Wood-Pawcatuck
Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council
Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 23, 2025
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)

Attendance:

Sharon MacLean, Exeter, RI (I&E Committee)
Nan Quinlin, Exeter, RI (Projects Committee)
Harvey Buford, Hopkinton, RI (I&E Committee)
Juliet Lamb, Hopkinton, RI
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 (Projects Committee)
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
Catie Alves, STB
Ian O'Hara, STB
Harvey Perry, TNC (Advisory Committee)
Chris Fox, WPWA
Tobias Glaza, Avalonia Land Conservancy
Casey Merkle, Council Coordinator

Meeting Convened at: 5:02 pm

Minutes Approval: Motion to approve June 25, 2025 minutes as amended by Sharon. Motion passed. Abstained Chris Grube and Tobias Glaza.

New Members:

1. Motion made to approve Westerly Land Trust as a voting member of the Council. Motion passed.
2. The Council would like to welcome Juliette Lamb, a new representative from Hopkinton, RI.

Town Representative Reports (10 minutes each)

1. West Greenwich
    a. Upper reaches of the Wood River are in the Western part of West Greenwich; Big River Management is part of the middle; and headwaters of the Queen River are the eastern part of the Town.
    b. The Town includes Arcadia Management Area, Tillinghast Pond, and Alton Jones Campus. A number of CCC structures still exist in Arcadia.
    c. Town is 51.3 square miles. Forty-one percent is protected open space.
    d. West Greenwich has a very colorful, independent slant towards politics.
2. Westerly
    a. An 1870 map shows Shore Road, which is in effect the southern divide of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed. It also shows how the Pawcatuck River forms the northern boundary and western boundaries of Westerly.
    b. There is a 1978 report on the lower Pawcatuck and into the estuary. Everything that flows into the Pawcatuck River eventually could become Westerly's issue.
    c. Biggest environmental problems today are the waste treatment facilities and flooding. A couple causes of flooding can be traced to the old Stillmanville dam remnants and an abandoned canal.
    d. Osgood point may contain radioactive sediments.
    e. Westerly also has a significant storm water issue because the way the town was built on a hill.

Committee Updates:

1. Executive Committee (Antonia Bryson, Richmond)
    a. FY2025-26 Funding Update –
        i. All of the funding, $210,000, has been released by the Federal Government. This means we can carry out our original 2025-2026 work plan.
        ii. 2026-2027 Budget is making its way through Congress
        iii. There is about $74,000 in FY2024-25 carryover. We are being urged to use these funds first.
        iv. There is about $20,000 left in the Advisory Committee which may need to be reprogrammed to another project. Council members are encouraged to come to the next Advisory Committee meeting.
    b. Review 2025-26 workplan –
        i. This contains $54,000 in the Community Grants Program. We can consider reprogramming more funds into this program.
        ii. Casey's salary will be for full time with a raise.
        iii. I&E has their full allotment.
        iv. Two of the initiatives, River Front Owners and Rain Gardens, would have covered a Terracorps member. Terracorps is not accepting new partners

this year. Denise is looking into working with URI grad students to complete these projects.

c. Bylaws Update – Executive Committee has gotten comments back on the proposed changes. Due to the budget issues further work on this has been delayed. The committee will review all the comments and produce a new document incorporating the comments as appropriate. The new document will be provided to the Council for review in September. A vote on the new Bylaws will be taken at the September Council meeting.

2. Projects Committee (Elaine Caldarone, North Stonington)
    a. General update – RFPs for Community Grants will go out by October 1, 2025.
3. Information & Education Committee (Co-Chair Madeline Jeffery, North Stonington & Co-Chair Bob Maietta, Charlestown)
    a. Now that the funds are available the committee will move forward with ordering garments and the hiker vests and River Friends programs.

<u>Hydrilla Updates</u>

1. SNEP mini grant update
    a. Purchased buoys to create a safe channel in Worden Pond to keep boats out of the hydrilla. Worden Family Campground has agreed to store the buoys.
    b. A permit needs to be submitted to RIDEM Wetlands.
    c. Another challenge is to have the proper boats and equipment to lift the buoys into position. The buoys also need to be removed every fall and reinstalled in the spring.
    d. RIDEM had encouraged the Council to pursue the purchase of the buoys and was to be the agency to install the buoys. However, due to administrative decisions the Wetlands Department is not able to take part.
        i. The Council could continue this project on a volunteer basis using outside boats and equipment. We would also need to obtain a wetlands permit.
            1. Likely no chance to get this done this year.
        ii. We could pressure RIDEM to honor their part of the project and put the buoys in themselves. We would not need a permit if they do it.
        iii. According to Chris Fox, a wetlands permit requires the owner of the property (likely the State of RI) to sign off on the permit. He has offered his services to help with the permitting process.
    e. Motion made by Bob Madison to stop any further action on this project; seconded by Madeline Jeffery. After discussion to do further investigation into this project, Bob and Madeline removed their motion.

2. RI DEM SNEP support letter - Katie DeGoosh is applying to SNEP for funding to stop the spread of hydrilla in the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed. It will include spot treatment of Worden Pond and volunteer greeters to educate boat users. The Executive Committee made the decision to sign a letter of support without Council vote because the timing of the grant application.

<u>Working Group Updates:</u>

1. Kenyon Mills Working Group (Denise Poyer, Richmond)

    a. Shannock Mills, LLC has been awarded $36,000 and a grant agreement has been sent to
2. Wild Brook Trout Working Group (Bob Maietta, Charlestown) – no report.

Partner Updates:

1. Avalonia Land Conservancy - no report
2. CT DEEP – no report
3. NPS
    a. The House has gone through their appropriation markup process. The Partnership Wild and Scenic Program has been level funded. A lot of steps still need to be taken before the final budget is known for 2026-2027 but this is a positive sign.
    b. Lauren is waiting to hear back concerning funding for the Dragonfly Program.
4. RI DEM – no report
5. Save the Bay
    a. 49th STB Swim went off successfully.
    b. Ian O'Hara was introduced. He is part of the restoration team, primarily focus on aquatic passage including dam removals. He is available to talk about ideas.
    c. Currently there are three culvert upgrades happening in Hopkinton.
    d. Town of Richmond is receiving technical assistance from SNEP to create a stormwater management plan at their DPW/transfer station.
    e. Collaborating with Exeter on SNEP application for technical assistance and stormwater training.
    f. Early July meeting by NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service) on the Wood-Pawcatuck Flood Protection Project to protect infrastructure from flooding (in short, they recommended levees at 8 sites across the watershed)
6. Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association
    a. NPS will be part of the permitting process for the Hillsdale Road culvert. Submitted a $400,000 grant request to SNEP for the construction of the culvert. If all goes well the project will be done in 2026,
    b. $100,000 from NBEP for removal for the Hudson Road dam on the Kelly Brook in West Greenwich.
    c. Chris has agreed to attend a meeting with Army Corp of Engineering about funding for infrastructure projects.

7. The Nature Conservancy – no report
8. Westerly Land Trust
    a. A quired Champlin Farm Preserve, 90 acres, with lots of frontage on the Pawcatuck River. Future projects is to renovate the gravel pit.

Good of the Order:

1. Antonia has been contacted by Alyson McCann from URI Cooperative Extension. They are doing a program concerning PFAS in certain areas in Charlestown and Exeter. They would like representatives from the Council to be part of this program.
2. A report concerning the Pawcatuck Estuary was created in 1992.

3. Notice has been received that RIDEM is seeking funding for $1.5 million dollars from the Forestry Legacy Grant and private resources to create a new management area for the Canonicus Property in Exeter.

Public Comment: none

No Meeting in August

Next Meeting: 5 to 7 pm, September 24, 2025

Adjourn: 6:45 pm