

**Partnership to Restore New Hampshire's Estuaries  
Meeting Minutes for 07/15/09**

**Attendees:**

Ray Konisky (TNC), Sally Soule (NHDES), Derek Sowers (PREP), Dave Burdick (JEL/UNH), Eric Derleth (USFWS), Kevin Lucey (NHCP), Carrie Schuman (NHCP), Peter Wellenberger (GBNERR), Eric Hutchins (NOAA), Kristen Ferry (NOAA) Note: Don Keirstead from NRCS is going to be in place of Brooke Smart while she is on leave

**Minutes:**

I. MOU Update and Signing Event:

Ray K reported that we have the green light from all ten agencies with the MOU, including the recently-completed review by the Under Secretary of NRCS. We are now moving into logistics for signing the MOU and engaging in a press-worthy ceremonial signing. For signing the document, Ray will prepare 10 copies of the MOU and signing instructions, and work with each agency individually to get the appropriate signatures. An electronic copy of the MOU will also be distributed with the minutes of this meeting. There have been no material changes to the document following the minor additional clause sent earlier by NRCS, except for updates to the signatories and contact appendices.

The signing event is targeted for Friday September 25<sup>th</sup> at the Winnicut Dam site on Route 33 in Greenland. The event will be done in conjunction with the current planning for a dedication event at the Winnicut River that day. There will be progress on the fishway by this date. Ray K is joining with Kevin L, Cathy Colleti (NH DES), and Cheri Patterson (NHFG) who are also planning the Winnicut event, to coordinate a ceremonial partners signing ("Planning Subcommittee").

We discussed the expectations for the signing in terms of attendees, and plan to invite Sen Gregg, Sen Shaheen, Rep Shea-Porter, Gov Lynch, and NOAA Chief Luchenco. Their ability to join will influence the date. As a fallback, we could do the signing the following day, Sat Sep 26 in conjunction with the Great Bay NERR 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A further fallback even would be Saturday Oct 17<sup>th</sup> at the State of the Estuary Conference.

**At this point all partners should contact their signatory authorities and check their availability to be at the Winnicut site on Friday Sept 25<sup>th</sup> and, as fallback, at Great Bay Discovery Center on Saturday Sep 26<sup>th</sup>.**

In terms of logistics, we would like to have a 30-40 minute event. Ted Diers would be asked to be the MC, and we would have 2-3 speakers depending on the high-level attendees. A tent would be erected at the site and parking logistics worked out, together with the Winnicut event. Ray K will work on a press release to be shared among partners, and work with Cathy Colletti and others on reaching out to the media. Ray K will also work on a fact sheet to be included as a hand-out for the event.

The Planning Subcommittee will convene as soon as possible to work on coordination for inviting high-level guests and preparing the invitations. An email will go to all partners as soon as possible to confirm key attendees and plans as they evolve.

## II. Funding

Sally S described the process of the Watershed Assistance Grant, with pre-proposals due on Sep 4<sup>th</sup> and complete applications in December. There are separate funding pools for impaired waters and high-quality systems, with a 40% match needed. Ray K and Dave B asked about Fresh Creek as a potential site, and Sally S thought it should qualify as an impaired system if the goal of the project was tidal exchange and improved water quality. Ray K said that TNC would be willing to inquire about the potential of developing a grant proposal and would work with UNH and the Town of Dover to investigate.

## III. Partner RoundTable

Dave B spoke about the stream daylighting potential at Hodgson Brook below head of tide and new stream temperature sensors. Also, the fill removal at North Mill Pond is in the permit process and he expects to conduct a planting there this fall with the local school. Dave also commented on rapid *Phragmites* invasion in parts of the Parker River system.

Eric H explained how the NOAA funding cycle for the recovery act had billions of dollars in requests but only fifty projects could be funded nationally, including the Winnicut dam removal in NH. Eric was joined at the meeting by Kristen Ferry, the new NOAA recovery act coordinator for the region. He noted that NOAA will continue to look aggressively for expanded funding to address the unmet needs.

Sally S described the completion of the Exeter River Geomorphic Assessment and the advancement toward pilot planning projects and ordinance revisions on a town-by-town basis. She announced the addition of a dedicated fluvial geomorphologist on NH DES staff and expectations to develop plans on other coastal systems. Sally also noted that NH was the first state to introduce a new designation for “physical integrity” as a regulatory mechanism for expanding funding to project types such as reconnection of flood plains to river systems.

Eric D spoke about FWS funding support for invasives work (including pepperweed) and early-stage restoration planning. He described the long-term planning process underway at the Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge and encouraged wide participation. Eric also noted that, as a group, we should investigate the possibilities of land acquisition and restoration together in one project.

Derek S announced that local grants up to \$8K are now available from PREP. He described a partnership with the Southeast Land Trust of NH to expand the number of conservation easements in the Hampton/Seabrook system.

Peter W spoke about an NRCS grant for invasives work at up to 13 properties that were in need of local/state match. He also mentioned that habitat enhancement for New England cottontail was going to happen at a site in Newmarket, and other similar projects might happen in the future.

Kevin L provided photo evidence of an impending culvert failure at the Stuart Farm salt marsh restoration site in Stratham, and discussed the need for funding to fix it with a possible focus on agriculture sources. He said that the dam removal plan for the Gonic Dam on the Cocheco was advancing. NHCP was also helped with feasibility studies for the Oyster River and Exeter River head-of-tide dams. Kevin also noted that channel enhancement activities at Little River were in agency review at this time but current funding needed to be expended by year-end.

Ray K told everyone that TNC and UNH had completed building a shell reef in the Oyster Reef for recovery of oysters in that system.

VI. Next Meeting: TBD – Following Signing Ceremony