



**Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed
Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council
Meeting Minutes**

***Wednesday, December 18, 2024
Westerly Land Trust,
449 Westerly Bradford Rd, Westerly, RI 02891***

Abbreviations: Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council (WPWSRSC or Council), Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (CT DEEP), National Park Service (NPS), Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM), Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA), Save The Bay (STB), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Westerly Land Trust (WLT), Information and Education (I&E), Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience (OSCAR) Fund Grant, Mainstreet Resiliency Projects (MRP)

Attendance:

Bob Maietta, Charlestown, RI (I&E Committee Co-Chair)
Nan Quinlan, Exeter, RI (Projects Committee)
Harvey Buford, Hopkinton, RI (I&E Committee)
Ahren Cohen, North Kingstown, RI (Council Treasurer)
Madeline Jeffery, North Stonington, CT (Projects Committee, I&E Committee Co-Chair)
Elaine Caldarone, North Stonington, CT (Council Vice Chair, Projects Committee Chair, I&E Committee)
Antonia Bryson, Richmond, RI (Council Chair, Advisory Committee Co-chair)
Denise Poyer, Richmond, RI (Council Secretary)
Ali Gretchner, South Kingstown, RI (I&E Committee)
Tom Halavik, South Kingstown, RI (Projects Committee)
Fred Wagner, Stonington, CT (Advisory Committee)
William Day, Voluntown, CT
Chris Grube, West Greenwich, RI (I&E Committee, Advisory Committee)
Tom Ryan, West Greenwich, RI
Lauren Bonatakis, National Parks Service (NPS)
Fred Sculco, Westerly Resident (Advisory Committee)
Harvey Perry, The Nature Conservancy (TNC, Advisory Committee)
Dr. Catie Alves, Save The Bay (STB, Advisory Committee)
Chris Fox, Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association
Marc Doherty, Westerly Land Trust
Casey Merkle, Council Coordinator
Ly Fastner, STB
Justin Andrade, Charlestown, RI

Meeting Convened at: 5:00 pm

Secretary's Report: Minutes of November 20, 2024 meeting approved.

Town Representative Updates:

1. North Kingstown
 - a. Aaron gave a brief description of NK and Chipuxet River connection to WP Watershed. Groundwater is of particular concern to the town because they are 100 per cent dependent on their aquifers. There are concerns about PFAs in groundwater, particularly near Quonset.
 - b. Part of the work being done in NK is resilience due to its proximity to the bay and climate change. Looking at dealing with impermeable surfaces.
 - c. Another important issue is access to public rights-of-way.
2. Exeter
 - a. The Conanicus property, about 300 acres and includes the dam that contains the Slocum Reservoir has been put up for sale. The Council has drafted a letter to the Episcopal Diocese in support of conserving the property. RIDEM has expressed interest in purchasing the property and is working to raise the funds.
 - b. Solar farm on property off Rt. 102 was installed before ordinance was changed and is a cause of concern.
 - c. Shartner Farm proposed hydroponic structure is stalled because investors have pulled out, the company needs to pay back taxes, and there are 38 conditions they must meet for RIDEM.
 - d. The town changed the requirements for the Conservation Commission to 5 members instead of 7, which should make it easier to convene the commission.
 - e. Rain garden at town hall and library are doing great.

Committee Updates:

1. Executive Committee (Antonia Bryson, Richmond)
 - a. Four Initiatives were proposed and discussed (See attachments)
 - i. Community Support Proposal was removed from consideration due to the extensive time requirements.
 - b. Review and discuss Committee Budgets (5 minutes to present each)
 - i. Advisory Committee request \$7,000 for GIS work, maintaining existing maps, and scoping out need for new maps, and \$12,000 for Working Group Program.
 - ii. Projects Committee request \$60,000 for Community Grants
 - iii. I&E requests \$18,000
 - iv. WPWA requesting \$10,000 and WLT requesting \$1,400 for Water Quality
 - c. 2025-26 Budget and workplan update
 - i. Executive Committee will meet in January and make recommendations for the budget.
 - ii. Casey will send out a vote asking the Council to rank the initiatives.
 - d. TerraCorps service member research
 - i. Will work with WLT as our sponsor.
 - ii. The application is competitive but not too much so it's possible WLT can recruit their own intern
 - iii. Based on their sliding scale it will likely cost close to \$12,500. We would also need to budget another \$3,000 for computer and training.
 - iv. 2025/2026 application opens beginning of March
 - v. We will need to do advertising local to recruit potential interns
 - e. Council Structure workshop update
 - i. No update
2. Projects Committee (Elaine Caldarone, North Stonington)
 - a. Community grant requests due Dec. 29
3. Advisory Committee (Antonia, Richmond)
 - a. Community Support Program
 - b. Watershed Working Group

4. Information & Education Committee (Madeline Jeffery, North Stonington & Bob Maietta, Charlestown, Co-Chairs)
 - a. Invasive aquatic workshop in January
 - b. Dragonfly newsletter is coming up and looking for articles
 - c. Hiker safety program pilot is moving forward
 - d. Developing a PowerPoint presentation
 - e. The podcast series will continue
 - f. Documentary photography is being explored
 - g. W&S Rivers tour program will involve 3 rivers.
 - h. Partnering with two groups for upcoming hikes
 - i. Patchaug group at the Green Falls loop on Dec. 28
 - ii. WLT walk on Jan 23

Working Group Updates:

1. Kenyon Mills Working Group (Denise Poyer, Richmond)
 - a. No report
2. Wild Brook Trout Working Group (Bob Maietta, Charlestown)
 - a. Meeting in a week or two
3. Worden Pond
 - a. Had one meeting with the town and will continue with meetings. Recommend town reps watch the video about the infestation with hydrilla of the Connecticut River.

Partner Updates:

1. CT DEEP no report
2. NPS
 - a. Talks of a continuing resolution may be signed and passed that would fund NPS until March, but would not include next year's budget for Partnership Rivers
 - b. EPA put out revisions to sections of their hand book on water quality standards that may affect W&S Rivers in a positive way. Looking for comment by March 12, 2025.
3. RI DEM no report
4. Save the Bay no report
5. Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association
 - a. Fully funded for engineering design and permitting phase for culvert replacement of culvert on Hillsdale Road over the Beaver River. Application for wetland permit will be submitted in March. Construction costs are estimated to be \$900,000.
6. The Nature Conservancy
 - a. TNC purchased and protected a 25-acre property in Hopkinton and 90-acre property in West Greenwich.
7. Westerly Land Trust no new report

Good of the Order:

1. North Stonington has a new state representative who is very environmentally supportive.
2. Stonington
 - a. Sent letter of support for an Avalonia purchase in North Stonington.
 - b. Request that whenever we have something brought before the Council for a vote we hear from the reps whose towns may be impacted.
 - c. Stonington is now the owner of the Circus Lot.

Public Comment: none

Adjourn: 6:58 pm

Next Meeting: 5pm-7pm, January 22, 2024