

York River Stewardship Committee Meeting

Minutes for September 24, 2024 meeting at York Land Trust

Voting Members Present: Karen Arsenault, Sally Harold, Joan LeBlanc (Chair), David Marshall, Mary Marshall, Susie Rice, Jim Smith, Judy Spiller

Other Committee Members: Phil Bekke (Alt), Beth Cromwell (Alt), Paul Dest (Wells Reserve), Jim MacCartney (NPS), Hannah Volk (NPS), Jenn Hunter (coordinator)

Guests: Geoff Wilson (presenter) and about 10 people attending for the presentation and discussion on salt marsh restoration

- 1. Welcome:** Joan LeBlanc opened the meeting at 5:30
- 2. Learning Opportunity:** Presentation by Geoff Wilson, Northeast Wetland Restoration and SMART Team member, who our committee has hired to develop restoration plans for salt marshes owned by US Fish and Wildlife Service and the York Land Trust. There was consensus among the YRSC that the project was a priority to pursue. We have a local project team to support the project: our committee, York Land Trust, USFWS, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and Wells Reserve. Jenn mentioned the community marsh walk that didn't happen this month would be rescheduled to the spring.

Geoff gave his presentation and explained that the salt marshes had been extensively farmed for hundreds of years to increase hay yields, leaving “embankment signatures,” changed hydrology, and marshes that are threatened with sea level rise. The restoration design approach uses a 4-tiered model:

- Platform hydrology: Address the marsh platform and waterlogging
- Surface hydrology: Increase primary productivity of marsh systems
- Wildlife management considerations
- Long term management considerations

During and following the presentation, attendees asked questions about similar projects in Maine, formation of megapools, how long would the marshes take to restore/recover, and addressing the issue of sea level rise.

- 3. Review and approve Minutes of August Meeting:** Corrections made: start time should be 5:30 instead of 5:05 and SWOT should be spelled out. With corrections Mary made a motion to accept the minutes. All approved.
- 4. Communications:** Jenn displayed the finalized logo. Fifteen committee members had provided feedback in the survey that was distributed for logo input. Judy made a motion to accept the logo as presented, seconded by Karen, unanimously approved.

Jenn gave an update on other Fluent products. The audit is still being finalized which will inform the communications strategy. A partner survey sent out to 55 people to get input and

impressions YRSC outreach and messaging. Fluent will attend the October 11th meeting of our Outreach Committee to present strategies/communications we can comment on, as well as comments on a website template.

First Annual Report shown. Jenn developed content and Hannah designed it. It will be sent to the town councils and select boards and presented in person as well. Joan is putting together a slide presentation for York that others can use. Jenn will put together talking points that our committee members can use when making presentations.

5. Updates:

- a. **NPS:** Jim stated that a Continuing Resolution (CR) looks likely for next year. Regarding the Partnership gathering there is a spreadsheet we can enter information regarding carpooling and other logistics. He also reminded the Committee about the upcoming PWSR council “best practices” workshop. Karen and Jenn are participating.
- b. **Executive Committee:** Joan reminded the group that the October meeting is canceled, with the date conflict for the PWSR network meeting.
- c. **Coordinator:** Our next meeting will be November 26. Maine DEP will attend and speak on water quality monitoring done by the state. They use the York River as a reference area or baseline for water quality. The meeting will be 2 hours instead of the usual 90 minutes.
- d. **River Access Ad Hoc Committee:** Mary reported that there will be an article on ballot in November for municipal docks. The feasibility and design report may not be completed in time for a budget item to be included on the May warrant. A question was asked about fees for parking. Paul remarked that we need to be aware of the funding source for the dock project. If state funds are used, charging for parking may not be allowed. Need to check deed as well. Mary noted the group is looking at parking issues at Scotland Bridge as well.
- e. **Committee:** The important upcoming court case in Maine on intertidal access was noted as getting underway in October, though probably no ruling until much later in 2025.

Motion made to adjourn at 7:10

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Arsenault, Secretary

Approved: November 26, 2024