

LMRLAC – May 24, 2012

LOWER MERRIMACK RIVER LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

May 24, 2012

Members:

- ✓ = present

Current:

- ✓ Kathryn Nelson (Chair) -- Nashua
Michael Redding (Vice Chair) – Merrimack
- ✓ Karen Archambault (Secretary) – Nashua
Michael Croteau - Litchfield
- ✓ Nelson Disco - Merrimack
- ✓ George May – Merrimack
Bob Robbins – Hudson
David Scaer – Hudson

Pending Renewal:

- ✓ Jim Barnes (Treasurer) – Hudson
Glenn McKibben – Litchfield

Associate Members:

Mildred Mugica – Nashua

Also in attendance:

- Tracie Sales

The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm in the Music/Art/Media room of the Nashua Public Library by Chair Kath Nelson.

Minutes

The minutes from the meetings of February 23, March 22, and April 25 were approved.

Treasurer's Report

Jim presented Kath with a check for \$3000.00 from the State of New Hampshire, the full amount of the account which had been turned over to the State for inactivity. Members briefly discussed options for a new bank account, whether it be with a bank or a credit union. Jim will research alternatives. Members also briefly discussed possible uses for the funds, such as matching funds for grants or a brochure. Further discussion on how to use the funds will be scheduled for a future meeting.

Members thanked Jim profusely for researching the lost account and recovering the money. Kath will contact Bob to let him know the funds have been recovered.

604(b) Grant for River Continuity Assessment

Nelson said he and Michael R. attended the training session at DES on April 30, but that neither stayed for the field work portion of the training. Geoff Daly attended the training as well. Nelson stated he thought that one other NRPC employee attended along with Jill Longval. Nelson explained that the presentation was very detailed, with a great deal of technical terminology, and he showed copies of the 4-page forms for culvert and bridge/arch assessments. Nelson stated that two people were necessary to take all the required measurements.

Kath summarized the status of the effort. Task 1, identifying the potential culvert locations, and Task 2, prioritizing culvert locations, have been completed. The culvert criteria, list of

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categorized culverts by town, and maps with culvert locations are all available on the NRPC Web site.

Kath further read that Jill plans to start Task 3, culvert assessment field work, on Tuesdays starting June 5. Rain dates will be Wednesdays. Jill will e-mail LMRLAC members each week prior to the assessment to provide the culvert list for the following week.

Kath mentioned that Tuesdays in general are not good for her; Tracie stated she is not available on Tuesdays, either.

Members reviewed the culvert prioritization criteria and the list of culverts by town. The criteria are as follows:

- Tier 1- located in one or more of a short list of Wildlife Action Plan Tiers
 - in close proximity to an identified NH Natural Heritage Inventory Fish location
 - within either a quarter- or half-mile of the Merrimack River
 - accessible without crossing private property.
- Tier 2 - same as Tier 1, but without the NH Natural Heritage Inventory Fish location
- Tier 3 - same as Tier 1, but beyond a quarter- or half-mile of the Merrimack River
- Tier 4 - same as Tier 2, but beyond a quarter- or half-mile of the Merrimack River
- Tier 5 - within a quarter- or half-mile of the Merrimack River and accessible without crossing private property

Members briefly discussed the list of culverts by town and the criteria. No culverts meet the Tier 1 criteria. Jim suggested that LMRLAC is most interested in the culverts in tiers 2, 3, and 5.

Kath suggested we ask Jill to send notification of the field work schedule to the full mailing list, not just to LMRLAC members. Members also expressed a desire to have a map of the sites that will be assessed.

Members briefly discussed the purpose of the project. George asked whether the assessment forms included any information on fish or wildlife passage. Nelson indicated that passage would have to be derived from the data collected, which is very detailed.

George stated the list of culverts can be used to approach Public Works Departments in the towns to prioritize culvert replacement and to use BMPs when doing so. Kath added that the LAC could also look for potential funding for restoration opportunities. Kath commented, from an aquatic life standpoint, the LAC's preference would be for bottomless culverts. She also pointed out that the assessment provides information not only on fish passage but on overall river health. She mentioned that municipalities would be interested in this to reduce or eliminate the likelihood of blowouts.

Jim suggested we invite Jill to the June meeting to give a status on the assessment field work.

George asked when the report was due. Kath replied that no specific date had been set.

Renaissance Downtowns – Bridge St. Project

Several members commented that there was an article in Thursday's Nashua Telegraph about the project. Kath had invited James Vayo to attend tonight's meeting but he was not available. Kath will invite Mr. Vayo to the June meeting.

George suggested we request that Mr. Vayo present information from the river's perspective.

Kath expressed concern about the phasing and expressed a desire for riverfront amenities in phase 1, rather than deferring them all to later phases. Nelson pointed out that it would be up to

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the Planning Board to impose such a requirement. Members expressed that LMRLAC's prime interests in the project are in drainage and river amenities.

Nelson asked about the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) project; Kath explained that there was a disinfectant plant planned in that area. After a brief discussion of the CSO situation in Nashua, Kath stated she would invite Mr. William Keating to a future LMRLAC meeting to discuss the status of the CSO separation projects in Nashua. (Note: Mr. Keating most recently attended the April 2011 LMRLAC meeting to present a status of the Nashua CSO separation program.)

Litchfield Conservation Commission Meeting June 7

LMRLAC has been invited to attend the Litchfield Conservation Commission meeting on June 7. Kath and Karen currently plan to attend. Kath asked members for ideas on what to discuss and whether to have a formal presentation.

Nelson suggested a presentation would be beneficial. Jim suggested that it should be brief, and George suggested that LMRLAC is likely just one item on the agenda. Members briefly discussed whether to bring hard copies of the presentation or just an electronic version.

Members suggested a summary of the Designated River program and LMRLAC's background, a brief discussion of the culvert assessment program, and a pitch for membership. Members briefly reviewed the distribution list for LMRLAC minutes to confirm whether there is a Litchfield contact on the list and confirmed that there is. Jen Czysz, the NRPC circuit rider for Litchfield, is on distribution.

Kath also brought up the change in focus, to forge a better relationship with the towns and get invited on site walks. Kath pointed out that conservation is just one of LMRLAC's interests.

Water Sampling Program – Status

George gave a summary of the water sampling program. Sampling takes place Tuesday mornings, starting June 5. Karen Mattor is the volunteer coordinator, and George takes care of collecting the samples from the volunteers, distributing them for testing, and compiling the results.

George briefly described that samples are collected by volunteers at 30 sites; 11 or 12 of the sites are on the Merrimack River. The volunteers drop off the samples at several Wastewater Treatment Facilities (WWTF) in the sampling area. George then collects the samples from their dropoff points and distributes them to the WWTFs which perform the analysis. George stated the Milford WWTF performs e. coli and performed some dissolved oxygen testing last year. He said that the Merrimack and Nashua WWTFs alternate weeks for dissolved oxygen. George also stated the treatment plants perform the testing at no charge.

George said he receives dissolved oxygen results the same day, and e. coli results generally the following day. Once he receives the results, George reviews the data and puts together a press release for the newspaper. George commented that he generally focuses on e. coli, since that result directly affects humans and their use of the rivers.

George mentioned that he wasn't sure whether all sites have monitors signed up yet. He also said there are two sites in Litchfield which may be looking for monitors; Kath said she'd mention that at the Litchfield Conservation Commission meeting.

George mentioned they'd like to sample the Piscataquog River at its entrance to the Merrimack but they would need a boat to do so. George said he'd also like to monitor behind the Pheasant Lane Mall. He asked if there was a way to contact the volunteers who collected samples for the

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MRWC in the past. Tracie said she would look into whether she had contact information for past volunteers for that part of the river.

George also mentioned that there is a Souhegan River cleanup scheduled for June 7.

NH Rivers Council Invasive Aquatic Training

Kath mentioned that NH Rivers Council is hosting a training session for identifying invasive aquatics on June 9 in Nashua. The program starts at 10am and will take place at the YMCA, off exit 5W in Nashua. The training consists of an indoor session, followed by water training. Registration is required. Kath encouraged members to go. Kath will also forward the information to David Brooks at the Nashua Telegraph.

DES Draft 303(d) List of Impaired Waters

Members reviewed the entries on the list of impaired waters, focusing on the locations listed for the four member towns. Kath pointed out that one of the Merrimack River sites indicated impairment for dissolved oxygen with an unknown source. George commented that the sampling he's been involved with does not show much of a problem with dissolved oxygen, and Tracie agreed. George further stated the testing on the Merrimack River indicates that it's generally pretty clean for bacteria, except after a storm.

Kath stated it's a little alarming to her to see macroinvertebrates and nutrient impairments listed for locations in Litchfield, which is a relatively undeveloped area.

Members reviewed the list in each town. George commented that "primary contact recreation" is LMRLAC's primary concern. Nelson mentioned that fish contamination is also a threat to humans.

Kath asked George whether the Souhegan and Merrimack sampling data is included. George replied that DES does receive the sampling data.

Kath asked whether members had any specific comments to submit to DES about the list. After a brief discussion, it was decided that LMRLAC had no comments to submit.

RMAC Update

Kath mentioned the Rivers Management Advisory Committee's (RMAC) focus on instream flow and the pilot programs for the Souhegan and Lamprey Rivers. She mentioned that a joint RMAC and LMAC (Lakes Management Advisory Committee) committee has been formed. Kath briefly explained the situation between Lake Pawtuckaway and the Lamprey River: the 7-foot lake drawdown for dock work was an issue this year due to a lack of winter precipitation. Kath stated that part of the reason for the joint meeting is to bring the LMAC up to speed on the instream flow issue. Kath mentioned that she is on a subcommittee which is looking at the general issue of managing lakes and streams, with developing some recommendations as a goal.

Kath stated the next meeting is in a couple of weeks. George commented that the meetings are public.

DES Watershed Planner

Kath mentioned that Tracie Sales will be the new watershed planner at DES starting next week. Tracie stated she will be working mostly RMAC projects but will be supporting LMAC projects as well. Members welcomed Tracie to her new position.

George commented that the position is needed. Kath suggested that LMRLAC can advocate for continued staffing of the position.

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Local Updates

George mentioned the “adopt a salmon program” is now releasing in the Piscataquog River in Manchester. He mentioned that today two busloads of students from Boston came to release salmon and then went to Amoskeag Fishways.

Summer Meeting Schedule

Kath requested members keep her informed of absences for upcoming meetings. Nelson mentioned that he cannot attend the July meeting. The planned summer meeting dates are June 28, July 26, and August 23. The tentative plan is to invite Mr. Vayo to the June meeting and cancel the July meeting if there are no pressing agenda items.

Elections

Members briefly discussed scheduling the next LMRLAC election.

DES and LAC Standard Operating Process

George expressed concern about the DES timetable. Kath stated that LMRLAC’s plan is to maintain a list of applications for which LMRLAC missed the opportunity to comment because of the schedule. Kath also mentioned that LMRLAC may not even see applications any more due to the change in regulations, as much as due to the process. Jim commented that we plan to keep a log so we can provide feedback with documentation to support it.

Members also briefly discussed the need for more than one person on distribution for applications, in order to be sure we are aware of an application and can respond before the deadline that a comment is forthcoming.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Next LMRLAC Meeting

The next LMRLAC meeting is currently scheduled for Thursday, June 28, 2012, at 7:00 pm at the Nashua Public Library.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Archambault
secretary