

Partnership to Restore New Hampshire's Estuaries Meeting Minutes for 06/05/08

Attendees:

Ray Konisky, Mark Zankel (TNC), Sally Soule (NHDES), Jennifer Hunter, Derek Sowers (NHEP), Dave Burdick (JEL/UNH), Cheri Patterson (NHFG), Eric Derleth, Jed Brown (USFWS), Kevin Lucey (NHCP), Eric Hutchins (NOAA), Ed Reiner (EPA)

Minutes:

I. MOU Update and Signing:

Jenn has completed a review with UNH that resolved the question of an indemnification clause. NHDES has elevated the MOU review to the Commissioner's office. With NHDES comments, Ray will prepare a 'final draft' version of the MOU and distribute to NOAA and all the partners. We will continue to work toward a completed agreement as soon as practicable. Kevin spoke about the recent signing ceremony and event for the invasive plant partnership (CWIPP), and noted that an effective approach would be to link the signing with a demonstration site. The CWIPP event also generated good media coverage in the newspapers and on public radio. Eric H agreed that we should try to leverage our partnership agreement with the press, and recommended that we combine a signing event with a high-visibility project (i.e., possible Winnicut dam removal or Oyster River reef building), even if that meant a fall 2008 or spring 2009 event.

II. Restoration Pilot Project:

Derek described efforts to provide a web-based workspace (wiki site) for consolidation and review of local restoration site information. Ray worked with TNC GIS resources to prepare maps of 21 site locations around Great Bay and Hampton/Seabrook. Derek uploaded these maps to the wiki site, along with a template for collecting feedback on site specifics from partners.

A sample map was reviewed to show the types of spatial data available, including historic/current distribution of oysters, eelgrass and salt marsh, plus conservation areas. Ray will work with TNC GIS to generate summary statistics of these acreages and add historic/current fish use. That work is expected to be done around the end of June.

The group discussed the merits and practical aspects of using the web-based system. Eric D noted that use of the system would have to evolve as we started to add information and comments, and Mark raised the future potential of clickable maps and a spatial database interface. Eric H described a NOAA on-line database that served a similar need, and thought that the wiki approach was valuable and over-due for collaborative work. Cheri thought the system would be very useful for filling in the gaps of next steps at our target locations, and for easily identifying those areas with listed impairments. Derek noted that the database would help with ready access to data for grant-writing.

Derek agreed to serve as the wiki administrator, and NHEP has paid the first \$50 annual fee to the Wikispaces site. Jenn sent around a sheet for everyone to identify a logon

name for the system with a single shared password. The site is restricted to partners only, with new requests to come through the administrator.

The site address is:

<https://restorenh.wikispaces.com/>

The initial usernames (email and password) are:

NH-CPatterson, cheri.patterson@wildlife.nh.gov, P2RNHE

NH-DBurdick, David.Burdick@unh.edu, P2RNHE

NH-EDerleth, Eric_Derleth@fws.gov, P2RNHE

NH-EHutchins, Eric.Hutchins@noaa.gov, P2RNHE

NH-EWilliams, ewilliams@des.state.nh.us, P2RNHE

NH-JBrown, Jed_Brown@fws.gov, P2RNHE

NH-JMckeon, joe_mckeon@fws.gov, P2RNHE

NH-KMills, katherine.mills@wildlife.nh.gov, P2RNHE

NH-KLucey, klucey@des.state.nh.us, P2RNHE

NH-MZankel, mzankel@TNC.ORG, P2RNHE

NH-PWellenberger, peter.wellenberger@wildlife.nh.gov, P2RNHE

NH-RKonisky, rkonisky@tnc.org, P2RNHE

NH-SSoule, ssoule@des.state.nh.us, P2RNHE

NH-SHoey, susan.hoey@nh.usda.gov, P2RNHE

NH-TDiers, tdiers@des.state.nh.us, P2RNHE

NH-EReiner, reiner.ed@epa.gov, P2RNHE

[Jennifer Hunter, Jennifer.Hunter@unh.edu already has Wiki account]

Eric H suggested that we focus first on a site that is familiar to most partners and of current interest, recommending the Fresh Creek location as a good first step. Everyone was asked to logon on, to have a look at the wiki information for Fresh Creek, and to use the discussion dialogs to add information (especially about reports and data sources). Ray will continue to follow-up with everyone this summer as the wiki becomes more complete and functional.

III. Restoration Funding Roundtable

Ray described TNC's interest in possibly developing a private-funding campaign that would support estuarine and marine restoration initiatives in NH (and beyond). Further investigations will be conducted this month. Ed, Eric H, and Eric D furthered the funding discussion by noting that in-lieu-fee programs had become targets for mitigation work in other states and to be aware of "no-net gain". Derek noted that in-lieu program fees in NH were being sequestered for at least the next two years.

Cheri explained that the Taylor River feasibility draft was moving ahead and to watch for public hearings. She would use our partner email list to keep us posted. The Winnicut dam removal project is going forward but still needs to raise about \$150,000 in non-federal match. The Wiswall fishway project on the Lamprey is moving slowly as the key participants shift focus from the originally proposed nature-like fishway to a denil ladder.

Mark spoke about NFWF funding and described a new focus for the program and RFP information at this address: <http://www.nfwf.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Keystone>.

Sally announced that the Exeter River geomorphic assessment was getting started as a joint effort among many partners, including NHDES, Rockingham County Planning, Town of Exeter, and NH Geologic Survey. The assessment should be complete and a watershed plan in place by spring 2009. This would enable new funding possibilities in the watershed.

Kevin described the on-going invasive plant work with the NH Coastal Program, and highlighted perennial pepperweed as a new invader from southern areas.

Jenn said that NHEP will have about \$30K available for partner restoration project funding in FY09-10, with a 1:1 match.

Derek noted that NHEP will soon be conducting culvert assessments at specific sites along the Oyster River.

Eric D. spoke about the USFWS restoration focus on salt marsh invasives, especially for *Phragmites* control. He also mentioned proposed work on the Salmon Falls River at the Boston Felt plant for lowering the dam. This led to a discussion about diadromous fish management plans and the current framework that would require separate plans for each local river system. In addition, Eric and Jed noted the deadline at the end of June for USFWS cost-sharing grants that could combine land protection with restoration work.

Dave described a project beginning soon at Berry's Brook to evaluate oyster growth potential. He also noted that UNH would be working with TNC and NRCS at Fresh Creek this summer on an assessment of potential habitat conditions for salt marsh plants and diadromous fish above the current perched culverts at Gulf Road.

Eric H announced that the Merrimack Village Dam would be removed in August near the confluence of the Souhegan and Merrimack Rivers. There will be a live web-cam installed to document the actual removal. This project is significant for many reasons, one of which is the possible recovery of regional short-nose sturgeon stocks.

IV. Next Meeting Date To Be Determined

Have a great summer everyone and we'll meet again in September.