

**York River Stewardship Committee**  
**Minutes for the February 25, 2025, Meeting**

**Voting Members Present:** Sally Harold, Karl Honkonen, Joan LeBlanc (Chair), David Marshall, Mary Marshall, Jim Smith, Judy Spiller

**Other Committee Members Present:** Philip Brekke (Alt), Beth Cromwell (Alt), Paul Dest (Wells Reserve), Jim MacCartney (NPS), Hannah Volk (NPS), Jenn Hunter (Coordinator)

1. **Welcome and introductions:** Joan welcomed the group at 5:30. There were no guests or members of the public.
2. **Review and approve minutes:** Mary made a motion to approve the minutes, David seconded. All approved.
3. **Cooperative Agreement/federal funding (Joan and Paul):** Paul gave an update on funding status, noting that all January and February obligations were paid and funds drawn down from the federal system. March obligations are planned for draw down in mid-March. All grants will be paid as soon as invoices are received. Paul will travel to Washington DC in March for coastal program meetings, during which he meets with congressional offices to discuss funding. This year discussions might include FY25 and FY26. Paul noted that there may be a federal government shut down if a continuing resolution or budget for the current fiscal year is not passed by March 14, when the current continuing resolution expires.
4. **York River Watershed Grants Program for 2025:** Jenn issued the RFP in mid-February 2025, with responses due April 16, 2025. The grants review committee will include Mary, Karl, Sally, Joan, and David. Jenn will send a note inviting any interested committee members to participate. Committee agreed to tentatively move the April 22 meeting to May 6, so that we can vote on the review committee's recommendations for grant awards (so that the award contracts can be done by July 2025). The decision regarding whether to host a second meeting on May 27 was tabled.
5. **Communications Products and Outreach Plans:** The new rack cards and banner display were set up in the meeting room. YRSC members thanked the Outreach Committee for their efforts and noted that the materials are very professional and well done. A photo of all committee members present standing near the table was taken and will be posted on our website.

Jenn asked for volunteers to help with outreach activities in the communities as we want to have a presence at events. She noted there will be another display for the table focused on yard care, and she will have talking points about our grants and projects for anyone volunteering at the table. The following events were discussed:

- Saturday, April 5 is the Kittery Land Trust Seacoast Film Festival where we will have a table (Sally and Judy volunteered).
- Saturday, May 3, Climate Action Fair at York High School (Mary, Joan and Jenn volunteered).
- Saturday, June 28, South Berwick Strawberry Festival. Karl and Philip will coordinate YRSC involvement in this event.

The committee discussed plans for Jim Smith to host summer boat tours on the York River. Jim encouraged committee members to invite members of town committees. Judy and Jim are working on a loose script of pertinent information about the York River so that everyone can participate if they are interested in accompanying him. So far Sally has invited the Kittery Conservation Commission. Anyone interested in inviting partner groups and committees should contact Jim and Jenn to coordinate. Jenn will develop and share a spreadsheet to facilitate scheduling. Hannah and Jim will put together a one-pager with basic information about the boat tours.

Other outreach project updates: 1. York Conservation Commission brochure on pesticides and fertilizers will be mailed at the end of March; 2. Save Kittery Waters joined our last Outreach Subcommittee meeting to discuss coordination of activities; and 3. York Parks and Rec kayak tour dates for 2025 have been published. There will be six dates. Paul and Sally are serving as YRSC naturalists on four of the tours.

## 6. **Updates and discussion**

**a. NPS and PWSR program:** Jim reported that the Park Service is preparing for multiple operating scenarios which will depend upon the federal government budget and program direction. NPS will host a virtual speaker series for Partnership Rivers on February 26. Topics will include invasive species, community engagement, and community response to climate. YRSC members were invited to attend.

**b. Executive Committee:** Joan reported that the March 25<sup>th</sup> YRSC meeting will have presenters from Wells Reserve and Southern Maine Planning for the topic of coastal resilience.

**c. River Access Ad Hoc Committee:** Mary reported that the River Access Committee's kick-off meeting on Feb 7<sup>th</sup> included discussion on permitting (permits will not expire until after the May 2026 vote and are needed from DEP, Army Corps and Submerged Land permit), parking, ADA, wood types used on the dock, winter maintenance. The meeting also included a site walk. The next meeting for this committee will be Tuesday, March 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm at the Police training room.

**d. Other:** Jenn reminded YRSC members about an upcoming training session for anyone interested in volunteering to help with rainbow smelt monitoring. Details were included in the email circulated by Jenn in advance of the meeting.

## 7. **Public comments:** None

Meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm

Submitted by Mary Marshall for Karen Arsenault, Secretary

Approved: April 22, 2025