



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

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

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)

Attendance:

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

Meeting Convened at: 5:01 pm

Secretary's Report: Minutes of January 22, 2025 meeting approved.

Town Representative Updates:

1. Richmond

- a. The Town of Richmond has a population of approximately 8,000 people and was incorporated on August 18, 1747. The town was named in honor of Edward Richmond, Attorney General of the Colony of Rhode Island from 1671 to 1680.
- b. Situated in the heart of Washington County and contained entirely within the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed, the town encompassing an area of 40.6-square miles. It is bordered northerly and northeasterly by the Town of Exeter, southeasterly by the Town of South Kingstown, southerly by the Town of Charlestown, and westerly by the Town of Hopkinton.
- c. The town has its own water district which primarily supports commercial development along Rt. 138 east and west of the intersection with I95. Looking into allowing denser development around this area.
- d. The town contains segments of four of the Wild and Scenic Rivers – Queen-Usquepaugh, Beaver, Pawcatuck and Wood Rivers.
- e. The Queen-Usquepaugh is on the south eastern border with South Kingstown. This is part of the segment that is considered Wild.
- f. The Beaver Rivers is almost entirely contained in the Town of Richmond and most of its length it runs through protected property. It supports a healthy population of native brook trout and a high biodiversity of macro invertebrates.
- g. The Pawcatuck River forms the southern border of town with Charlestown.
- h. The Wood River forms the entire western border between Richmond and Hopkinton.
- i. Close to 25% of the town is protected, either by fee simple or conservation easements.
- j. There are seven to eight villages, basically around dammed river segments associated with mills.
- k. It is part of the Chariho School System.
- l. As with our neighboring towns, one the biggest environmental issue over the last ten years has been the large-scale solar panel installations. They are placed on farmland or forests have been clear cut to develop them.
- m. Just received assistance from SNEP around storm water mitigation strategies. (Casey will take part in the educational series.) They offered to work with the transfer station.
- n. SNEP has offered to work on a story map of the sole source aquifer.
- o. Recently received a large grant to do some work on the heritage trail and grasslands restoration.
- p. Planning board and council have worked on and implemented an aquifer overlay.
- q. Culvert on Hillsdale Road has been targeted as the highest priority for freshwater habitat.
- r. Richmond participated in LID review.

South Kingstown Report on Hydrilla

1. Had a meeting with DEM, STB, USFW, WPWA, and the Town of South Kingstown.
2. DEM gave a presentation regarding treatment at Indian Lake.
 - a. Two strong landowner associations provided the push for treatment.
 - b. Funding was primarily provided by a one-time USFW grant.
3. Discussed assessment of Worden Pond.
4. Talked about other potential stakeholders and set a virtual meeting in April.

5. Town has a wash station for boats which will be installed in the spring at Worden Pond.

Committee Updates:

1. Executive Committee (Antonia Bryson, Richmond)
 - a. Vote to approve FY25-26 Budget
 - i. Motion to approve the budget as presented by Fred, second by Tom. Motion passed unanimously.
 - b. Reinstate recording volunteer hours
 - i. Documentation of all our volunteer hours helps NPS show the value of the Partnership W&S Program. It can also be used for match funding.
 - ii. Casey has developed a new form that can be electronically filed.
 - iii. Casey will send out the form shortly for review and comments.
 - iv. Council members will be asked to submit the form to Casey monthly.
 - c. Bio and Headshots on website
 - i. Requesting all the Council Members submit a short bio and headshot. This will be posted on our website.
 - d. Bylaws review effort
 - i. Executive Committee is still working to update the bylaws.
2. Projects Committee (Elaine Caldarone, North Stonington)
 - a. Q&A on Community Grants
 - i. Information sent to the Council for review. No questions regarding the recommended grants.
 - b. Vote to approve Community Grants
 - i. Motion made by Harvey and seconded by Fred to approve the six grants recommended by the Projects Committee. Motion passed unanimously.
 - c. A separate grant was recommended approval by the committee: Westerly Land Trust requested \$4,000 as part of the purchase price for property on Boy Scout Drive. Motion made to approve by Bob, seconded by Tom. Motion passed unanimously.
3. Advisory Committee (Antonia, Richmond)
 - a. No report.
4. Information & Education Committee (Co-Chair Madeline Jeffery, North Stonington & Co-Chair Bob Maietta, Charlestown)
 - a. I&E has sponsored a DEEP program in North Stonington regarding aquatic invasives on March 25.
 - b. Dragonfly Express will be printed in limited numbers. It will likely be a quarterly report. Request for contributors of all possible media, such as photos, articles, artwork, poems.
 - c. Logos for garments have been selected. Council members will have an opportunity to order a select number in the near future.
 - d. Working on River Friends, a PowerPoint presentation, and special day events.
 - e. Will be sponsoring a film on river herring, hopefully held the second or third week of March. Still looking for a location to hold it.

Working Group Updates:

1. Kenyon Mills Working Group (Denise Poyer, Richmond)
 - a. Committee has developed an RFP that will be sent to 6 entities. The proposal period will be open from March 1 to May 1. We anticipate an award or awards will be made by June 1 of this year.

- b. Will circulate to the whole council.
- 2. Wild Brook Trout Working Group (Bob Maietta, Charlestown)
 - a. It has 11 members from W&S, TNC, RIDEM, TU, and PRIBT.
 - b. Developing mission statement, which will not be shared at this point.
 - c. A report will be sent to the council and RIDEM.

Partner Updates:

- 1. CT DEEP no report
- 2. NPS
 - a. Loren is compiling information to submit for an annual report that will include all national Wild and Scenic Rivers.
 - b. NPS hosted a speaker series with three topic rooms. Plan to continue the format and hold another program in two months.
- 3. RI DEM no report
- 4. Save the Bay
 - a. Partnering with Richmond and SNEP program and grasslands restoration.
 - b. Partnering with Hopkinton with upgrading culverts.
 - c. Spoke at RI Marine Fisheries council regarding regulations for horseshoe crabs.
 - d. Public comment is open until March 7 for all RIDEM fisheries regulations.
- 5. Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association
 - a. WPWA will plan a stand-alone event since there will be no Seven Rivers Festival.
- 6. The Nature Conservancy no report
- 7. Westerly Land Trust
 - a. Working at the Champlin Farm and hope to have that property open to the public by June.
 - b. Working on gravel project restoration.

Good of the Order:

- 1. Due to fiscal uncertainty and based on NPS council and advice it is recommended that we pay Casey's salary upfront in one lump sum. This payment will include the time period from March 1 to June 30. The total sum will be determined by the Executive Committee and an addendum added to her contract. The revised contract and total sum will be sent to the council for an electronic vote by next week.
- 2. Mystic YMCA is hosting an event called All in for Alewives tomorrow night.

Public Comment: none

Adjourn: 6:37 pm

Next Meeting: 5pm-7pm, March 26, 2025