

Housatonic River Commission

"to coordinate on a regional basis the local management and protection of the Housatonic River Valley in northwestern Connecticut"

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of September 11, 2018 with Core Coordinating Committee (subject to approval at next regular meeting) at Housatonic Valley Association office, Cornwall Bridge, CT

Lynn Fowler – North Canaan – A
Christian Allyn – North Canaan – P
Karl Munson – Canaan (Falls Village) – A
Ellery Sinclair – Canaan (Falls Village) – A
Gordon Whitbeck – Salisbury – P
Stacie Weiner – Salisbury – P
William R. Tingley – Chairman – Sharon – P

(Acronyms listed on last page)

Phil Hart – Vice-chairman – Cornwall – P
Barton Jones – Cornwall – A
Jesse Klingebiel – Secretary – Kent – P
Steve Robey – Kent – P
Marc Andreotto – New Milford – P
Robert Gambino – New Milford – P

Also present were: Jocelyn Ayer, NHCOG; Liz Lacy, NPS; Mike Jastremski and Courteny Morehouse, HVA; Mike Humphries, CT DEEP; Tom Zetterstrom, Invasive Knotweed Network Coordinator, and Victor Flores; Nancy Bennett, home owner - applicant, Edward Estico, builder; Roger Liddell, Sharon Land Trust, and one member of the press.

Mr. Tingley called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

The minutes of the July 10, 2018 regular meeting were approved with the following correction:
replace second paragraph under GE Settlement/PCBs with According to the EPA there are around three million cubic yards of sediment in the rest of river containing high levels of PCBs. General Electric's plan for the rest of river is to remove one million cubic yards of this high level PCB sediment. The environmental groups are calling this a 25% "clean up". One of the proposed three landfills could contain one million cubic yards after dewatering. The other two sites could be used for staging and dewatering.

Treasurer's Report – Mr. Whitbeck reported \$198.86 in checking and \$4,828.48 in savings.
Ms. Ayer added that all dues for this fiscal year are in except for North Canaan and New Milford.

Communications

- Mr. Tingley said he has spoken with Mr. Sinclair, who has been absent due to illness, but is keeping current with HRC activity and plans to attend a meeting soon.
- Ms. Ayer distributed the draft, written by Mr. Klingebiel, of the Annual Report (to be included in town reports). Commissioners signed off on the report.

New Business

- HRC application for building at 22 Old Route 7 in Sharon - Ms. Bennett said that the application for the house on the property was approved approximately five years ago. Mr. Tingley visited the property and said that the proposed garage is quite a distance from the river. The commissioners signed off on the application.

Housatonic River Coordinating Committee – member updates

- HVA – River Stewards Program – Ms. Morehouse gave an overview of this summer's River Information and Outreach – RIO activities. Teams of two interns focused on four main sites (two near the Gaylordsville Bridge, the Bend in West Cornwall, and Great Falls in Falls Village) every weekend from noon to 5 p.m. from June 5 to August 5, to determine use (and abuse) and to

interview visitors. The busiest area was at the Falls and overall 70% of people were from Connecticut, fewer from New York and Massachusetts. Trash cans and bathroom facilities were highly recommended by visitors. The next steps are to improve protocol, take more photographs, collect more data, and show a greater presence.

Ms. Weiner noted that parking on the road is an issue at the Falls.

- CT DEEP – Mr. Humphries distributed DEEP Fisheries: Upper Housatonic River Recreational Use Survey, Summer 2018. The intent of the survey was “to determine the recreational use of the Housatonic River, including fisheries and other resources” and took place between Memorial Day and Labor Day over 13 river zones on Saturdays and Sundays and holidays. Among other details, results from Mr. Jastremski and summer assistants’ work concluded that the greatest use was picnicking/swimming (21% anglers), the biggest use days were holidays and hot sunny weekends, “areas with restricted access or aggressive monitoring by volunteers remained relatively free of garbage,” but that “areas with open access and less/no monitoring were heavily trashed and abused.”

It was noted that proper signage is important, with permanent signs replacing the current temporary signs.

- NHCOG – Ms. Ayer talked about Sustainable Connecticut. It’s a certification program that awards points to municipalities based on best practices for a wide range of any of 100 different items (watershed protection, education re: invasives, etc.). Cornwall is a participant. NHCOG will work with any town wanting to take part.
- NPS – Ms. Lacy said that progress on the Wild & Scenic designation is moving forward, but very slowly. It is almost out of review and on its way to the next step, which is public and agency review, all still being dealt with internally at NPS. Stefan Bastrzycki has finished his work.

Ongoing Issues/Updates

- The Bend – Mr. Jastremski (HVA) explained that the design elements remain the same, although there are a few changes in other areas. In order to minimize excavation, they will be building from the existing grade up, and the port-a-let location has been moved a bit.

Mr. Tingley has reviewed the plans thoroughly with Mr. Jastremski, noting that it is a high profile spot and it is important that the project be done right. Mr. Jastremski has assured the HRC that they have a say in what happens at the riverbank regarding access for boaters/fishermen, and the hydraulics of the river.

Mr. Hart made a motion to accept the plan for The Bend as presented by HVA at this meeting, and the intentions that have been included. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

- Invasive species management – Mr. Zetterstrom – Over one year ago he suggested that Japanese knotweed is incompatible with a Wild & Scenic river. Over the past year a Japanese Knotweed Network of paddlers was organized by Mr. Zetterstrom. Several teams surveyed sections comprising HRC’s entire 42 miles of the river, identifying locations of knotweed. Despite the variable number of identified sites, dealing with the invasive is still feasible. This will require layers of cooperation among land trusts, Connecticut DOT, federal agencies, and private landowners.

Mr. Zetterstrom showed photos of knotweed-free locations, as well as a worst-case location on the west side of the river above the Covered Bridge. Rhizomes can extend 65’ underground and there is no reason to expect expansion will stop. If, however, it could be controlled (standard

treatment is with glyphosate which on average biodegrades within two months) in the 42-mile stretch, it could become the only free-flowing river without knotweed in the northeast.

Ms. Ayer asked what it would cost to treat all identified sites.

Mr. Tingley suggested that people bringing in fill should be responsible, as that is the source of much contamination by invasives, adding that the railroad tends to dump fill randomly.

Ms. Ayer asked if Mr. Zetterstrom could attend a NHCOG meeting with a presentation, and with further cost estimates of treating Japanese knotweed.

Ms. Lacey mentioned that there have been rounds of funding for invasives control from other agencies, but that the NPS budget could not support the cost.

Mr. Tingley asked if there were studies of negative environmental effects of herbicide use.

- River Access – Mr. Tingley and Mr. Klingebiel paddled the length of the HRC portion of the river and noted lack of access in some areas, and excess access in others.
- Railroad – there is major track and tie replacement taking place in Massachusetts. Mr. Allyn said a meeting concerning the railroad will be held in October or November in North Canaan. He also said that the DOT is doing track reconstruction in Canaan at road crossings.

Standing Report

- GE Settlement/PCBs – tabled
- **Comments** – Mr. Whitbeck mentioned that for the first time, he saw a jet ski on the river at his farm in Salisbury.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

Next regular meeting October 9, 2018

Next Coordinating Committee November 13, 2018

Recording Secretary,

A photograph of a handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Susan Francisco". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a slightly larger name at the top and a more stylized first name below it.

Susan Francisco

CCC – Citizens Coordinating Committee
CT DOT – Connecticut Department of Transportation
DEEP – Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
EAB – Environmental Appeals Board
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency
FERC – Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency
GE – General Electric
H.E.A.L. – Housatonic Environmental Action League

HRC – Housatonic River Commission
HVA – Housatonic Valley Association
MOA – Memorandum of Understanding
NCD – Northwest Conservation District
NHCOG – Northwest Hills Council of Governments
NPS – National Park Service
NRD – Natural Resource Damages
RIO - River Information and Outreach
RSRS – Rail Service Restoration Society
W&S – Wild and Scenic
ZEO – Zoning Enforcement Officer