Wood-Pawcatuck
Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council
Meeting Minutes

DRAFT

Wednesday, May 27, 2026
Westerly Land Trust,
449 Westerly Bradford Rd, Westerly, RI 02891 and via Zoom

Abbreviations: Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council (Council), Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (CTDEEP), National Park Service (NPS), Information and Education Committee (I&E), Projects Committee (PC), Working Group (WG), Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA), Save The Bay (STB), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Westerly Land Trust (WLT)

Attendance:

Justin Andrade, Charlestown, RI
Bob Maietta, Charlestown, RI (I&E Committee Co-Chair)
Sharon MacLean, Exeter, RI (I&E, Hydrilla WG)
Nan Quinlin, Exeter, RI (PC, Hydrilla WG)
Juliet Lamb, Hopkinton, RI (Website Update)
Janice McAleer, North Kingstown, RI
Elaine Caldarone, North Stonington, CT (Council Treasurer, PC Chair, I&E)
Antonia Bryson, Richmond, RI (Council Chair, Advisory Committee Co-chair)
Denise Poyer, Richmond, RI (Council Secretary, Website Update, Kenyon Funds, Landowner Initiative)
Tom Halavik, South Kingstown, (PC, Hydrilla WG)
Fred Wagner, Stonington, CT (Advisory Committee)
Chris Grube, West Greenwich, RI (Council Vice Chair, Advisory Committee Co-Chair, I&E)
Bob Madison, Westerly, RI (I&E)
Mark Doherty, WLT
Lauren Bonatakis, NPS
Tobias Glaza, Avalonia Land Conservancy
Casey Merkle, Council Coordinator

Meeting Convened at: 5:02 pm

Minutes Approval: Motion to approve April 22, 2026 minutes. Minutes approved.

2025 Annual Report

1. Casey presented the 2025 Annual Report. It captures what the Council accomplished between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025.

2. Casey will distribute it digitally to our email list.

Committee Updates:

1. Executive Committee (Antonia Bryson, Richmond)
    a. Officers' election: The slate of candidates as presented was elected by the Council.
        i. Chair: Antonia Bryosn
        ii. Vice chair: Chris Grube
        iii. Secretary: Denise Poyer
        iv. Treasurer: Elaine Caldarone
    b. Social Media Consultant: Five well qualified people applied. Heather Palardy was hired. She will attend all our events and outreach programs, helping Casey with outreach and communications with the public, and publish our other activities such as Hydrilla issues. Heather will start June 1 and hopefully attend the June Council meeting.
2. Projects Committee (Elaine Caldarone, North Stonington)
    a. Suggested that Heather publicize the grant recipients.
    b. Suggested that we have a reception for the grant recipients like we did in 2025.
3. Advisory Committee (Antonia Bryson, Richmond)
    a. Watershed Working Group update
        i. In the Advisory Committee budget, we had allocated $14,000 for the Watershed Working Group, which would coordinate all the research data being generated in the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed.
        ii. Since Katie Alves is no longer with STB, so it was decided not to continue with this project.
4. Information and Education Committee (Bob Maietta, North Stonington)
    a. Spring Festival in Exeter had a great turn out of people. One take-away was to reach out to people at the event and bring them to the booth.
    b. Sharon has signed up for the Fall Festival on September 19, 2026, at the Yawgoo Ski Area, Exeter.
    c. Madeline did an Earth Day event in Groton, CT, that went very well.
    d. Caps and garments are still available. See Casey.
    e. TEK walk last week, led by Narragansett Nation member, was an excellent program. The Tomaguag Museum will be providing three other events this year: two paddles in June 16 and July 13, and a TEC walk on September 19 at the Hene Preserve in North Stonington.
    f. Casey and Heather will be working on the Constant Contact monthly update.
    g. Trout Unlimited Camp is coming up in June. Lauren and Casey will conduct a class on Watershed Education. Bob will be presenting on Wild and Scenic and watersheds. Lauren will also be working with the same campers in September for the Dragonfly Mercury project.

Partner Updates:

1. Avalonia Land Conservancy
    a. On May 20 they held a volunteer appreciation event, including a walk near the Shunnock River.

    b. They have become a little more active in the Eight Mile River activities.
2. CT DEEP - no report
3. NPS
    a. Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers partners meeting was held by Zoom on May 13. Casey sent around the presentation from that meeting.
        i. They are planning to revive a quarterly speaker's series. They would like any suggestions for topics.
        ii. Lauren is will be working with a GIS consultant to conduct a land use analysis around the PWSR rivers. They will be looking for an across-the-board comparison on how land use has changed over time. It may help inform the Councils on their protection projects.
    b. Working on having another gathering for the PWSR. There are limitations to travel for NPS employees, so they need to figure out how to accommodate the restrictions.
    c. Lauren will be conducting Dragonfly Mercury sampling again this year at three sites: Upper Wood, Wyassup and Green Falls River confluence, and somewhere in the lower watershed. Lauren will use the Trout Unlimited campers for the upper Wood River site. She will be looking for volunteers to help with the other two sites. She will send around info and dates when they become available.
    d. Construction Project reviews:
        i. Lauren is working with Chris Fox on the Beaver River culvert, which should be starting by the end of June.
        ii. She has reached a compromise with RIDOT for the Ashaway bridge to mitigate impact to the river.
        iii. She is starting reviews on proposed bridge replacements over the Chipuxet River and some of its tributaries.
4. RI DEM – No report
5. Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association
    a. Preapplication for the Hudson Pond dam removal is on June 10. It should not need an Army Corp of Engineers permit.
6. The Nature Conservancy – No report
7. Westerly Land Trust
    a. There is a Thursday hiking and paddle group associated with WLT that has been in existence for a number of years, meeting every Thursday. There may be a room for coordination with Wild and Scenic Council. They are looking for new leaders.
8. Save the Bay – no representative.

<u>Status Reports</u>

1. Landowner Stewardship Outreach Project (Denise Poyer, Richmond)
    a. Working on final draft of the pamphlets. We are waiting for the website update before we send them out. We anticipate a mailing date in early fall.
    b. To explain the separate pamphlets:
        i. 0 will be the general information pamphlet that will be available for tabling and other events.
        ii. 1 is to introduce river front land owners to their Wild and Scenic River. It will be customized for each individual river. For example, folks living

along the Beaver River will get one with details about the Beaver River. These will be mailed to our landowner list.

iii. 2 is to introduce landowners to potential issues for their rivers. These will be mailed to landowner a couple weeks after the first one. They will also be available for events.

iv. 3 is to introduce personal action people can take to help their rivers. These will be mailed shortly after the second one and will be available for events.

2. Rain Gardens (Nan Quinlan, Exeter)
    a. Waiting for West Greenwich to finish up the building so they can install the rain garden.
    b. Hopkinton site at Crandall field will not work out. Still looking for another site.
    c. Richmond Town Council approved working with the Council to install two rain gardens at the new construction for a community center near the Town Hall.
    d. North Kingstown has a new construction that does require rain gardens, so hopefully we
    e. Wenly Ferguson from STB will work with Nan on the designs.
3. Hydrilla Working Group
    a. Several members of the Council had a Zoom meeting with Jason McNamee of RIDEM to push forward on some of the promises.
        i. There will be a resurvey of Worden Pond in June from a SNEP grant.
        ii. Great Swamp employees will help deploy the buoys this summer.
        iii. RIDEM has received funding to apply herbicide for at least one year.
        iv. Buoys are ready to go as soon as we get permission from RIDEM, especially regarding the necessity of a wetland permit.
    b. Friends of Worden Pond has a full suit of officers and will be taking membership soon.
        i. Also, at this meeting a representative from Save The Lake had several suggestions about outreach.
    c. We need to do outreach to state representatives regarding the issue of hydrilla in Worden Pond.
        i. Katie DeGoosh has an intern who will be working on a presentation to bring to local officials.
4. Kenyon Settlement
    a. Only one application was received. TNC has a fish passage proposal on the Pawcatuck River at the Rt. 91 bridge and Jay Cronan fishing access, which is 85% funded. The project will be to create a notch in the USGS weir to allow upstream passage at most water levels. The Kenyon Settlement Funds would allow the project to be fully funded. It will be completed within 18 months.
5. Website Update
    a. Denise, Casey and Juliette meet to look at the proposed changes. They decided that the front page needs a more modern look that will work with cell phones. Denise will work with Bruce to redesign the website. This may require more funding.
6. Water Quality Monitoring – no report.

Good of the Order:

1. Amtrack bypass from Providence to New London proposal has resurfaced. The original plans called for putting a rail line right through many conservation areas, including the Francis Carter Preserve. It would also require new bridges over the Pawcatuck River. It will be a topic the Council should follow.
2. No meeting in August.
3. Casey suggest we do a potluck for either June or July meeting.
4. Denise will not be here for the June meeting. We will need a substitute to take minutes.

Public Comment: None

Adjourn: 6:22 pm

Next Meeting: 5 to 7 pm, June 24, 2026