



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

*Wednesday, January 28, 2026  
Westerly Land Trust,  
449 Westerly Bradford Rd, Westerly, RI 02891 and via Zoom*

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), Board of Selectmen (BOS)

Attendance:

**Justin Andrade, Charlestown, RI**  
**Bob Maietta, Charlestown, RI**  
**Nan Quinlin, Exeter, RI (Projects Committee)**  
**Elaine Caldarone, North Stonington, CT (Council Vice Chair, Projects Committee Chair, I&E Committee)**  
**Madeline Jeffery, North Stonington, CT (Projects Committee, I&E Committee Co-Chair)**  
**Antonia Bryson, Richmond, RI (Council Chair, Advisory Committee Co-chair)**  
**Denise Poyer, Richmond, RI (Council Secretary)**  
**Tom Halavik, South Kingstown, (Hydrilla)**  
**William Gay, Voluntown, CT**  
**Chris Grube, West Greenwich, RI (Advisory Committee Co-Chair, I&E Committee)**  
**Sharon MacLean, Exeter, RI**  
**Bob Madison, Westerly, RI (I&E Committee)**  
**Jen Fusco, Westerly Land Trust**  
**Lauren Bonatakis, NPS**  
**Harvey Perry, TNC**  
**Chris Fox, WPWA**  
**Tobias Glaza, Avalonia Land Conservancy**  
**Casey Merkle, Council Coordinator**  
**Fred Sculco, Westerly, RI Resident**

Meeting Convened at: 5:05 pm

Minutes Approval: Motion to approve December 17, 2025 minutes.

## Committee Updates:

1. Executive Committee (Antonia Bryson, Richmond)
  - a. Chapter 6 Priorities update
    - i. Preserve and Protect Water Quality and Quantity
    - ii. Preserve and Protect Habitat
    - iii. Minimize the effect of non-native invasive species
    - iv. Educate the public about river ecology and ways to keep rivers healthy
    - v. Preserve and protect cultural resources
  - b. Workplan FY 2026-27 Schedule
    - i. Will have a Workplan to be approved by the Council for the Feb. 25 meeting.
    - ii. Any Council Member who has a project they would like to propose for this workplan may submit it to Casey as soon as possible. We will need the project and a rough estimate of the funds needed.
    - iii. Committees need to have their budget request by Feb. 12.
  - c. Kenyon Settlement update
2. Projects Committee (Elaine Caldarone, North Stonington)
  - a. Received 10 proposals. They will have a recommendation for the Council to approve at the February meeting.
3. Advisory Committee (Antonia Bryson, Richmond)
  - a. Antonia renewed contact with URI NEMO regarding storm water management projects.
  - b. Fred Sculco brought up a water quality proposal.
  - c. The committee received requests for letters of support regarding drinking water and low impact development practices in towns. Both projects need more development.
4. Information & Education Committee (Co-Chair Madeline Jeffery, North Stonington & Co-Chair Bob Maietta, Charlestown)
  - a. TEK events with the Tomaquag Museum will be held including two walks and two paddles.
  - b. Will be sending at least 3 members of the Council to the Land and Water Summit in March. If more people want to attend there is a probability that more funds can be made available. The Council will have a table there as well.
  - c. Moving towards events that can be turned over to outside agencies to conduct.
  - d. Working on the next issue of the Dragonfly Express. Always looking for good writers, photographers, or other artists.
  - e. RITU would like to have the Council participate in their Children's Camp. They are looking for a presentation on Wild and Scenic Rivers. Bob will have TU contact Antonia.
5. Website update
  - a. Juliet has come up with a lengthy list of suggested changes for the website. Bruce Hooke has agreed to do the work for an estimated \$1050. The executive committee has agreed to move forward with the changes. Bruce will create a test environment to view the changes for approval before we go forward.
  - b. As part of the update we will also correct the content to reflect what is the correct name for the watershed and what is designated.

### Partner Updates:

1. Avalonia Land Conservancy –
  - a. They are planning to conduct a restoration project along the Shunnock River regarding removal of invasive species and replanting native species.
  - b. Working on a Conservation Easement on ten acres adjacent to the Wyassup River and a 100-acre upland piece off of Babcock Road, touches on the Shunnock River.
2. CT DEEP – see attached update
3. NPS
  - a. Congress passed appropriations bill which was signed. Basically we will have flat funding.
  - b. Working at a programmatic level to allocate funding for projects that impact the Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers.
  - c. Will cover the Dragonfly Mercury program for Wood-Pawcatuck this coming year. Lauren is looking for more volunteers.
  - d. Reviewing a proposal to replace the Amtrak Bridge over the Pawcatuck in Bradford.
  - e. RI Energy is planning to do substrate borings in several areas in the Watershed.
4. RI DEM – no report
5. Save the Bay – Dr. Alves is taking a Leave of Absence from STB.
6. Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association
  - a. TNC is making good progress addressing fish passage at the Jay Cronan Access. They plan to create a notch in the USGS weir and create additional weirs downstream to assist with fish passage.
  - b. Culvert replacement project on the Hillsdale Road could obtain a wetland permit by this spring.
  - c. At 60% design on the Hudson Pond dam in West Greenwich. Chris Grube has become involved with the project. Looking to addressing other impediments on the Kelly Brook, such as aging culverts.
7. The Nature Conservancy
  - a. The current Green Space proposal by the RI Governor does not include funding for open space purchase. TNC is working to include this funding. TNC suggest that individuals should contact their representatives to support including open space funding.
8. Westerly Land Trust
  - a. They have been working with RIDEM on the Champlain Farm gravel pit restoration project. They are allowing a gravel cap. The goal is to convert this to grassland for livestock grazing.
  - b. The Johnycake Center is looking for more agricultural land to grow food. WLT is installing a well and electrical resources at the Haggerty property which is an old hay field. All the food grown here will go onto the plates of local families.
  - c. Submitted a proposal with STB for the RI Coastal and Habitat restoration fund to restore a salt marsh at the Avondale Farm Preserve.

### Landowner Stewardship Outreach Project

1. Sarah is has completed the Riverside Land owner database. She has nearly completed one of the pamphlets and has prototypes for two more. She is working on maps for the Council Member packets.

#### Rain Gardens

1. So far 5 towns interested. Next step is to have a specific site with town permission to work on the site. Need to know as soon as possible so that at least some projects can be started in April.

#### Hydrilla Updates

1. Casey, Tom and Antonia, along with John Torgan with TNC, meet with Jason McNamee, Deputy Director at RIDEM. Made the argument that this is a serious problem and needs higher level involvement.
  - a. Will look into to putting together a task force at RIDEM concerning hydrillas
  - b. Asked for suggestions on different outreach methods
  - c. Will help with setting and retrieving buoys for Worden Pond. They will also investigate expediting the permitting process.
  - d. Suggest we talk with our state legislators to educate them about the problem. They may be able to free up state funding.
2. Friends of Worden Pond has a Board of Directors and getting ready to file for a 501c3.
3. Completion of the poster is in sight.

#### Working Group Updates

1. Brook Trout – Corey and Bob will meet with Antonia in February and have a report next month.

#### Good of the Order:

1. Water Quality Proposal
  - a. Objective is to analyze the large amount of data contained in the Watershed Watch database and present it in a way that makes sense to the general public.
  - b. Charlie Gieger, a graduate student with extensive experience, has agreed to do the project.
  - c. Final product would be a report card on the Pawcatuck River that can be utilized by all stakeholders, including towns and state agencies.
  - d. This will not be limited to just Watershed Watch data.
  - e. Motion made to support the proposal up to \$30,000 for Water Quality Analysis by URI Watershed Watch. Motion passed with one abstention.
2. Fred Wagner sent a newsletter article about \$800,000 grant from CT Representative for the Circus Lot.
3. There is a bill before the RI Legislators to prohibit sale of invasive species by local nurseries.
4. There is a study by URI School of Oceanography regarding PFAS in the Pawcatuck Watershed. Lauren question if anyone is doing a study on microplastics, which is currently unknown.

#### Public Comment

Adjourn: 6:48 pm

Next Meeting: 5 to 7 pm, February 25, 2026