

CRJC Headwaters Subcommittee
Thursday, October 26th, 2017
Littleton Community Center
Draft Minutes

Present:

Pauline Corzilius, Haverhill
Mary Dole, Ryegate
Jim Sherrard, Littleton
Rick Walling, Vice Chair, Bath
Jan Edick, Littleton
Ken Hunter, Monroe
Peter Cooper, guest
Kathy Urffer, CRC
Barbara Robinson, CRJC
Alex Belensz, staff

1. The meeting was called to order by Rick Walling at 7:07 and introductions were made. Rick announced that Stephanie was under the weather and unable to attend.
2. The minutes of the July 27th, 2017 meeting were approved as presented by motion of Sherrard/Corzilius.
3. Permits: a discussion was had over NHDES' Request for More Information letter for the AB Excavating project in Lancaster. Rick said he hoped that the subcommittee will see this application again after the applicant responds to NHDES. Rick suggested that a letter be sent to DES requesting an opportunity to review the revised application. He will coordinate with Stephanie on drafting the letter. Members did not see anything in letter regarding their comments about the scrub woods mitigation area that had been clear-cut. Jan indicated that the applicant had quite a bit of work to do with a limited timeframe.
4. Updates: Rick has not heard any updates regarding powerline or pipeline projects. Kathy said she would forward an article covering a recent New York State court case regarding the denial of Section 401 certification for a natural gas pipeline. If FERC wins the case, it could have implications for states' rights going forward.

Kathy provided an update on the FERC relicensing process for Connecticut River dams. Great River Hydro has been working with state and federal agencies to figure out the best flows for maintaining habitat in the main stem of the river. Having three dams (Wilder, Bellows Falls, and Vernon) makes this a lot more complicated. Great River Hydro has agreed to model a few river flow scenarios, but each model is expensive and time-consuming. They have agreed to make an inflow-outflow model and provide it to the fisheries biologist. Great River Hydro is concerned about losing the ability to generate electricity during peak times.

Jan mentioned that the FERC process for the 15 Mile Falls dam seemed to move a lot faster. All stakeholders were brought in at the beginning, which led to a faster and more equitable process. Kathy added that this process was sped up by a settlement process, so that TransCanada could proceed with the sale of the dam. The FERC process for the three Great River Hydro dams started in a similar vein, but has been complicated by the fact that there are three dams involved in the process. The FERC process is at a strange place – Great River Hydro has submitted their final application, but there are still multiple studies outstanding. The new erosion study is due November 15th, and the American eel study needs to be completed. Once the application process is completed, the Section 401 Water Quality Certification process will begin.

5. Annual report: Rick indicated that the professional staff have typically drafted the annual report. Alex said that Nick Altonaga from NCC would be drafting the annual report and sending it to Stephanie and Rick for their review. Alex indicated that they may need help from subcommittee members to make sure that all the major issues and efforts from the year are covered in the report.
6. Other business: Kathy gave an overview of her background and work as River Steward at CRC. She has taken over for David Deen at CRC, and maintains regular contact with David. The bulk of her work is focused on the FERC relicensing process for the Great River Hydro dams at Wilder, Bellows Falls, and Vernon along Connecticut River. CRC will be conducting a recreation survey to hone in on specific river access needs. Kathy is also involved in policy and regulatory processes in VT and NH, and offered to be of service to the subcommittee in any way she can be helpful. Rick indicated the subcommittee can assist CRC as well.

Rick has been planting trees on his riverfront property to build a riparian buffer and enhance bird habitat. CRC has assisted him in securing NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program funds for the project.

Alex alerted the subcommittee to changes in the NHDES Shoreland Program. Rick said there were improvements to regulations for riparian tree plantings that will improve the quality of riparian buffers.

Barbara provided an overview of North Country Council's work in the region. NCC provides support to northern NH through economic development, regional planning, grant writing, and advocacy. Recently, NCC worked with the Campton Village Water District to secure a NHDES grant to fund a fluvial geomorphology-based assessment of the Mad River to develop a plan for future restoration, infrastructure protections, and river management.

7. The next meeting will be on December 14th, 2017 at the Littleton Community Center.
8. A motion to adjourn was made by Edick/Dole at 8:06 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Alex Belenz.