

CRJC Riverbend Subcommittee
Minutes
 Thursday December 17th, 2020
 5:30PM
 Conference Call

CRJC’s mission is to preserve the visual and ecological integrity and sustainable working landscape of the Connecticut River Valley, and guide its growth and development through grassroots leadership. Five local river subcommittees carry out this work with a corps of over 100 volunteers.

Attendance

Lancaster	Rob Christie	✓	Monroe	Ken Hunter		Guildhall		
Lancaster			Monroe			Guildhall		
Dalton	Michael Crosby		Bath	Rick Walling	✓	Lunenburg		
Dalton	Gal Potashnick	✓	Bath			Lunenburg		
Littleton	Jim Sherrard		Haverhill	Pauline Corzilius		Concord	Deborah Noble	✓
Littleton	Jan Edick		Haverhill	Dale Lewis		Concord		
Waterford	William (Bill) Piper	✓	Barnet	Bill Graves		Ryegate	Mary Dole	
Waterford			Barnet	John Fairchild		Ryegate		
Newbury	Scott Labun	✓						
Newbury								

Sacha Pealer (River Scientist, VT ANR); Olivia Uyizeye (CRJC Staff)

Minutes

1. Review of Conference Call Tools and Public Meeting Guidelines

Chair Walling called the meeting, conducted via conference call, to order at 5:32 PM under the emergency provisions of RSA 91-A, New Hampshire’s Right-to-Know law, as allowed by Emergency Order 11 under Executive Order 2020-04 in light of the COVID-19 outbreak.

2. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Walling conducted a roll call of LAC members, invited any guests to introduce themselves, and welcomed all present.

3. Speaker on River Corridor and Floodplain Protection

Sacha Pealer - River Scientist, VT ANR

Pealer introduces herself. Her work focuses in Northeastern Vermont. (See slides for more details).

Pealer discusses different values of the river corridor and increasing impacts of flooding and related disasters throughout the state. 2011 was a significant year for flooding along Lake Champlain and NE VT. There are generally two types of flooding: inundation (which is all about

elevation) and erosion (flash flooding, a lot of movement of earth materials where elevation does not provide as much protection). The River Program in VT looks to better plan for these types of events. *No Adverse Impact* means no harm to yourself or your neighbors in any project.

NFIP is the starting point for floodplain management in the US. It is administered by FEMA while the state plays a role in technical assistance. Communities can sign up, allowing access to services if they agree to enforce certain regulations. If a participating community, it must have permits for development in designated floodplains. Much of the focus is on raising homes so their first floor is above the base flood elevation.

Also, VT is looking to go beyond this structural focus and preserve floodplains for the benefits that it provides – store and slow flood waters. The State is promoting higher standards for maintenance of the floodplain. Also, the State is encouraging communities to keep critical facilities outside of hazard areas. Any new investments should avoid these areas. In VT, much of the damage is outside of the designated flood zone, largely due to erosion flooding. Pealer explains that many of the flood maps are very old, even up to 40 years. They are working on updates to these maps in Riverbend, but unsure when this will happen. Typically it is about a 4 year process, if funding continues. Even these updates have their limits. The maps may not account for debris& ice effects, changes in development, climate&precipitation change, and river channel movement.

River corridors is a program that VT is actively trying to give rivers the space to have the most stable meander pattern. Rivers are *not static*. The channel is the *symptom* of what is happening now. When a river has less space to move it becomes steeper, where it gets more energy, more powerful flow events. As a result it impacts more on the riverbanks and undermining structures. Statewide river corridor maps can be found at tinyurl.com/floodreadyatlas

On the Connecticut River there is not yet mapping of the river corridor in its entirety. These maps can be used in various ways for conservation, emergency planning, etc. Act 250 land use permits considers floodways as part of its process. Also, a flood hazard area and river corridor permit that was enacted in 2015 and managed by the State provide for some limitations on uses where communities have fewer controls, such as electric corridors and agriculture.

Restoration of rivers and natural floodplains has a broad array of strategies from easements to restoring riparian forests. River corridor easement programs allow a landowner along a river to be compensated for putting land in an easement where it can be preserved and provides a buffer/habitat for the river. This is a long view, passive strategy.

Floodplain restoration is a more active restoration. Pealer explains an example of where an area was flooded in Northfield VT, where up to 17 impacted homes were bought. There was enough area in a continuous spot that it was able to be transformed into a public park, also allowing floodplain functions to return. Pealer explains different resources available for information on corridors, trainings, etc.

- Labun asks if a manure facility or spreading has any regulatory oversight. Pealer explains the 2015 law has some control; however the glitch is that it does not apply in communities not a part of NFIP. Communities do not have the right to regulate agriculture generally. Agency of Agriculture has rules about where/how you can spread. In river corridors, it is more related to infrastructure than direct water quality impacts.

Permit applications in VT related to the river corridor, often allow for a period of public comment.

- Walling explains types of permits received in VT related to injections from Cabot, electric facilities. Pealer can send information on how to sign up for ENB notices for permits in the region.
- Walling asks for more information on the project in Northfield VT because of a project being worked on in Lisbon NH that will be very similar, run by ACT and CRC. Pealer mentions another project done by CRC, a dam removal in East Burke, which opened up fish habitat and free flowing river benefits. Potashnick asks about what kind of outreach was done in advance of the project to ensure that residents are informed about what will happen in the area. Pealer explains how CRC – Ron Rhodes has a lot of experience doing that kind of outreach. In Northfield VT, there was a lot of outreach done around the buyout. They found that involving the community on how the area can be transformed to continue benefiting the residents despite the loss of the neighborhood, was important.
- Pealer explains that there will be a public process for the river corridor maps for the Connecticut River. Likely the comment period will occur next winter. RPCs would be aware of when these happen. Pealer says she will see about how the LRS might be notified of updates in the process. It might not be up on ENB.
- Noble explains how their area is influenced by railroads, some of which are turned into rail trails. Pealer explains that typically corridor designations stop for railroads or state highways because of the significant community investment, meaning it is very unlikely these would be moved if damage was done. There are rail trail examples where some adjustments are made to allow flood waters to access areas beyond. There is a need to get all transportation entities on board. It is likely they will not be moved, but it is worth talking about and discussing restoration benefits and changes where able.
- Pealer invites members to contact her with any questions or feedback:
sacha.pealer@vermont.gov

4. Approve Meeting Minutes from June

Walling opens up the December minutes for comment. Labun makes a motion to accept the minutes. Piper seconds the motion. The motion passes unanimously by roll call vote with one abstention.

5. Permit Reviews

a. Portland Pipeline crossing at Israel River

Willing describes that the pipeline owner was looking for a local project so not to pay into ARM fund, but rather fund a project directly. However, no project was found so they did pay into the fund. Christie describes that there was some discussion about whether the impacted area in Lancaster would get priority if applied for ARM funds at a later date. Some assurance was given that they would have priority. Christie explains that Lancaster is now looking at potential projects. Generally the CC did not have any major issues for the project. Walling explains that it is just outside of Connecticut River corridor. A few years ago, Riverbend received several

presentations on the Portland Pipeline topic. An earlier iteration of the project received comments with many concerns from communities and river groups. Christie indicates the community will keep an eye on the project.

b. Seasonal Dock, Monroe

Walling describes a seasonal dock permit that requested signature prior to the current meeting in Monroe. Walling explains that he did sign the permit. There is a walkway to the dock, so he was not concerned about erosion. Also, the design seemed to follow all the expectations for putting up a dock in NH

6. Other Business

a. Water quality testing

Christie indicates there being some interest in Dalton. Potashnick will inquire in Dalton for volunteers. Walling explains there's been an active group for many years along the Ammonoosuc, using the VRAP protocol. It seems to work best for 3 people. The main challenge for the Connecticut River is the distance between sites. Testing takes place over 4-5 months during the warm season. Christie asks if this is something that requires watercraft. Walling says no it is either from the shore or from a bridge (not appropriate for a river as big as the Connecticut River).

b. Public Article Review

Uyizeye will share the draft for member contributions over email.

c. Headwaters Meeting with Ben Copans – January 28th at 7pm

Riverbend members are invited to attend the January Headwaters meeting to hear a presentation by Ben Copans about the draft basin plan related to the region in VT.

d. Commissioners update & Annual town report

Uyizeye explains that commissioners are starting to get into the GRH-FERC relicensing conversations after submission of the final application. Commissioners are also working to bring attending and concerted planning efforts around the questions of increased migrations into the Connecticut River Valley due to impacts such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. Uyizeye has submitted the annual town report on the Riverbend LRS to communities.

7. Adjourn

Piper makes a motion to adjourn the meeting. Christie seconds the motion. The motion passes unanimously by roll call vote.

Next Meeting

Thursday, March 18, 2021
5:30PM

Minutes Respectfully Submitted by Olivia Uyizeye