

**DEERFIELD RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
MEETING MINUTES**

DATE: Monday, July 17, 2023 **TIME:** 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

LOCATION: Google Meet this month.

	Bruce Lessels	X	Chris Bathurst
X	Charlie Olchowski		Ryan O'Donnell (Kelsey Wentling from CRC joined on Ryan's behalf)
X	David Boles		Sheila Kelliher
X	Jim Perry	X	Terry Atkinson
	Chris Curtis	X	Patrick McCoy

Special Guests:

- **Jack Widness** - VT Representative
- **Michael Fernandez** - District Manager of the Bennington County Conservation District.
- **Ron Rhodes** - CRC Interim Exec. Director

PURPOSE: Regular Monthly Meeting – **Please let Jim know if you cannot attend.**

LIST OF TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED

--Call to order

--Review past minutes – **May 15, 2023 and June 19, 2023** (No quorum in June) **All board members present voted to approve May and June 2023 meeting minutes** (Jim Perry)

--Identify **New Agenda Items** not included in this proposed agenda.

Board Member Reports -

- **President & Vice Presidents:** (Jim Perry – President; Chris Curtis – 1st VP; Charlie Olchowski 2nd VP)
 - Guest: **Michael Fernandez.** District Manager of the Bennington County Conservation District.

- *Michael reached out in regards to a newly initiated floodplain restoration project in the town of Readsboro. He's working closely with the Town Select Board and Josh Carvahall from Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) to develop a work plan focused on removing the collapsed bridge on Old County Lane. Additionally, we plan to remove a large portion of the road surface that is causing the break in the floodplain. The work will likely be delayed due to the fund being reallocated to FEMA buyouts. Waiting on a new fund cycle to resume the process.*
- *We are hoping to secure a letter of support from your organization, highlighting the importance of the Deerfield River and the overall significance of this project.*
- Michael will send a summary doc including maps to DRWA to provide additional information to help inform the board.
- **Board to consider voting on sending a letter of support once additional information has been provided.**
- Michael asked about the impact of flooding on the Deerfield after recent storms. Kelsey spoke w/ the landowner on the North River restoration project who reported that there was no significant damage.
- Michael shared information about resources available to farmers who were impacted by loss as a result of flooding (e.g., cost sharing resources/funding available) and emergency water quality measuring requests. Michael can provide additional information upon request and as he learns more about his efforts in Vermont.
- DRWA Search for Additional Directors (ongoing):
- Mail & Email Call: Do we have any? (Jim)
- CRC Liaison: Latest news -
 - The search for a CRC executive director is ongoing. Currently down to two candidates, hopefully with a new Executive Director to start as soon as possible (Kelsey, Ron)
 - CRC to install a bridge and new culvert on Beaver Brook in VT (Ron)
 - Before the new Executive Director is in place, Ron and Chris will work to help resolve the financial reporting info we have been missing. Ron sees \$51k 2021, (as a result of holding funds for the Cromack project). \$4k balance shown in 2022. Ron is working on updated reports to show the current account balance. Discrepancy between donations received in 2022 and expenses. Need for Jim, Patrick, Ron and Chris R to meet to sort through financial

statements to meet in person before the August DRWA board meeting to rectify. Patrick to suggest a few options for times to meet.

- CRC's financial accounting system (MIP) can't report based on project (e.g., Green River Festival, trail maintenance). Need to create a process for DRWA to get line of sight into how invoices are being processed by CRC. Right now, Jim is not aware of any invoices being paid out of DRWA's account. CRC can associate a project code for invoices, but cannot get this into MIP financial reporting.
- New process to be discussed: for any invoices submitted to CRC, Jim NEEDS to be cc'd in any communications to approve expenses for our own budget line tracking purposes.

Watershed Projects:

- Northern Watershed Update - Update on what types or issues and actions are occurring in the Vermont end of the Deerfield River watershed. (Jack Widness)
 - Fly Fishing Film Tour Event at Latchis Theater in Brattleboro:
 - *Chris C attended a TU working group meeting today to plan for this event, which will benefit DRWA's Wild and Scenic efforts. This event is September 14, please put it on your calendars. TU is asking that we encourage all of our board members to attend, **we can have a table for DRWA, and we'll need some volunteers to help with things.** When the event poster is ready, they would like us to post it on our sites and send via email to our mailing list. We will also need helpers to help post it in local businesses in MA. Here is the website:*
 - <https://flyfilmtour.myeventscenter.com/event/Connecticut-River-Valley-Chapter-Of-Trout-79453>
 - DRWA to promote the event in our newsletter, social media and website.
 - Jack to share marketing materials with DRWA in the next few weeks.
 - In addition to our DRWA table, Jack asked DRWA board members to help arrive early to help with the event's raffle tickets.

- Jim: If DRWA approves, we will have a self-service table at the Franklin County Fair the weekend before, which will help us organize materials in advance.

- Wake Boats:
 - Letter of Support: Requesting a Letter of Support for a 1,000-foot from shore rule for wake boating, vs the DEC's proposed distance of 500-feet.
 - DRWA's "pre-rule making" letter can be used to create a new letter of support now that a rule has been proposed.
 - Jack is asking for individuals on the board to indicate support (Jack to share with the board).
 - **Vote to consider a letter of support for a 1,000 foot buffer from shore rule. Vote approved by the board.**

- Green River Music Festival - Was held June 23-25 (Patrick & Chris)
 - Patrick set up a detailed staffing, materials, and supplies list in Google Docs we were able to keep updated.
 - The tent was staffed by Patrick, Terry, David, and Jim. Chris C took ill.
 - Patrick ordered three new DRWA banners that made it clear whose booth it was.
 - The new tent worked out really well, much better than the old tent. The tent will be stored in the basement at CRC.
 - Our other booth supplies are stored in the hall closet at CRC.
- Franklin County Fair - September 7-10, 2023 Th 3-9..Fri 3-9..Sat 10-9. and Sun 10-8 (Jim)
 - Susan Flye contacted Jim about setting up a DRWA display at the fair in the Wildlife barn. This would be unstaffed, self-serve. We would have either an 8' long display or a 4' long display. They are still working on dismantling some of the cages to make room for new exhibitors.
 - We have most of what we need, but probably should set up better displays keyed into answering questions the public might have, such as where can I swim, or hike, or where is the water clean or a problem, and why, along with self-serve handouts? Short and sweet. There is not a lot of space.

- Should address: Wild & Scenic River? Water Quality Monitoring and Findings? Water and Terrestrial Recreation? Guided Hikes? Franklin River Clean Up.
 - Jim to help set up the booth. Terry and David to also help take stock of what materials are needed for the booth.
 - **Vote: Approved to participate in the Franklin County Fair**
- Franklin County Rivers Source to Sea Cleanup (formerly, The Green River Cleanup) and the Greenfield City Cleanup. – Status Update. (David Boles, Charlie Olchowski)
 - 20th year of the Green River Clean Up.
 - David B is looking for ideas to submit donation requests to local companies.
 - Noticeable increase in homeless populations in Greenfield and camps along rivers (particularly impacted by recent funding).
 - Patrick & Jim to reach out to Stacey Lennard (or kloubriel@ctriver.org while Stacey is out on vacation) & Ryan to get digital versions of materials for the clean up to
- Green River Watershed Alliance - Status Update. (Ryan O'Donnell and David Boles)
- Monitoring – Status Update. Progress on 2021 and 2022 Annual Reports? (Ryan O'Donnell)
 - Request to include Terry in Ryan's email w/ water quality reports.
- Wild & Scenic Rivers – Status. Next steps. (Chris Curtis with Charlie Olchowski and Patrick McCoy)
 - *Our legislation finally received a hearing in Congress on June 21, a very important step toward its eventual approval. The National Park Service testified in favor (see attached), which was good, but they noted a backlog of river studies. I was also able to get favorable testimony submitted by Windham Regional Commission, TU, Town of Deerfield and of course DRWA (copies also attached). The next step in Congress is mark-up, and this is scheduled for July 27. Very exciting!*
- Trail Maintenance – Status. (Chris Curtis, Chris Bathurst, Jim Perry)
 - Grants:
 - Latest News From CSX.
 - *I checked with Robert Rohauer of CSX about the status of our trail proposal, and received this response:*
 - *I have received your proposal. I would suggest waiting a couple more months for the folks at*

Berkshire & Eastern to take over, since they should be much easier to work with being more locally based than we are. It may make more sense to just wait and not try to involve our folks for the ROE right now. We are not terribly connected to the Pan Am Southern requests since it will be transitioning to the B&E soon.

- DRWA passed (this year) on working with the Shelburne Open Space Committee for Woodland Partnership Grant Funding until we can work out some of the details and work through issues with CSX (above). There are a few items we need to figure out, such as:
 - Who would hold a potential easement?
 - Approximate costs of an **engineering feasibility study** so we know how much money to ask for in the grant process?
 - Sufficient time to write a solicitation for next year.
 - The Woodlands Partnership grant solicitation has been passed along to Chris C. for consideration of an **engineering feasibility study** for a potential trail that would reroute the Mohican-Mohawk Trail away from the CSX tracks at Bardwell's Ferry, where CXS has closed the trail, and additional trail work.
- Site Visit (Also in June's Meeting Notes): A site visit to the Bardwell's Ferry/CSX trail section was held on Sunday, June 4 at 10:00 AM. Attendees: Chris C, Chris B, Patrick M, Jim P.
 - It was amazing to witness a pickup truck drive over the RR Trestle Bridge. Apparently this happens a lot. You can see why CSX is concerned about use of this area.
 - **The hike went well.** A lot of poison ivy though.
 - Very steep RR fill slopes through the forest to traverse. Three steep sections, about 150 feet in total. Two short sections to cross and one very steep 115-foot section and very unstable section to cross with a steep drop to the river. Looking for ideas on how it can be done safely.
 - A 45 - 50 foot long falling RR debris protection shed would have to be built under the RR trestle.
 - We hiked some of the trail upstream. Much of the old trail is in fairly good shape. Some pressure treated stairs need

replacement. Some fallen trees need to be removed, but not too much.

- There is at least one creek crossing that would be tricky to construct a bridge across due to flooding. One possibility is to go with stepping stones that could be used during low flows. (Although, that may be problematic too, as one person in our group fell in the creek stepping on a slippery stone). There is another creek crossing farther down the trail that we did not get to. It might be located in the “closed” section of the trail.

■ Hike:

- (Also in June’s Meeting Notes) Jim led an Urban Trees of Shelburne Falls walk on June 10, with 12 participants. Another enjoyable and informative hike. They talked about trees, which ones get diseases, native trees, the trees that work best along streetscapes (non-native) v. foreign trees (more adaptable to growing in the tighter conditions and are more disease resistant).
- The next planned hike is a **Late Summer Wildflower Hike** up at the **High Ledges on September 10, 2023** led by Peggy Warwick of the Shelburne Open Space Committee. Once again we would also partner with the Arms Library and Shelburne Falls Senior Center.

- **Vote: Approved partnering with the listed groups on the Late Summer Wildflower Hike**

- Deerfield River - Recreation Management Planning - Status: (Bruce Lessels)
- Relicensing - Status. (Bruce Lessels)
 - Gardner Falls Hydroelectric Project - (Jim & Bruce)
 - Central Rivers Power - Gardner Falls Hydroelectric Project - **DRWA, CRC, Shelburne, and Buckland** all had signed onto and submitted a joint set of comments on the owner’s Draft - Revised Recreation Management Plan.
 - The current owner of the facility (**Patriot Hydro** has 42 Hydroelectric power facilities) and is concerned about issues raised by our comments on their draft Recreation plan and asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for, and received, a delay until **Sep 1, 2023** , to submit a Revised Recreation Management Plan.

- The owner has been researching commitments the previous owners made to FERC.
- Jim was contacted by the owner about holding a **small group meeting** to discuss and work through the comments. The owner and our group of town and conservation representatives: Jim - DRWA & Shelburne; Kelsey - CRC; Andrea Donlon - Buckland (could not attend, so Bruce filled in); Bruce - DRWA & Buckland, met the owner's representatives at the Buckland Town Hall on Wednesday, June 21, 2023, to discuss the owners concerns with our comments.
- Our group of town and conservation representatives held a pre-meeting at 7 PM on Tuesday the 20th to review our comments on the owner's draft plan.
- Based on our discussion, the owner will come back to us with an updated Recreation Plan. For safety reasons, they now want to close the access road at the picnic area each night. How to do this is the tricky question as they do not have staff on site 7 days a week and whoever locks the gate, would also have to chase out the people that did not get out at closing. Finding staff to close the gate 7 days a week and chase people out who do not want to leave on time is harder than it sounds.
- Wilcox Hollow -
 - The road had been repaired a year ago by Eversource. Recent rains caused severe road erosion as water went down the center of the road, bypassing the culverts. Jim dug in some minor waterbars and directed water to culverts and off the road at various locations.
 - Jim brushed out the entrance sign for the second time this year to make it more visible from Route 2.
 - Looks like the hydro company did some minor brushing around their sign at the parking area in the former field.
- **Woodlands Partnership of Northwest MA** – Status Update. (Sheila Kelliher)
- **Trout Unlimited** – Updates on what Trout Unlimited has been up to on the Deerfield River. (Sheila Kelliher)
- **Mass Rivers Alliance** - Current issues. (Chris Bathurst)
- **Website Maintenance, Google Docs, Email System:** (Patrick McCoy) Status -
- **Financial Report:** See notes about conversation with Ron Rhodes above. (Patrick)

- Ron Rhodes has told us: “We’ll have the budget/finance statement to you before July 15th.” The statement that was submitted by Chris Riffenburg is a first start and did not contain our total balance of all monies held for us by CRC.
- Based on the applicable spreadsheets Jim could find....
 - Jim thinks we carried over from 2019 **\$9,651.68**
 - (we had been hemorrhaging money for years.)
 - As best Jim can tell, our net income in 2020 was **\$2,660.23**
 - (CRC record keeping is messed up for 2020 due to Cromack Project, but it shows this net income)
 - We closed out 2021 with net income of **\$6,431.24**
 - We closed out 2022 with net income of **\$4,862.10**
 - Cromack Project Share **\$5,000.00**
 - So, if my reading of the spreadsheets is correct, DRWA should be **starting Calendar year 2023** with **\$28,605.25** Total Equity.
- The Statement also did not include our Budget for calendar year 2023 with planned and actual expenses by Focus Area.
 - Here is what we submitted to CRC as our proposed 2023 budget with planned Focus Area funding allocations for...
 - Trail Maintenance - \$0
 - Educational Programs - \$600
 - River Cleanup - \$900
 - Monitoring - \$2000
 - Wild & Scenic Rivers - \$0
 - Outreach Activities - (such as Green River Festival) - \$500
 - General Operations - (such as Contributions, CRC Admin. fee, Printing, Mailing, Stamps, Memberships, Website & Email & Google Docs, etc.) - \$1,500
- **Last Updated:** July 13, 2023
 - Contributions: Jan 1, thru Jun 30, 2023 **\$1,121.62**
- **Secretary:** (Terry)
- **Membership & Community Outreach:**
 - DRWA Instagram Account – (Sheila & Ryan)
 - Facebook Account – (Ryan)
 - Newsletters & Appeals - (Jim)
- **Education:** (Terry Atkinson)
 - Education Outreach:
 - Mini-Grants –
- **[Science]:** (Terry Atkinson) *Terry is on vacation this week and last but will try to attend from Maine, if all goes well: I’m interested in hearing feedback from our membership all over the watershed about these latest flood events and the effect on infrastructure, crops, ecology, etc., pervasive throughout the northeast. This morning I heard that 90,000 gallons of raw sewage leaked into the Green River, as a result of the flood event overwhelming the sewage treatment plant.*

New and Old Business:

Next meeting: August 21, 2023, 6:00 PM

Assignments & Adjournment:

Robert's Rules of Order (condensed)

Types of Motions:

Main motion; Substitute motion; Friendly amendments; Call the Question; Motion to table; Motion to reconsider.

How the Motion is Brought Before the Assembly

- A member makes the motion: *I move that (or "to")*
- Another member seconds the motion: *I second the motion*
- The chair states the motion: *It is moved and seconded*

The President puts the motion to a vote

1. The President asks: *Any further discussion?*
2. The President says: *Those in favor, say 'Aye'.* (Pause for response.) *Those opposed, say 'Nay'.* (Pause for response.) *Those abstaining, please say 'Aye'.*

The President announces the result of the vote.

1. *The ayes have it, the motion carries, and ...* (indicating the effect of the vote) or
2. *The nays have it and the motion fails.*

HOST Initiating Google Meet

1. Log into the DRWA Google profile using the username/pswd (e.g., login to DRWA's gmail account).
2. Once logged in Google as DRWA, click the Google Meet link and join the meeting.
3. Once in the meeting, you'll get a pop-up window asking you to grant access to each attendee looking to join.