

Wantastiquet Subcommittee
of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions
Wednesday, July 10, 2019
Spencer's Place, Walpole, NH
Minutes

Attendees

Walpole	Samantha Loch	X	Westminster	Paul Harlow	
Walpole			Westminster	Jim Calchera	
Westmoreland	Perry Sawyer	X	Putney	Joe Grutta	
Westmoreland			Putney		
Chesterfield	Roland Volbehr		Dummerston	Daniel Marx	
Chesterfield			Dummerston	Jack Lilly	X
Hinsdale	Joe Conroy		Brattleboro	Kathy Urffer	X
Hinsdale			Brattleboro	Michael Fairchild	X
Vernon	Andy White	X	Brattleboro (alt)	Michael Donovan	X
Vernon					

Olivia Uyizeye (Staff)

Ryan O'Donnell (Water Quality Monitoring Coordinator, CRC)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Uyizeye opens the meeting and introductions are made. No quorum is present.

2. Approve of Meeting Minutes

No quorum to approve minutes. Discussion had for those who were absent.

The permit reviewed at the May meeting, West Chesterfield Shoreland permit, was determined to not be of major concern. It was a septic plan away from the river, right in line with other existing septic systems. Some of these are on a high foundation due to being in the flood zone.

3. Permit Review

No new permits to review.

4. Chair Election

No quorum, tabled for the next meeting.

5. Review of Subcommittee Priorities

Hinsdale – Brattleboro Bridge Construction

Fairchild and Urffer report on the Existing Bridges Subcommittee (EBS). At the most recent meeting on May 23, a review of the project was given. The question was raised about what to do with the island that Hinsdale currently electrifies. It is often a location where homeless people have lived. It is common, historically, for people who are homeless to camp at spots along the river. The towns and US Fish & Game are working on relocating the individuals living on the island.

The EBS also considered engaging a public design process with design schools, including one that is currently working on a dam with the City of Keene. The meeting also covered general statistics and erosion.

There is also a bridge construction committee who has more authority on certain design decisions than the EBS.

Loch notes that the owners of the Whetstone Station (restaurant on the river) are interested in connecting in with the development of this area.

White asks who is going to care for the structures, paths and other components of the completed bridge replacement. No one present new clearly how this responsibility would be split up.

Water Quality Monitoring

Urffer reports on her conversations with Ted Walsh (NHDES) who runs the Volunteer River Assessment Program (VRAP). NH collected data from a series of sites along the river in 2004 with the expectation that CRJC would maintain this over the years; however, due to changes at CRJC, this did not occur. Urffer suggests using these 2004 sites as locations for the Wantastiquet LRS to conduct a pilot program in 2020. There are 5 sites in Wantastiquet's region. These sites are often right after the confluence with a tributary. There is one long term trend station in Northfield, MA. There are VRAP programs under way on the Ashuelot and Cold River that reps might consider shadowing for a day.

The data is collected by placing a meter in a bucket and then in the center of the river, which can be reached by bridge or boat. This meter measures temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen and often chlorides. The data is collected every month starting in May and ending in October. Teams are trained by NHDES and lent equipment to use. If the program continues past the pilot phase, then the equipment would need to be purchased. Reps ask if this is a cost CRJC could cover. What if other LRS take up the program as well at sites in their section of the river? Could equipment be shared to some degree? Questions are raised about what the commissioners are learning and planning in their focus on water quality. Uyizeye reports that they have been receiving presentations on the topic but is not aware of other activities. Uyizeye will follow-up with the commissioners for more information.

White notes that he often tracks some of these parameters in the river. Temperature came up very quickly this year.

Both states of NH and VT would accept this data with the appropriate QAQC protocol followed.

Donovan asks – what is our purpose in collecting this data? Is there someone else already doing it? If so, is that data public? If not, why not?

The data is collected to identify if rivers are impaired and need to be placed or kept on the Clean Water Act's section 303(d) list of impaired waters.

Multiple reps suggest contacting users of the river (e.g. wastewater treatment, drinking water systems) to discuss what they test from the river. Sawyer says that the Westmoreland nursing home gets its drinking water from the river. O'Donnell says users do not typically track more than what is required by their permit.

Loch asks if there are other items to test. O'Donnell responds that in Vermont they utilize labs to test for Nitrogen, Phosphorus and e-coli (tested every two weeks because it can change quickly and impacts swimming safety). These tests require more in collecting samples appropriately and getting them to the lab. Reps consider conducting this extra testing after a pilot phase with the meters.

Fairchild asks about sediment testing. O'Donnell says you can use a PVC tube and secchi disk to measure turbidity.

There is general consensus among the group to develop this monitoring program. Fairchild comments that he is surprised that this is not already being done. Urffer notes that state staff time is limited for the Connecticut River, most funds go to the sea coast and lakes. Concerns about the river are often blamed on the upstream party – New York to Connecticut to NH/VT.

Urffer will circle back to Walsh about training the group in March 2020 as a public event. Co-sponsors might include the Putney Rowing Club, Hooper Institute and the local Trout Unlimited chapter.

Uyizeye will follow-up with the Westmoreland nursing home with Sawyer about their process and water testing. Uyizeye will inquire with CRJC commissioners about initial thoughts about buying equipment.

6. Review meeting Schedule

Uyizeye asks if the group would like to consider a certain week and day to meet every month, rather than the doodle. Reps are undecided on this topic. It is decided to have the next meeting tentatively set for September 18, 5:30 pm in Westmoreland. Uyizeye will confirm the final date over email with all reps consulted.

7. Other Updates and Business

CRC Samplepalooza

One day where CRC seeks to collect samples from the CT River and tributaries. This was done in 2014, 2015, 2018 and is being planned for September 12, 2019. There is a hurricane date set for September 19. Tests are typically done for Nitrogen and Phosphorus. There are typically sample drop off points at various locations and a video training on sampling methods is available to new samplers. O'Donnell will be sending out a notice to start outreach for this year's event soon.

Aquatic Invasive Species Notice from Laurie Callahan

1.) There is a water chestnut survey/search & harvesting session scheduled for the Hinsdale/Vernon water chestnut site for Mon., July 22 from 9:30AM-12:30PM. If anyone is interested, please contact me (802-258-1877, therivermist@hotmail.com). Additional sessions will also be scheduled for August and September.

2.) I will be leading an aquatic plant/invasive aquatic species survey session on a section of the CT River in Springfield/Charlestown on Sunday, July 28. Time is yet to be determined. The session will last about 2.5-3 hours. I will provide basic aquatic plant identification instruction during the beginning of the session. We will launch from Hoyts Landing in Springfield and paddle upstream for about a mile, up one side and then back down the other side, then returning to Hoyts Landing. If anyone is interested, and to get more info, please contact me (802-258-1877, therivermist@hotmail.com).

3.) Soon I will be scheduling some additional AIS survey sessions in the Hinsdale/Vernon area adjacent to the known water chestnut site. Those will probably happen in late summer. Schedule will be provided when available.

4.) Due to our level of funding we will not be running the "AIS Info Blitz" at boat launches as was originally planned. The alternative plan is coming together and will probably include asking local river users (or folks recreating on lakes and ponds in the CT River watershed) to provide information about invasive aquatic species information and signage that is displayed or available at the boat access areas that they are using. I may create a Google form for folks to fill-out and submit or something similar. They will also be able to submit photos. This information will then be able to be used to improve messaging and information at the boat launches - as a start for 2019 or 2020. If anyone is interested in participating in this, they can contact me (802-258-1877, therivermist@hotmail.com). At the May meeting, I think it was Jim Calchera (Westminster?) that had expressed some interest in the possible "AIS Info Blitz" or improving boat access AIS information.

Laurie Callahan (mobile: 802-258-1877)

Aquatic Biologist/SE VT AIS Project, coordinator

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Olivia C. Uyizeye