Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
September 12, 2017
7:00 P.M. Lee Safety Complex, 20 George Bennett Road

APPROVED OCTOBER 10, 2017

members present: Emily Schmalzer (Brentwood), Dick Lord (Durham), Joe Foley (Epping), Sharon Meeker, Kitty Miller, Preston Samuel (Lee), Elizabeth Dudley (Newmarket), Carolyn Matthews (Raymond)

staff present: Laurel Cox, Suzanne Petersen

members absent: Mary Ann Krebs, Cynthia Kelsey (excused), Al Hall (excused), Anne Lightbody (excused), Michelle Shattuck (excused), Deb McNelly (excused)

Meeting began at 7:03.

presentation on oyster bed restoration in Great Bay with Alix Laferriere, The Nature Conservancy:

- Great Bay has lost much of its historic oyster reef area. Losses are due to over-harvesting, sedimentation from floods, and overall water quality impairment.
- Non-harvested reefs demonstrate much greater vertical habitat structure compared to harvested sites. This vertical structure can result in greater mortality to oysters located closer to the bottom, but the overall structure is much more resilient. This structure also provides critical habitat to many juvenile fish.
- Oysters have tremendous capacity to remove nitrogen from the water column both by capturing phytoplankton and by direct uptake. More oysters lead to better water quality.
- The goal in Great Bay is to restore 25 acres of oyster reef by the year 2020. So far, 19.5 acres have been successfully restored. Some of this restoration has occurred at the mouth of the Lamprey River, although not upstream yet.
- Oyster spat are encouraged to grow by providing suspended, cleaned oyster shells on which they can settle. Sites are located on UNH- and TNC-managed rafts as well as 91 private docks of volunteer hosts. Once spat are big enough, they are gathered and distributed onto mounds of cleaned clam shells that have been created by dumping large quantities onto the bay floor.
- Siting of clam shell mounds is determined by historic oyster reef locations, avoidance of eel grass beds, water depth, and other factors. The maximum suitable depth in Great Bay is somewhat less than other oyster areas; 12 feet versus 25 feet. New reefs do better when placed close to existing reefs, so that planted spat are supplemented by wild recruitment. New reefs are closed to harvesting until 2020.
- Researchers are working to determine how oysters respond to stressors that include heat, cold/freezing, and sedimentation rates.
- To date, The Nature Conservancy has not issued an official stance on the Eversource cable burial project. More details are needed, but they are most concerned about possible impacts to sparse eel grass beds located nearby and habitat for juvenile fish.

approval of minutes from August 8, 2017:

Preston Samuel made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Dick Lord seconded. Minutes were approved with 4 yes votes and 3 abstentions.

financial report:

With FY 2017 approaching its closure at the end of September, the year-to-date shows a significant surplus of unexpended funds. The land protection fund is stable with no earmarked expenses.

workgroup updates:

land protection:

Some new money might be available from a non-federal source. The group will meet soon to review priorities. There are no active projects currently.

outreach:

UNH intern: A student will be helping to update and expand the committee's social media presence and help to gather data for walking trails in the middle and upper watershed.

The saltwater eco-paddle held on August 26 was a success with 21 people. Specialists informed the group about eelgrass mapping, river herring and dams, oyster restoration, and water quality.

The LRAC display at the Lee Fair held on Sept. 9 drew in a diverse group of visitors. The display will also be set up at the Durham Day Picnic on Sept. 16.

The 20 Year Progress Report has been finalized and sent out to print. Paper copies and a website compatible version will be available before the end of September.

recreation:

middle and upper watershed recreation map: It was recently learned that UNH Cooperative Extension is working with the NPS to develop an inventory of walking trails in the Lamprey River watershed to be added to the Trail Finder on-line system already active in Maine. This system allows users to type in a town name and see nearby hiking areas. Once a user clicks on the site, directions, photos, and trail resources are listed. The data collected will be most useful to LRAC in forming the basis of a printed map similar to the one already available for the four lower towns. LRAC will contribute to the effort by visiting trails, taking photos, and writing up brief descriptions.

canoe passage improvements between Rte. 87 and Wadleigh Falls: The work to remove and relocate selected sections of large wood that local Trout Unlimited chapter agreed to provide has been indefinitely delayed by TU headquarters. Liability seems to be the main point of contention. A suggestion to secure event liability might provide some much needed forward motion. The grant intended to support this work remains in effect until spring 2018. If action from TU cannot be secured, another partner needs to be found soon. A suggestion was made to contact the director of Wild and Scenic Rivers, Northeast Region for advice and assistance.

history:

Thompson Forest, Durham: LRAC agreed to fund a Phase 1-B study of a potential trail on behalf of the town. An archaeologist visited the site and dug several test pits. No pre-contact native artifacts were found in the former agricultural soils. Trail work can now proceed without any delays. Management of the property will probably include clearing of a portion of the forest to create cottontail habitat.

project review:

No projects have been submitted for review recently.

water quality:

A UNH student will begin work to analyze trends on spatial and temporal data for turbidity, specific conductance, and *E. coli.* The group will meet soon to discuss and determine more specific criteria.

wildlife:

The work group has not met recently.

NHF&G provided data on the river herring run this past spring. The number of alewives passing through Macallen Dam was down significantly: 35,920 fish this year versus about 92,000 in 2016. On average, however, this run is only slightly below normal At Wiswall, 19,281 alewives passed the fish ladder there. The biologists suspect the lower numbers were caused by constant higher-than-normal flows and cold temperatures.

town issues:

Newmarket:

- Work on the $14 million WWTF upgrade is proceeding. The town website has a video showing progress from the air.
- The Macallen Dam Commission met recently to discuss safety enhancements. The group was very receptive to including provisions in the engineering plan to accommodate a pocket park and improved release structures for river herring that are transferred from the fish ladder holding area.

new business:

Rum Brook, Epping: SELT reports that conservation land owned by SELT and SPNHF is facing issues caused by a lost stream crossing. An access road with two culverts was lost in the flood of 2006. Up until recently, access for management was available through a neighbor's land, but the future of this access is uncertain. SELT is requesting financial assistance from LRAC to contribute toward a bridge over Rum Brook that would accommodate heavy equipment. The estimated cost of this bridge is between $25,000 and $30,000. Whatever LRAC contributes will be matched by SELT, with the remainder most likely coming from NRCS. Without this bridge, ATVs will continue to be a presence, resulting in erosion, turtle habitat disturbance, water quality issues, and impaired recreational access.

Representatives had many questions. The executive director of SELT will be invited to attend the October meeting to present his proposal formally and answer questions.

other:

LRWA is in the midst of strategic planning. The board is looking for comments from LRAC members on two questions: First, how do you understand "partnering" when you use that term in relation to working with other organizations [not LRWA specifically] ? Second, does the LRAC have any specific areas where it could use the help of LRWA this year? This is just an informal query and anyone who wants to is welcome to respond. Please send your thoughts to Christos.

adjournment:

Dick Lord made a motion to adjourn. Carolyn Matthews seconded. Meeting adjourned at 9:20.