



Minutes
Connecticut River Joint Commissions
July 27, 2009
Weeks State Park, Lancaster, NH

Present: New Hampshire Commissioners: Nancy Franklin (chair), Robert Harcke, Cheston Newbold, Robert Christie, John Severance, Mary Sloat, Hank Swan, John Tucker, George Watkins.

Vermont Commissioners: Peter Gregory, John Lawe, Beverly Major, Gary Moore, Gayle Ottmann, Joseph Sampson, Michaela Stickney, Nat Tripp, Brendan Whittaker, Norm Wright

Guests: Joe Short, Northern Forest Center; Vince Lunetta, Weeks SP; Rebecca More, Lancaster; Mark Maghini, USFWS, Nulhegan Division; Mike King, North Country Council.

1. Minutes of May 26, 2009. Bob Christie moved to approve; Nat Tripp seconded. Unanimous.

2. Reports.

a. Communications. Rebecca reported that the Atlas is for sale at local bookstores, and has been sent by CRJC to a mailing list of key contacts in NH and VT. CRJC also sent complimentary copies to town libraries and secondary schools serving riverfront towns. The new Byway map is completed and being distributed. The LRS water resources plans are in the final edit and design stage.

b. Mohawk- Colebrook bank restoration. Adair said that North Country Council is working with the federal Economic Development Administration on the contract, and all hope that the grant will be approved shortly. Next step is to get a NH licensed engineer to develop final construction bid specs. With the high water this year work has been delayed. She visited the site on July 19, observing that the bank has eroded significantly, and is now some 80 feet from the nearest building (approximately the length of the Weeks meeting room). EDA has indicated it will need to review and approve every subcontract, which will take 2 weeks each time. Adair asked if it might be possible to ask the Portland Maine regional administrator to visit the site to illustrate the degree of the emergency. Mike King explained that EDA is overworked and we are not likely to

expedite them. Sharon said that DES Commissioner Burack does not want to see riprap there and hopes he has disabused the town of ideas to use it.

Adair also reported that despite the high runoff so far this summer, water quality monitoring for EPA grant in the Upper Valley has revealed no bacteria violations, while there have been many in Massachusetts.

c. Upper Connecticut River Partnership Act: Sharon was in Washington in early July and met with congressional staff members, and then returned several days later to testify before a subcommittee of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Sen. Shaheen and Sen. Sanders spoke very highly of the commissions. The subcommittee chair is Mark Udall of Colorado, the nephew of Stewart Udall, Sharon's former boss, Sharon quoted Stewart Udall on a 1968 study of the river. A one-page fact sheet on the Partnership Program shows how the many projects in the watershed we have funded have leveraged federal funds. Sharon expects that the legislation will get tacked onto another bill. Contacting congressmen Hodes and Welch would be helpful. The National Park Service testified against the bill, with the same arguments they made in 2003 prior to Senate passage. NPS hosts a similar program for the Chesapeake.

d. Financial Update. The transition of records from Barb's office, after her death July 6, is progressing but Sharon does not yet have a financial report. We have received \$10,000 from the NH Charitable Foundation Atlas printing and presentations, and \$18,500 from TransCanada to build support for a ten year Great River Initiative, much of which can be supported through the Partnership.

e. Personnel. Nancy Franklin reported that the personnel committee, along with Sharon, is working on a job description to replace Barb's position. The position will be a "business and office manager" with much more involvement with the financial reporting. They hope to make a hiring decision by September. Norm Wright wondered if a business manager could make our relationship with Lawrence Reed & Associates auditing only – and not have the same firm doing accounting and auditing. Sharon explained that Reed has a "firewall" between the functions. She would prefer that we do data entry and Reed do monthly reports. Reed has the background and experience doing this, and charges us a very competitive rate. She would like the new person to grow into additional responsibilities. Gary Moore said he agrees with Norm, and that we should move toward separating the auditing and accounting functions. He thinks there is a perception problem when both accounting and auditing functions are done by the same firm. Joe Sampson suggests that we hire someone who can do the accounting function, whether that person does it immediately or not. Robert Harcke says that monthly statements are results of data entry in programs like QuickBooks. Peter Gregory explained that the intent is to advertise the position without a salary listed, and see what results we get, and if need be, allocate more funds. This is an opportunity to go to the next level in terms of reporting and accounting, capacity and technology. An information technology consultant will review hardware, software, and external backup, for free. The personnel committee is also looking at the benefits package, he said.

Sharon reported on the memorial service for Barbara, and Barb's dedication to the commissions. She revealed that a "generous contribution" of \$500 made several years

ago to cover lunches for one of our annual meetings – when we did not have the funds – was from Barbara.

3. Presentation: the Weeks State Park, the Weeks Act, and John Wingate Weeks.

Rebecca More and Mary Sloat. John Wingate Weeks is the great grandfather of Rebecca More, who lives in Providence, RI and in Lancaster. She teaches history at Brown University. The centennial of the Weeks Act is in 2011. She is looking at what influenced her great grandfather and how he came to introduce the legislation that bears his name and led to the creation of the WMNF, as well as other eastern national forests. Letters from constituents were important, as they raised concerns about the loss of fish and game species by numbers and type. Weeks, who lived in Lancaster to age 16, and then spent summers there, would have seen the results of sawmill residue and erosion clogging the streams, and the expansion of railroads and lumbering, and the growth of the paper industry. In 1883 the first NH forest commission noted that in the North Country wood was gone, the “mountains stripped to their summits.” Horrendous fires surrounded Whitefield, sparked by the railroads that brought tourists and took logs. Weeks’ environmental consciousness predated the forest crisis, however. Action on the issue stemmed from many interests, particularly around the effect of diminished river flow on industry in Manchester and the interest in navigable rivers. More explained the many connections between people involved in business and government, through work, marriage, or family. The Act was the work of many people, and she hopes the centennial will show this.

Mary Sloat is a former Weeks State Park manager. She explained that Weeks entertained many people in the main room with the spectacular views. Among them were George Patton and Herbert Hoover. The bird collection from the 1880s is downstairs, and was kept in the Lancaster Library for nearly 70 years. She emphasized that the many interests that came together to support the Weeks Act overcame the opposition’s “Not one cent for scenery” slogan from Joseph Cannon. The state of the land affected interstate commerce – if trees grew at the headwaters, rivers would be cleaner, and more useful for industry and navigation. In 1910 NH land cover was 10% forest – now it about 85%.

4. Joe Short, Northern Forest Center, Sustainable Economy Initiative (SEI).

Hank Swan introduced Short. Short said that the Weeks Act is a great early example of connecting landscape and economy, and making the case to people outside the region why the land and water here are important for them. The SEI hopes to do the same. It is looking a decade and more ahead, to changing uses of the region’s natural resources, and asking what an economy would look like that is dedicated to sustaining those resources. The SEI began in late 2005, all four states. NFC got an EDA grant, along with North Country Council. The four NF governors appointed representatives to a steering committee that included Hank Swan and Cleve Kapala. A “consensus blueprint” was created, with the vision that the region be globally recognized for its unique character and ecosystem that supports regional economies and communities. Ten strategic areas/actions were set: keep forests as forests; encourage a creative and growing economy; coordinate regional marketing; keep wealth in the region; renewable energy; improved telecommunications; improved existing transportation infrastructure. The plan

emphasizes follow through to prepare for future through research, forecasting, analyzing impact; establish coordinating body; continue to get federal funding. Some pilot projects on biomass and carbon markets are underway, and there is a proposed Northern Border Regional Commission, authorized in the farm bill, that may be source of investment. The regional commission complements our partnership program. The commission is focused on infrastructure, and not as much on ecological/social/cultural applications, which is where the Partnership Program could have a needed, complimentary role. All four state governors now support the recommendations in the SEI. SEI is meant to be used by organizations to advocate for their programs.

Sharon said that CRJC and NFC should support each other's legislative initiatives. Joe said he will talk about the Partnership Act when he is in DC.

5. Other Business. Sharon gave Cheston an extra office copy of the 1997 commemorative photo collage at the dedication of the Connecticut River Corridor Management Plan. It includes photos of Cheston and of Gov. Dean and Gov. Shaheen canoeing. Michaela reported that Bob Paquin on Sen. Leahy's staff is being replaced by Tom Berry, who used to work for Sen. Jeffords on natural resources, and is formerly the Lake Champlain director for TNC. He starts Aug. 10.

A general discussion moved to the crisis in dairy farming, described by Brendan Whittaker. He posed the question of what would happen to the ag land along the mainstem should the farms fail. He urged CRJC to consider contingencies. John Tucker suggested that the staff to prepare to respond to any movement by the states or federal government to address the issue, and that we invite the ag commissioners from both states to discuss the issues. Norm Wright commented on how topography here limits agriculture, and how the region has become dependent on the cow. Gayle and others noted the success of the Valley Food and Farm project (supported by the Partnership Program).

Adjourned at 3:20