Wood-Pawcatuck
Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council
Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 25, 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 (I&E Committee Co-Chair)
Juliet Lamb, Hopkinton, RI
Ahren Cohen, North Kingstown, RI
Janet McAleer, 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)
Marc Doherty, Westerly Land Trust
Lauren Bonatakis, NPS
Harvey Perry, TNC
Chris Fox, WPWA
Tobias Glaza, Avalonia Land Conservancy
Casey Merkle, Council Coordinator

Meeting Convened at: 5:03 pm

Ahren Cohen stated that this would be his last meeting. He introduced Janet McAleer, a member of the North Kingstown Conservation Committee and newly appointed Council Representative for North Kingstown.

Minutes Approval: Motion to approve February 25, 2026 minutes. Minutes approved.

Special Presentation: Marc Doherty, WLT presented information concerning the contamination of PFAs at the former BDA which have been leaching into the Pawcatuck River. Recent articles have highlighting the issue of PFAs from BDA. There is a request to the Federal Government to declare the former mill a Superfund Site. Some remediation has been done in the past, including drum removal, contaminated soil removal, and new retention ponds.

Currently the request is in the assessment phase. It will also need the Governor's approval. After that it will go to a ranking process, selection of remediation, and then the work. It is a long process of at least 10 to 15 years.

WLT will be rebuilding and maintaining the sluice gates at the end of the retention ponds, with the help a Community Fund from the Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council.

Committee Updates:

1. Executive Committee (Antonia Bryson, Richmond)
    a. The FY 2026/2027 Workplan and budget was updated to include the supplemental funding awarded for the TU erosion control project in the upper Wood River. It was sent to the Council with the meeting notification. Only a few changes were made to the already approved budget, mostly to make sure that the fiscal agent, WLT, will receive the appropriate amount.
    b. Officer Elections will be at the May meeting. Currently all officers have expressed interest in continuing in their position, with the except of treasurer. We will be looking for nominations in April. Anyone can nominate someone, or themselves, for a position.
2. Projects Committee (Elaine Caldarone, North Stonington)
    a. Grant agreements have been sent to all the grantees and have been signed.
3. Advisory Committee (Antonia Bryson, Richmond)
    a. Antonia sent a support letter to the RI Senate for legislation that proposed to exempt areas with sole source aquifer designation from Affordable Housing bonus density. This also included language that required any large housing development must show that they can provide enough water and adequate sewage treatment on site.
    b. Antonia also sent a support letter for a CT bill which would allow a rapid CTDEEP response to hydrilla.
4. Information and Education Committee (Madeline Jeffery, North Stonington)
    a. RI Land and Water Summit, March 21 was attended by Madeline, Denise, Tom, Antonia, and Casey. The Council had an information table. Some sessions attended were:
        i. NBEP is working on a Water Quality Dashboard that will make the data accessible to everyone. It is likely that URI Watershed Watch will be uploading all their data to this instrument in the future. NBEP is committed to maintaining this database using open software.
        ii. Stormwater session focused on inland stormwater issues and solutions.

iii. Wetland restoration focusing on marsh restoration.
iv. Besides being cute Beavers are cute and can actually solve flooding and stormwater issues if we learn to collaborate with them.

b. Dragonfly winter edition has been sent out. Looking for any inputs for the next edition, including but not limited to, articles, photos, drawings, and poems.
c. Hats and garments are now available to be distributed to the Council.
d. Madeline and Casey will be attending an Earth Day exposition on April 25 in Groton, CT.
e. A joint program with the WLT is on redwing black birds on April 11.

Partner Updates:

1. Avalonia Land Conservancy – No report.
2. CT DEEP – see attached update from Chris Belluci.
3. NPS
    a. Lauren was able to get all the proper documentation for the Council's work plan and budget submit to the appropriate department earlier than usual.
    b. Lauren has been working on project reviews.
        i. RIDOT has submitted permitting information regarding replacement bridges and culverts in Hopkinton.
    c. TU Youth Camp in June
        i. Denise will be conducting a training session regarding watershed education at WLT on a date to be determined. Looking for a few volunteers who can take the training and conduct a workshop at the Youth Camp on June 22.
4. RI DEM – no report
5. Save the Bay – see attached from Katie Alves.
6. Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association – Chris Fox and Chris Grube toured the privately owned dam at Hudson Pond. Fuss and O'Neil are developing a design that would remove the dam but may be able to retain some of the pond per the owner's request.
7. The Nature Conservancy – No report
8. Westerly Land Trust - no other report

Landowner Stewardship Outreach Project

1. Sarah has completed all the pamphlets. Casey will send an email with a link to the pamphlets to the Council. Please send any comments to Denise at denisepoyer@gmail.com.

Rain Gardens

1. The North Stonington Conservation Commission is considering a state land site.
2. West Greenwich has a site on town land that has been approved. Waiting for site walk by Nan.
3. Hopkinton has identified a site that has been approved by the town. Waiting for site walk by Nan.
4. Denise and Antonia are on the Richmond Town Council agenda to approve a site on town land.

Working Group Updates

1. Brook Trout – Meeting tomorrow.
2. Kenyon Settlement – accepting proposals until May 15.
3. Aquatic Invasives (hydrilla) –
    a. Kiosk has been installed at Worden Pond.
    b. Post cards have been sent to everyone in South Kingstown.
    c. Suggest that we send postcards to every state Senator and Representative in Washington County.
    d. RIDEM may be able to send the postcards to applicants for fishing tournaments.
    e. Friends of Worden Pond has been established.
    f. RIDEM is funding another assessment of Worden Pond in 2026. There is also funding for spot treatment at the boat ramp.
    g. Suggest the Council start an invasive aquatic working group.
4. Water Quality Monitoring
    a. Denise meet with Elizabeth Heron, Fred Sculco, Elise Torello and Charlie Gieger. Charlie will produce a report from the last 5 years of monitoring that will evaluate the data and produce a report card suitable to bring to town officials. She will provide an update in 6 months and the final report in one year.

Good of the Order:

1. West Greenwich Earth Day Cleanup will be on April 18 meeting at Parking Ride, Exit 19 at 8:30 am.
2. West Greenwich had the Master Plan meeting for the Stubble Brook Development but no good details were available. This is the project that the Council wrote a letter of concern to the Planning Board.
3. The Council would like to recognize Ahren Cohen for all the help he gave the Council as the North Kingstown Representative for six years and as treasurer for two years. Casey would especially like to thank Ahren for his assisting her in her new role as Coordinator.

Public Comment: None

Adjourn: 6:48 pm

Next Meeting: 5 to 7 pm, April 22, 2026 (EARTH DAY!)