



## SuAsCo RSC Minutes for September 30, 2025

**RSC Representatives present:** Marlies Henderson, Chair (Billerica), Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Matt Brown (OARS), Dan Cook (Carlisle), Jonathan DeKock (Carlisle-Alt), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Laura Mattei (SVT), Brian Murphy (Bedford10-0), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), Andrew Petitdemange (NPS), Ellie Sablek, Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt), Angela Taveira-Dick (Bedford-Alt)

**RSC Representatives absent:** Ron Chick (Framingham), John Drobinski (Sudbury), Stephanie Koch (USFWS)

### Welcome and July Meeting Minutes

7:05 pm Ms. Henderson opened the meeting. She welcomed Angela Taveira-Dick as the new alternate representative for Bedford and Jonathan deKock as the new alternate rep for Carlisle.

7:12 pm Mr. Cook motioned to approve the July Minutes, Ms. Hempel seconded. The motion passed 11-0.

### Draft Procurement Policy

7:13 pm Mr. Petitdemange discussed the Procurement Policy which he, Ms. Brown and Ms. Henderson drafted. He explained that the draft is based on a procurement policy which has been approved by the financial assistance arm of the National Park Service for other rivers. It has worked well for the Westfield PWSR.

7:16 pm Mr. Cook motioned to accept the new Procurement Policy. The vote passed 11-0.

### Talbot Mill Dam Update

7:17 pm Mr. Brown said that he had a productive meeting with Billerica's Conservation Commission. There are still minor issues to discuss with the Conservation Agent and peer reviewers. The Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) has scheduled an October hearing to consider an appeal of the No vote by the Billerica Historic Districts Commission (HDC) which denied an application for a Historic Districts Review. Mr. Brown said the project team's attorney has argued that the dam removal itself is not applicable under the HDC's bylaws. Mr. Brown said that the project team has made it clear they are willing to fund a protracted legal fight. He thinks that if Billerica is eventually faced with a long legal battle then it might turn to its Town Manager or Select Board to accept the dam removal in return for additional mitigation funding.

### Partner Grant Reports

7:35 pm Ms. Henderson asked if there were any questions about the Final Partner Grant reports. Mr. Sciacca asked Mr. Brown if he could speak more about the reference in OARS' report to wastewater treatment plants being a major source of chloride. Mr. Brown said that reference came from findings downstream of the Westborough plant. They aren't definitive but OARS' water quality scientist thought they warranted further study. Mr. Brown said he would like to review the findings and have this discussion at our October meeting.

7:40 pm Ms. Brown spoke about the Memo of Understanding for the RSC's Partner grants. The MOU gives Partners authorization to spend grant money. She asked if the Partners would like the MOU to cover the usual time period of 9/1/2025-8/30/2026 or if they would like to change the dates to 10/1/2025-9/30/2026 since the MOU is being released one month later than usual. Ms. Mattei and Mr. Brown said the usual dates were fine.

7:44 pm Ms. Brown said the RFP for Community Grants is ready to send out. She asked for suggestions on disseminating it beyond our past grant recipients and having RSC members publicize it in their towns. Ms. Mattei said she could add an announcement about the RFP to the monthly Metrowest Conservation Alliance and CISMA newsletter that SVT publishes. The newsletter goes to many of the people the RSC is targeting, such as Conservation Commissions and local land trusts. A link to the RFP will be posted on the RSC website.

### **River Ambassador Report**

7:54 pm Ms. Brown shared a panoramic shot of the Sudbury River taken from a drone over Wayland. That image now appears as the new banner on our website. She has personally submitted a letter requesting to join Concord's new Warner's Pond Subcommittee. She and Mr. Murphy spoke to many people about the SuAsCo at Bedford Day. She has prepared packages of maps and other materials for all the libraries in RSC communities except for Wayland, which didn't express interest. The Concord library is currently displaying the map we gave them for Earth Day. Ellie Sablak participated in the Dragonfly Mercury Project which was organized and supervised by Julia Khoranna. The sampling sites were in Hudson, Framingham, and the Minute Man National Historic Park in Concord. NPS staff helped to collect and identify larvae from the Park.

7:59 pm Ms. Brown spoke about water chestnut removal efforts. One was arranged by Jonathan deKock and sponsored by the Concord-Carlisle Foundation. Mr. deKock said this was the first time their organization had organized a water chestnut pull. They removed about 35,000 plants but there are still a lot left in the river. Ms. Brown provided an update on MCI-Concord. She shared a slide of Concord's Vision Plan for that site. It includes affordable housing and walking trails. The Town would like to take over the wastewater treatment plant but that decision will be made by the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance which owns the property. Ms. Brown provided an RSC presence at many events, including a Billerica Conservation meeting, a coffee event in Concord, MCI-Concord meetings, Concord's NRS meetings on Warner's Pond, and a Hanscom meeting to stop the private jet expansion project.

8:08 pm Ms. Brown said that there are large water chestnut infestations everywhere on our rivers and they are much more spatially distributed than they were earlier in the year. There was an unusual violation at a residence on the Sudbury River at Elm Street. The property owner's caretaker dug up historical artifacts in many locations on that property along the river. Concord's Natural Resources Director sent out a letter of violation. The digging stopped and a mitigation plan will be developed. Ms. Brown then shared highlights of a plan from Sudbury to replace Sherman's Bridge. Sudbury will host a public meeting about this in October.

8:11 pm Ms. Hempel asked if the creation of a new Warner's Pond Subcommittee means that removing the dam at Warner's Pond is no longer a possibility. Ms. Brown said that the dam removal discussion has been deferred. The subcommittee will establish baseline conditions because The Friends of Warner's Pond argued that without them there is no way to tell if the pond is getting worse or getting better. She said that much of this data already exists and can be found in various reports. The last Warner's Pond Committee recommended a five-year study. The Natural Resource Commission decided on a one-year study instead.

8:13 pm Ms. Mattei said that a member had sent SVT an email with concerns about the proposed plan to use asphalt on Sherman's Bridge. She wondered if the RSC would review the plans. Mr. Sciacca said that he would be at the next public meeting for this plan. Mr. Petitdemange said that he was contacted by the engineering firm working on resurfacing the bridge. The NPS will review this project under Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. He would like to represent the RSC in speaking to the scenic quality of the bridge. Ms. Brown said that Ms. Lord has talked with that firm about the possibility of helping with erosion problems from two informal put-ins. Mr. Sciacca thought large boulders on either side would prevent the trailer boat launching which contributes to erosion.

8:23 pm Mr. Fadden said that the erosion is caused by runoff. He suggested fill be placed at the top of the ramp to make water run down the sides instead of running down the ramp. He thought that boulders would block parking and that would impede recreational use of the river. Ms. Henderson said that from this discussion she thought the bridge project should include a solution for erosion at the site. Ms. Brown said that the land is owned by the US Fisheries and Wildlife Service. Ms. Henderson said the USFWS will have to be a part of this discussion.

8:29 pm Ms. Henderson received an email from Fred Akers of Great Egg Harbor River in NJ. He noted that the Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers (PWSR) Program is large and growing. There are 18 PWSRs with 14 candidate rivers that could be added. It is challenging for the PWSRs to communicate with each other, with the NPS, and with members of Congress and their staff. For years he and others have been acting as spokespersons for all the rivers. He is recommending that each PSWR have one or more volunteers to act as spokesperson(s) for their river. Ms. Henderson volunteered for the SuAsCo and will ask Mr. Chick to join her.

8:32 pm Ms. Henderson said that the RSC has not given out a River Stewardship award since we stopped having RiverFest kickoff parties. It used to involve forming a subcommittee to find a nominee. She asked for opinions on whether we should revive this award or not. It was agreed that Council members would think about this and discuss it at the October meeting.

8:34 pm Mr. Petitdemange recalled that last month we discussed the difficulty of getting state representatives to attend our meetings. He recommended that a Council member contact other Massachusetts PSWRs who are facing this same problem. Over the past month he spoke to river managers on the Taunton, Nashua and Westfield rivers about this issue. His colleague Lauren Bonatakis from Taunton spoke to DER Director Beth Lambert about all the PWSRs getting state representation from DER or another similar agency. If we don't hear back from Ms. Lambert then he suggested we have one or two people from each of the four PWSRs meet to discuss finding state representation. Mr. Petitdemange said he would share any communications he received about this with the RSC.

8:36 pm Ms. Henderson returned to the topic of road salting protocols in member towns which had been discussed at our last meeting. Some representatives had emailed new information as they researched the issue. Other members were still gathering that information from their towns. Ms. Brown said that it will be useful to know which towns use brine, what other materials they use and how much, and when they use it. Ms. Henderson said this information will indicate how diligently the municipalities in our watershed are working to reduce salts.

8:42 pm Ms. Henderson got permission to base a SuAsCo RSC Artificial Turf Statement on one from the Charles River Watershed Association. She asked for suggestions to the text she circulated by email. Mr. Sciacca said that an increasing number of heavy storms due to climate change affect the artificial turf and mentioned the crumb rubber that washed into the river marsh in Wayland. Ms. Henderson asked him to add his edits to the statement. The final statement will be added to the RSC website.

8:47 pm Ms. Henderson referred to the Draft Indigenous Land Acknowledgement she circulated. After some discussion it was agreed that we would table this topic and take it up at the October meeting.

8:50 pm The Council approved Ms. Henderson's suggestion that Mr. Sciacca speak for the RSC when he attends public meetings on Sherman's Bridge.

8:54 pm Ms. Hempel motioned to adjourn, Mr. Cook seconded and the motion passed 10-0.