



MT. ASCUTNEY REGION RIVER SUBCOMMITTEE Minutes - January 26, 2010

PRESENT: Ted Putnam and Jan Lambert, Charlestown; Margaret Perry and Tom Herson, Rockingham; Gil Whittemore, Weathersfield; Cordie Merritt, Hartland; Nancy Franklin (Plainfield), Adair Mulligan, CRJC

ABSENT: Cornish, Springfield, Claremont, Windsor

PUBLIC: Marie Caduto, VT DEC; Jane Osgood, Windsor; Kevin McCaffery, Stantec

1. Housekeeping: Noted the passing of Claremont representative Bob Woodman, a charter member of the Subcommittee. Welcomed new Weathersfield representative, Gil Whittemore. Minutes of the meeting of November 9 approved on motion by Tom, seconded by Margaret. CRJC has applied to VT Conservation License Plate Program for Watershed Grant to print the subcommittees' recreation plans, create portable exhibits on riparian buffers, purchase a laptop to free another for use by members and commissioners to give presentations, and print more copies of the water resources plan.
2. CT River Water Resources Management Plan - Adair encouraged members to give presentations to town boards and citizens in their own communities using the CDs that have been provided. Several members requested copies of the CD. Tom noted that Rockingham's Planning Commission is making copies of it for each member. Jan recommended sending it to the public access TV stations. Tom asked for an extra copy for Rockingham's soon-to-be-established Conservation Commission. Adair encouraged each member to identify recommendations in the plan that are appropriate for their town to consider, and to follow through.
3. Permit issues: proposal to discharge dioxin-contaminated groundwater through the outfall pipe of the Bellows Falls Wastewater Treatment Facility into the Connecticut River. This would come from groundwater collecting at construction site, a former paper mill site. Tom explained that the project is conceived as a way to bring revenue to the town from septage haulers, and is not needed to take care of town needs, since the WWTF is not being used to capacity. Saxtons River WWTF is having problems. Fish tissue in area is already contaminated with dioxin, a byproduct of paper manufacture. Marie Caduto pointed out that it is better to have more of the town's wastewater handled by WWTFs than individual septic systems. Monitoring wells for groundwater contamination have existed here for some time. Tom said people are unaware of the project. Will attend the Feb. 10 public hearing to find out potential alternatives and impacts.
4. Sumner Falls transfer of ownership: TransCanada will transfer property to Hartland, including small acreage in Plainfield, to fulfill requirement of new federal license for 15 Mile Falls dams. Hartland will transfer Plainfield land to that town. Cordie said that the Hartland Conservation Commission is quite excited about the prospect, and notes it is a great site. Condition of the road now is helpful in controlling traffic. Town will maintain it.
5. Tri-State Targeted Watershed Initiative - Adair recommended visiting the website, which has new information posted. She will give a presentation on results of WQ monitoring in Lebanon, which show that much progress has been made in cleaning up the river as CSOs are eliminated, and the river is now safe for recreation, including at Sumner Falls.
6. Commissary Brook - Margaret reported that there have been surveyors on the land at the slope failure site. Marie reported on DEC monitoring in October of the three brooks in the area. Very high aluminum was found on the small tributary where the failure occurred, and extremely high turbidity: Commissary Brook = 4.95, Little Commissary Brook 14.7, and the tributary 970, which means that essentially 10% of that brook's flow is solids. Heavy metals, especially copper and zinc, were very high. It is thought that these may be naturally occurring metals that readily adhere to clay particles, and are now being released. The brooks are now on the state's "C" list, needing further assessment before the state can determine what is going on.
7. Connecticut River Byway - Adair described this economic development program, and reported that there is a move afoot by the Vermont River Conservancy to create more organization of a Connecticut River Paddlers' Trail of canoe campsites along the river. The idea is to ensure better coordination without publicizing the trail so widely that it becomes abused. CRJC is working on a byway grant to create 8 driving tours and 4 bicycle tours with a history theme. She asked for advice on sites to visit and sites and routes to avoid. Jan expressed concern about visitors idling their cars at sites, and advised parking and walking. Tom suggested using the park

& ride lots such as near Herrick's Cove; people could bike to Green Mountain Marina and the Cove, and see the cornfields on Route 5 and the meetinghouse. Suggested basing tours out of Amtrak stations. Jan asked whether the Connecticut River Transit buses (small) could run bus tours. Jane Osgood said she thought the tours would inspire people to care about the region's many assets. Her goal is not high tourism, but local appreciation. She suggested destinations including Saint-Gaudens, North Star Canoe Livery, Cornish Colony Museum, Path of Life. Margaret said that while there are bicycle tours in Vermont, few focus on the river. Tom pointed out that heavy truck traffic can now use I-91, making the smaller roads safer for bicyclists. Jane said that visitor centers need maps with suggested tours. Should give information about mileage, and for cyclists, difficulty of the ride. Jan suggested involving the Upper Valley Trails Alliance. Jane suggested walking tours with three variations, such as a short downtown loop and then larger loops. Grafton VT has a walking path. Brattleboro has a new trails map that is available at a kiosk at Retreat Meadows and elsewhere in town.

8. Report from the Commissioners - met on Monday with Rick Kendall, the new supervisor at Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site. He will hold public meetings to receive comment on the project to restore the landscape, including cutting large pines to restore the view of Mt. Ascutney. Interested members are encouraged to attend.