



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.

Connecticut River Joint Commissions

Full Commissions Meeting
 Monday, February 13th, 2023 - 2 PM
 Hybrid Meeting – Kilton Library, Lebanon, NH

ATTENDANCE

| NH CRVRC COMMISSIONERS | | | VT CRWAC COMMISSIONERS | | |
|------------------------|---|--------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------|
| NCC | OPEN | | Sec. Nat. Resources | Marie Caduto | P |
| UVLSRPC | Ted Cooley | V | NVDA | Beth Torpey | V |
| SWRPC | Jeffrey Miller Harriet Davenport (alt) | P X | WRC | Chris Company Margo Ghia (alt) | X P |
| CRC | Ken Hastings | P | MARC | Jason Rasmussen | V |
| CRFCC | OPEN | | TRORC | Pete Fellows | V |
| Hydro-Electric | Jen Griffin | P | RPC#5 | OPEN | |
| Conservation | OPEN | | At Large | Steve Lembke | P |
| Tourism | OPEN | | At Large | Beth Kennett | V |
| Agricultural | OPEN | | At Large | OPEN | |
| Forest Products | OPEN | | At Large | OPEN | |
| At Large | Jim McClammer | X | At Large | OPEN | |
| At Large | OPEN | | At Large | OPEN | |
| At Large | OPEN | | At Large | OPEN | |
| At Large | OPEN | | At Large | OPEN | |
| At Large | OPEN | | At Large | OPEN | |

Note: P = present in person; V = present over remote virtual platform; X = not present

Additional attendance

In Person: Rich Holschuh, The Atowi Project; Olivia Uyizeye, Staff Consultant.

Virtual: Gail Golec, Monadnock Archaeological Consulting; Kate Buckman, NH River Steward, CRC; Kathy Urffer, VT River Steward, CRC; Markelle Smith, Friends of Conte; Kristen Sykes, Friends of Conte

AGENDA

2:00 PM Convene

1. Welcome

President Griffin starts the meeting at 2:07pm. Commissioners and guests in attendance introduce themselves.

2. Speaker – Rich Holschuh and Gail Golec on the Kchi Pontegok Project

Rich Holschuh and Gail Golec speak about the Kchi Pontegok project that was awarded funding by the National Park Service in June 2022 through the Historic Preservation Fund, Underrepresented Community Grant program. The following is a summary of the presentation:

- The Kchi Pontegok project is a collaboration between the Elnu-Abenaki tribe and Rockingham Historic Preservation Commission to bring funds to a place-based collaboration. Federal funds can be onerous with multiple barriers to entry, however this group of partners was able to pull together a sound proposal that was funded and kicked off on September 1, 2022.



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- Partners Holschuh and Golec are managers for the project. The project is being lead by many volunteers, a number of whom are members of indigenous tribes of the Valley, which is pretty unique. The group hopes this project will set an example for other projects that might come up along the Connecticut River Valley. Approaching this project from a concept of relationships.
- Rockingham Historic Preservation Commission acts as the administrative entity. Rockingham looking to do history walking tours using story maps. Mapping can be added to over time.
- State agencies. Overall feel support by NH and VT state organizations for historic preservation and environment. In communication with NHDOT on the expected upgrade to Vilas Bridge off the Bellows Falls Island. Also, taking part in the FERC relicensing for the mainstem dams which could provide added resources.
- Privacy Issues. Aspects for privacy and sacred/cosmology issues that will not be public.
- Timeline – This winter is a time for background research and logistical coordination. Spring 2023 will be a time for site work and ground surveys using known information about Connecticut River sites. There will be no digging. The project is building up contextual information for the petroglyphs site at Bellows Falls. They will be building on folk talks and physical structures in the region. They will also be looking at the Brattleboro petroglyphs that have been under water since the very early 1900's. Annette Spaulding, a diver with many years of experience exploring the underwater Connecticut River, is also a volunteer for this project.
- Maps. These tools have come a long way. Initially 2D resources that were hard to modify, they are now able to handle 3D information and be regularly updated and communicated to communities. This allows for a higher inclusivity of “layers” of landscape and cultural information. The project is working with professional mappers and will be doing additional fundraising in order to pay related costs.
- Research. The project will perform document based research that shows up in oral history, literature, town documents. Focused on the petroglyph site with a national register ranking. This project intends to elevate the petroglyph site to its own significance, as it is currently part of a larger historic district with industrial history.
- Great Falls/Bellows Falls. The petroglyphs site is in an area known today as Bellows Falls. This comes from the Great Falls for which the Abenaki word is Kchi Pontegok. A set of falls have been there for a long time with human presence for upwards of 13,000 years with European settlement since 1760. A different set of values reflected by these peoples. Brownfield sites all over the place. The different sets of values and how they leave a footprint on the landscape is demonstrated at this site. Decisions by Euro-American peoples leave a larger footprint, decisions that have to be lived with now such as the multiple brownfield in the island area. Part of this project is to help represent those differences and also how values have changed internally to place-based cultures over time.
- Kchi Pontegok. Carvings on rocks or petroglyphs stand out as an anomaly among the industrial use on the island. Most of which is now in disrepair. The petroglyphs are not in very good shape from erosion, river, human maltreatment. Carvings on rock should not be looked at as art, nor as graffiti made on a whim. The project seeks to tease out what that is and a different way of looking at things. This area is the most significant place on the Connecticut River for cosmological significance.
- River. The project will promote the greater concept of place with the river as the central motif. The petroglyph site is on the river itself, so has to do with the river and the watershed and will be incorporated as an essential piece of the research.



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- Work of this sort happens elsewhere in the country, although there is none similar in the Connecticut River Valley.
- Indigenous. People are indigenous because of the place, not people who are just dropped there. It's the place that matters first and then everything else. People belong in the earth. Once there, how they behave is a different matter, which is when culture comes in.
- Throughout history have taken their take of those figures, but not much from those who were a part of. A lot more there that is going on, want to recover those stories, create context, enliven, and encourage better understanding that leads to relationship. Cannot be in a relationship if you do not understand. Abenaki world seen as happening there, that perspective not well understood.
- Children matter. Work of the future, built on the past. Our responsibility to pass it on in the best way possible.

Following the presentation, a discussion is had with CRJC Commissioners. The following topics were covered:

- What is the study area for the project? Focused on the petroglyphs themselves as the center of the project. In order to make that case, the wider landscape will be looked at. There are constraints with time. The intention is to stretch south to the MA border because of the petroglyph site there. Then maybe 30 miles north, Ascutney/maybe White River. May have to scale back a little for time reasons with report due Summer 2024.
- Brattleboro petroglyphs condition is good. They are under silt and have not experienced much erosion.
- Similar efforts? Not sure through NPS, but yes more generally. Traditional cultural properties or landscapes.
- Caduto explains interest from VT ANR and DOT to do a wayfinding project. There is also movement to recognize the Bellows Falls area as an outstanding water resource. A similar designation cannot be made in NH as those designations are based solely on water quality.
- The Kchi Pontegok site is located at the narrowest place on the river. The amount of energy (used now as hydro head) at this location is incredible. A lot of dynamism among the different elements that come into place. Montague site is most comparable with no known petroglyphs.
- Lembke asks if there may be any role of a bi-state meeting here? This is an opportunity to directly engage with specific stakeholders. Jen invites Rich and Gail to listen in on the upcoming discussion to get a sense of what is happening.

3. Connecticut River Watershed Partnership Act

Markelle Smith and Kristen Sykes share an overview of the Friends of Conte organization and their effort to advance the Connecticut River Watershed Partnership Act (CRWPA). Slides presented at the meeting are attached to these minutes.

Friends of Conte is the only refuge bound by a watershed. The collaboration of organizations works together to advance the health of the watershed, with success in land conservation. The Connecticut River was the first National Blueway.

The CRWPA runs in line with similar acts on behalf of the Delaware and Chesapeake. Another is moving through the legislature now related to the Hudson. These Acts bring more funding to bear on the impacted watershed and/or waterbody. For example, Increasing access to open space and trails, active transportation, and land conservation. Congressman McGovern (MA) has agreed to introduce the



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Act in the house. Senator Shaheen (NH) will be the lead in the senate. Friends of Conte hopes the CRWPA will receive bi-partisan support as these types of efforts have done in the past. There will first be hearings before the relevant committees, and we are asking partners and individuals to provide a sign on letter of support along with comments.

4. Adopt/Review Minutes of September

Griffin opens the September meeting minutes for review. No comments are made.

By motion of Lembke/Miller, the minutes are approved as presented. The motion passes unanimously.

5. Financial Report and Status of FY2023 deliverables & budget

Griffin postpones this item to the February Executive Committee meeting, and final review at the March Full Commissions meeting.

6. Revitalization and Assessment Plan

Griffin explains that this plan is a way for Commissioners to see what needs to move forward, keep on time, and direct support from staff. The plan has helped Commissioners to realize how effective this group can be, especially related to bi-state meetings.

a. Goal 1, Funding

Griffin reports that the Vermont Contract was received. The required press release was distributed. The New Hampshire payment of invoices that was held up for a period has been paid. Caduto reports that she has been asked to make the funding a round number. Currently \$30,771, Caduto will request \$35,000. The New Hampshire contract may also see an increase, although Griffin and Uyizeye have not yet heard the final decision. Miller asks whether it is NHDES or the legislature decide the yearly approved budget. This will be checked on.

b. Goal 5, Bi-state discussions: Climate Migration & Water Quality

Griffin notes that the climate migration forum, previously under Goal 9 has been moved to this Goal as it is seen as a bi-state discussion. Each bistate discussion takes on a life of its own, with CRJC taking leadership in coordination.

Caduto reports on the water quality bi-state discussion. There were two sessions. After which, there has been some attention paid to ensuring the USGS gage at MA border continues to receive funding. It was previously funded by the State of Massachusetts. Losing this regular data on Nitrogen and other parameters would be a critical loss. In response, USEPA requested the Long Island Sound Study group to evaluate their ability to fund the gage. This costs approximately 20-30K per year. This funding mechanism appears to be a good one, and we are waiting for final confirmation of these funds being available. On another water quality issue, Tracie Sales has made us aware of a New Hampshire workgroup studying the cyanobacteria problem along with possible action steps. Although this problems appears to be more significant on the NH side, it is likely an appropriate future topic for this bi-state.

Griffin and Lembke report on the climate migration forums. The intention is to bring together municipalities and planners to have a joint discussion. This series of events will be in coordination with AUNE who is also hosting two in-person events.

Lembke and Kennett are in conversation about an agricultural bistate, which is likely to be a useful exercise.

c. Goal 6, CRJC-LRS relationship: LRS Survey Results



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Hastings provides a recap and update on the LRS survey, which was sent out to members to evaluate what they thought of their work, the Commissioners, how they can interrelate. The survey results are now summarized as a spreadsheet, and the goal group intends to compile a simplified version on the results and Commissioner response. Then bring that back to the LRS members and create a vehicle by which we can solve some of these problems.

- Hastings was able to attend 3/5 LRS meeting so far.
- Hastings highlights that LRS are the building blocks of what the Commissioners do. Confusion about what the commissioners themselves do and how to help LRS carry out their jobs.
- Expected more negative responses. At least a group of them understand what that relationship is, not all of them but a solid group.
- Commissioners need to help them carry out their jobs as best as possible. One thing that came out is they don't know what we do or the purpose.
- One action is Commissioners attending these LRS meetings, more possible now that they are hybrid. The benefits of having Commissioners participating is critical. It tells LRS what Commissioners are doing who you are, and to bring ideas back. Do not be afraid of attending the LRS meetings. Chirp in if you know anything. Be willing to introduce yourself as a Commissioners
- Another idea is to invite LRS members to the full commission meeting, even just one representative.
- Another idea is to have a yearly online training session to help members navigate resources, and for long standing members to share their experiences.
- Mention is made of the 5-year strategic plan. The original intention was to craft one with the LRS after the Commissioners, which was never done.

d. Goal 8, Recruitment

Lembke provides a recruitment update. The goal is to have 4-8 Commissioners/Advisors by the end of this Fiscal year. There is concern for when members step down but are unable to replace themselves. The only thing that is different now, is that we are inspired and encouraged by the bistate discussions, which is a reason to participate. Lembke will be working with staff to fill some of these slots before the end of this fiscal year.

7. Priorities and Fundraising Primer –

Griffin indicates that there is a need to update the revitalization and assessment plan. What are the priorities, timelines and specific goals going to be for the next fiscal year? Lembke offers to draft this phase 2 plan for others to review.

a. 2023 Proposal for Speaker Series and Social Events, Known Grant Opportunities

Uyizeye explains there is a need to review existing programming to identify goals and available budget for each in the next fiscal year. A summary specific to the speaker series and social events has been provided, and will be discussed further at meeting later this February and in March. There may also be additional actions that can be taken identified through other lines of conversation, such as in recruitment and for the LRS. Given current budget limitations, there may be some trade offs needed to prioritize goals. There may also be a need for additional fundraising. Two grants are the NHCFF Unrestricted grant and the Long Island Sound Futures Fund.

8. LRS Update



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Uyizeye informs Commissioners that an update to LRS activity is available as a summary in your meeting documents. No questions are raised.

9. Hydro-relicensing Update

Griffin shares that FERC is now requiring updates from First Light every two weeks on their settlement process, with a deadline set for the end of March. You can see those updates now on the FERC website. At that point FERC will perform an environmental assessment on the three lower Connecticut River dams owned by GRH, and initiate next stages of comment.

10. Other Business

Caduto informs commissioners that the Herrick's cove festival will return this year, for the first time since the COVID-19 outbreak. The event tends to be large and may be an opportunity to get the word out on CRJC. The event is planned for May 7.

4:00 PM Adjourn

Griffin thanks everyone for attending.

By motion of Caduto/Miller the meeting is adjourned. The motion passes unanimously.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Olivia Uyizeye.