updates:

- a. **JJ Kelly Trail:** Dave P. reported that he has permission from DFW to build a short trail along Walker Brook in Chester on the JJ Kelly Conservation Area. It will follow about a mile of the Chester & Becket Railroad (granite hauler) past a wooden trestle and remnants of the Hampden Emery Co. Processing Plant (NOT the mines!!) to a nice overlook of the brook atop a granite bridge abutment. It will connect to a walkway from the Jacob's Ladder/PVPC-sponsored Town Park Project on Hampden St., which will connect in the opposite direction, to the town center. This will make it possible to walk from the station to the Conservation Area and back, mostly along Walker Brook, and take in a brief history lesson to boot. He believes the C&B and the KAB Trail are the only two trails on DFW land in the state.
- b. **White Nose Syndrome, Bats:** Based on recent reports in the newspaper and conversations with DFW, the bat populations in the Chester mines has plummeted since White Nose Syndrome was detected over the last year (numbers went from 10,000 bats to 116). Measures are being taken to encourage and keep people out of the mines to reduce interaction with sick bats and risk of transmitting MNS to other locations.
- c. **Babcock Brook Siltation:** A hiker along the KAB Trail noted siltation coming down a brook and entering the West Branch. He discovered after following the brook a distance that a pond on Middlefield Road appears to have been recently dredged and the source of the siltation. John R. believes this was a permitted project and will speak with the Middlefield Conservation Commission to what can be done to address the problem.
- d. **Flyover of West Branch:** The Friends of the Keystone Arches are planning another Flyover of the West Branch before the foliage comes out this Spring. Dave P. said another donation from the Committee would be appreciated. The Operations Sub-Committee will include this item as a need when reviewing the budget.
- e. **East Street Improvements, Chesterfield:** The Town of Chesterfield is planning to make improvements along East Street and will include a culvert replacement over Baker Brook (a tributary to the Dead Branch). This crossing ranked as a 'Severe Barrier' when surveyed a couple of years ago. Carrie B. noted that she contacted the Conservation Commission who is reviewing the project and it appears the new culvert will attempt to meet the new crossing standards. It will be replaced with a wider, embedded box culvert. Although it is unclear from the information she received what the culvert's alignment is like in comparison to the stream and whether the wider culvert meets the 1.2x bankfull width.
- f. **Windsor Cell Tower:** AT&T is proposing a cell tower in Windsor on Shaw Road and is visible from the river corridor, including vantages along the East Branch and Route 9 in West Cummington. The Committee sent a letter to the ZBA requesting that the height of the tower be reduced by 50 feet and that the materials used mitigate the scenic and aesthetic impacts to the river corridor. Jim C. said the letter was well received and prompted the town Attorney to ask whether the cell phone company had to file for a NEPA permit.
- g. **Savoy Cell Tower:** A public hearing will be held on Thursday, April 9th. The proposal is to locate a tower on a hill overlooking Drowned Land Brook and will likely be visible

from several locations along the brook. The Committee will send a similar letter to the one sent to the Windsor Selectboard and Jim C. will attend the meeting.

- h. Town of Russell Wind Tower Study:** Jeff P. reported that the Town of Russell is investigating the feasibility of installing wind towers on their watershed lands on Holiday Hill. This would impact the watershed from several locations in Huntington. He plans to contact the Town's study committee to get additional information.
- i. Water Quality Monitoring:** The Quality Assurance Project Plan has been approved and volunteers have been trained and will conduct the 1st round of water quality sampling on Saturday, April 25th.

7. Other Business:

- a. Joan Kimball's Retirement Party:** To be held on **Sunday, April 26th** at the Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary in Belmont from 3-6pm; **RSVP by April 17th to JKimball_Party@hotmail.com**. Jeff P. motioned to contribute \$100 out of the general fund to help defray the cost of the rental hall for the retirement party; seconded by Jim C. Motion approved.
- b. Thank You to Dan Call:** Committee signed Thank You card for Dan's recent donation to the Committee.

Next meeting: Thursday, May 14th.