



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

***Wednesday, February 25, 2026
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:

Bob Maietta, Charlestown, RI (I&E Committee Co-Chair)
Sharon MacLean, Exeter, RI (I&E Committee)
Nan Quinlin, Exeter, RI (Projects Committee)
Juliet Lamb, Hopkinton, RI
Arhen Cohen, North Kingstown, RI
Elaine Caldarone, North Stonington, CT (Council Vice Chair, Projects Committee Chair, I&E Committee)
Madeline Jeffery, North Stonington, CT (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, (PC, Hydrilla)
Fred Wagner, Stonington, CT (Advisory Committee)
William Gay, Voluntown, CT
Chris Grube, West Greenwich, RI (Advisory Committee Co-Chair, I&E Committee)
Bob Madison, Westerly, RI (I&E Committee)
Jen Fusco, Westerly Land Trust
Lauren Bonatakis, NPS
Harvey Perry, TNC
Casey Merkle, Council Coordinator
Cory Pelletier RIDEM
Fred Sculco, Westerly, RI Resident

Meeting Convened at: 5:05 pm

Minutes Approval: Motion to approve January 28, 2026 minutes. Minutes approved.

2026/2027 Workplan :

1. Motion to approve the 2026/2027 Workplan as presented. No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Projects Committee (Elaine Caldarone, North Stonington)

1. Elaine submitted a list of eight grants for approval. The committee has \$58,000 in their budget and the eight grants for approval requested a total of \$58,964. The Committee is requesting to fully fund the entire request. The Council will need to identify unspent funds in the current budget to cover the short fall.
2. Motion made to approve the grants as presented, including covering the extra \$964. Motion passed unanimously.

Advisory Committee (Antonia Bryson, Richmond)

1. Chris Grube contacted the Advisory Committee concerning a proposed development near Stubb Brook in West Greenwich that would have an extremely large density.
 - a. Due to the timing of the meeting, Antonia sent a letter to the West Greenwich Planning Committee on behalf of the Council.
 - b. The letter opposes the density based on the potential adverse impacts on the rivers and sole-source aquifer.
 - c. The Planning Committee meeting was postponed due to the storm.
2. Megan Cotter has introduced a bill to the RI Legislation that could benefit the Pawcatuck Watershed. Currently state regulations allow a density bonus when developments include low-income housing. The Cotter bill would remove the density bonus in the case of environmental impacts such as sole-source aquifers.
 - a. Antonia will be drafting a letter to submit in support of this bill. This will be sent to the Council for comments and approval. She will include a copy of the bill and a letter developed by Scott Millar.
 - b. One of the main points of the letter is that the Wild and Scenic designation is based on the sole-source aquifer status of the Pawcatuck Watershed.

Information and Education Committee (Madeline Jefferies, North Stonington)

1. A new edition of Dragonfly will be coming out.
2. Several Council members will be attending the Land and Water Summit on March 21.
3. On April 21 the I&E will be at the Groton Environmental Outdoor Expo.
4. There are many wonderful programs coming up for the summer.

Partner Updates:

1. Avalonia Land Conservancy – No report.
2. CT DEEP – see attached update from Chris Belluci
3. NPS
 - a. Partnership Wild and Scenic NPS staff were tasked with developing a mini grant request to disperse funds remaining from the current budget. The grants were for up to \$30,000 and needed to be completed within the 2026/2027 budget. The staff received grant requests from most of the Partnership Rivers. They make their decision by next week. Any grant awards will be included in the Partnership Rivers budget for next year.

- b. Trout Unlimited has received NPS funding for a Youth Camp this June. Lauren will be conducting a Dragonfly Mercury sampling as part of this camp.
4. RI DEM – no report
5. Save the Bay – No report.
6. Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association – No report.
7. The Nature Conservancy – No report
8. Westerly Land Trust
 - a. Marc will be giving a presentation to the Council next month concerning PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl Substances) investigation at the Grills Preserve.

Landowner Stewardship Outreach Project

1. Sarah has completed all the pamphlets and has developed maps for all the towns.

Rain Gardens

1. Nan has received information from West Greenwich and North Stonington. When the snow thaws, she will look at the sites. Hopkinton and Richmond are also expressing interest. There is still time for other towns to let Nan know if they are interested.

Hydrilla Updates

1. No new activities.

Working Group Updates

1. Brook Trout – No report.

Good of the Order: None

Public Comment: None

Adjourn: 6:18 pm

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