

LMRLAC – August 23, 2018

LOWER MERRIMACK RIVER LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

August 23, 2018

Members:

- ✓ = present

Current:

- ✓ Gene Porter (Chair) – Nashua (current term expires Dec 2019)
- Nelson Disco (Vice Chair) – Merrimack (current term expires 06/21/21)
- Chris Barrett – Nashua (current term expires 08/22/20)
- ✓ Michael Croteau – Litchfield (current term expires 11/08/20)
- ✓ George May – Merrimack (current term expires 06/14/20)
- Francis Murphy – Nashua (current term expires 02/18/19)

Pending Renewal:

- ✓ Karen Archambault (Secretary) – Nashua (current term expired 08/12/17)
- Christine Dupree (Treasurer) – Hudson (current term expired 11/25/17)

Also in attendance:

John Boisvert, Pennichuck
Chris Countie, Pennichuck
Matthew Day, Pennichuck
Larry Goodhue, Pennichuck
Bernard Rousseau, Pennichuck
Donald Ware, Pennichuck

Meeting called to order at 7:02pm by Chairman Gene Porter in the Meeting Room at the Nashua Public Library. It was noted that a quorum was not present for the meeting.

Minutes

No quorum being present, approval of the June 28, 2018 LMRLAC meeting minutes was tabled.

Discussion Items

City of Nashua Water Supply Discussion with Pennichuck Representatives

Chairman Porter opened the discussion by summarizing some background on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination in the news over the past couple of years. He then gave the floor to the representatives from Pennichuck.

The Pennichuck water supply system has two sources: the Pennichuck Brook and ponds system, and the Merrimack River. The Merrimack River intake was installed in the mid-1980s and was originally connected to feed into the ponds system. About three years ago, an additional interconnection main from the Merrimack River intake was installed which feeds directly into the treatment plant. This allows Pennichuck more flexibility in using water from either or both sources – for example, it allows them to shut down one source in response to a contamination event, and/or to continue to “mix” the water from both sources.

Pennichuck representatives explained that Pennichuck and the Manchester water supply system are the two entities in New Hampshire which are subject to collecting data under the Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR) program. This program requires monitoring for a defined list of contaminants over a period of time to collect and analyze data to provide a

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basis for potential future regulation. Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) are two of the substances on the third UCMR (UCMR3) list of unregulated contaminants, which EPA published in 2012. (PFOA and PFOS are two of the substances in the group now referred to more widely as PFAS.) Sampling under the UCMR program has to be analyzed by a laboratory using EPA-approved methodology. This sampling is in addition to monitoring the regulated substances, for which a maximum contaminant level (MCL) is defined by EPA.

Pennichuck started taking regular samples of PFOA and PFOS three years ago, in response to the Saint-Gobain investigation by the NHDES. Over that time, the testing and measurement technology has changed, including providing increased sensitivity. Over the three-year testing period, Pennichuck has not, as of yet, detected discernable trends. They have, however, noted relationships between the results and factors such as surface water level and amount of groundwater contribution to the sample.

Pennichuck representatives explained they are part of an early warning system by which they will be notified of a contamination or spill event upstream. They explained, for example, that they shut down the Merrimack River intake whenever they are notified of a Manchester CSO event. They also explained that the Merrimack River intake is typically shut off for heavy rain events, since the water flow is sufficient without the river source in that case.

Pennichuck explained that they have a strategy team which brainstorms what treatment options they might implement in response to changes in contaminant level standards. Depending on the level change, and the contaminant, such responses could include water filtering, or mixing the water from the sources for the finished product.

Pennichuck representatives pointed out that the Saint-Gobain site is not the only site in the area that has been identified as a potential source of PFAS contamination. They pointed out that there are current or former manufacturing sites west of the ponds system which could also be contamination sources. Mr. Boisvert commented that the river shows a lower PFOA/PFOS level than the ponds do, based on just three data points.

Mr. Ware commented that when EPA sets an MCL for a contaminant that Pennichuck's water supply has to comply with the defined level. Pennichuck has to look at such things as efficacy of treatment and the maturity of the technology available for measuring it. He stated that Pennichuck is collecting data in order to be prepared to respond, should an MCL be defined for PFAS or other unregulated contaminants.

Mr. May asked whether a resident in the area with a private well should have it tested for PFAS. Mr. Goodhue suggested such residents call Brandon Kernen at DES for advice.

Mr. May asked the Pennichuck representatives whether they had any other concerns about the water system or water supply. Mr. Countie replied that sustainability is an ongoing concern. Mr. Rousseau commented that sustainability of the system is what led to installing the river intake pipe back in the 1980s.

Mr. Croteau expressed concern that DES has not been sufficiently responsive to the public regarding the PFAS contamination situation. He pointed out that the presence of PFAS affects not only residential consumers, but agricultural interests as well – there are farmers who abut the Merrimack River who draw river water for irrigation.

Mr. Goodhue concluded by stating that Pennichuck takes its responsibility seriously, has been pursuing an ongoing infrastructure replacement program, and is proactive at anticipating and preparing for the future.

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Chairman Porter thanked the Pennichuck Water representatives for coming in, and the care with which they answered LMRLAC's questions.

Merrimack/Litchfield: Pennichuck Water Expansion Project (Shoreland File #2017-00449, #2017-02197; Dredge and Fill #2017-00386, #2017-02305)

The new pipe crossing the river was installed on August 23. Mr. Boisvert summarized the pipe submersion process, and estimated that work in the river will be complete by mid- to late-September. The pipe is expected to be operational by the end of the year. The intake work will take place next year.

Hudson: Sparkling River, LLC Shoreland Permit Application (File #2018-01684) and Alteration of Terrain Permit Application (File #20180823-131)

Chairman Porter summarized the status of the applications. He stated that the Shoreland Permit has been issued and that the Alteration of Terrain Permit application is an agenda item for the September LMRLAC meeting.

Chairman Porter summarized his concerns with the Alteration of Terrain application as follows:

- The community center and parking requires a lot of excavation
- The plan includes a proposal to convert a wetland to infiltration basins

Chairman Porter also explained that the applicant did not consider the shoreland trail to be part of the development. LMRLAC will need to take up the trail easement issue with the Hudson Planning Board.

Members briefly discussed the proposed boat launch on the site, whether it could become a public launch, and whether the roads in the complex are, or will be, public streets.

Chairman Porter will contact the applicant for electronic distribution of the Alteration of Terrain permit application for members to review prior to the September meeting.

Region: Pawtucket (a.k.a. Boott Hydropower) Dam

Chairman Porter mentioned that he attended a tour sponsored by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The tour occurred in conjunction with scoping sessions as part of Enel's application for relicensing the dam (FERC Docket number P-2790-072.). He explained that the tour was interesting and informative.

He also stated that the final thirty feet of the Crest Gate bladder system is being installed. Chairman Porter expressed his view that the Crest Gate system will not affect water levels in Nashua. Mr. May commented that it could reduce bank erosion. Chairman Porter agreed, primarily downriver from the LMRLAC jurisdictional area.

River level and Navigability

Discussion of the dam and the lowered river level led to a brief discussion about checking for navigability. Chairman Porter stated he went looking for exposed rocks on Thursday, since the river level is currently down by about five feet. He stated that he feels the river is navigable from the Greeley Park boat ramp to the Taylor Falls Bridge. He mentioned that there are rocks on the east side of the river at Tyng Island.

Oil Spill Response Exercise in Allenstown

Chairman Porter mentioned that he attended the recent exercise conducted in Allenstown, at which a simulated oil spill and its response were demonstrated. The exercise was sponsored by EPA and DES.

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Nashua - Beazer East

Chairman Porter expressed hope that a representative for the project will come to the September LRMALC meeting. He also said he would re-send the Web link for the reports to members.

Nashua – Former Mohawk Tannery Site

Chairman Porter summarized the location of the site and its background. The site is on the north side of the Nashua River, east of the highway. He explained that, at one time, the plan had been to remove the contaminated soil from the site. The EPA is now proposing to encapsulate in place instead. There is a citizen's group with an on-line petition urging EPA to go back to the initial plan.

Since there was no quorum at the meeting, the chairman did not call for a vote on whether LMRLAC should sign the petition as an organization. Mr. May commented that signing on as an organization would have a little more potential weight than signing as individuals.

Items from the Floor

Litchfield Boat Ramp

Mr. Croteau stated that the Litchfield boat ramp construction is complete and the ramp is open. He explained that the ramp is open to Litchfield residents only.

Water Quality Testing

Mr. May explained that the most recent water testing took place on Tuesday, August 21. He mentioned that e.coli levels were a little higher than he may have expected, but still below 88 (i.e. 88 per 100 milliliters) at all sampling locations, except for at the mouth of the Souhegan River. He also mentioned that the e.coli levels measured in the Souhegan River were down from where they had been a couple of weeks ago.

River Flow Rate Data

Members briefly discussed methods for measuring flow in the Merrimack River. Mr. May commented that he thought the Merrimack River Watershed Council (MRWC) had obtained flow meters through a grant program a few years ago, and had placed two meters each in the Souhegan and Merrimack Rivers. Chairman Porter will follow up with the MRWC to see what data is available from that effort.

Souhegan River Conditions

Mr. Croteau and Mr. May briefly discussed the state of the Souhegan River and its aquatic life population. Mr. May explained that the Souhegan Watershed Association is still putting salmon into the river as an ongoing educational project with school children.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50pm.

Next LMRLAC Meeting

The next LMRLAC meeting is currently scheduled for Thursday, September 27, 2018, at 7:00 pm at the Nashua Public Library.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Archambault
Secretary