

York River Stewardship Committee

Minutes for May 27, 2025 Meeting

Voting members present: Karen Arsenault, Joan LeBlanc (Chair), Sally Harold, David Marshall, Mary Marshall, Susie Rice, Judy Spiller

Non-voting members present: Philip Brekke (Alt), Stefan Claesson (Alt), Beth Cromwell (Alt), Deane Rykerson (Alt), Paul Dest (Wells Reserve), Jim MacCartney (NPS), Emma Lord (NPS), Hannah Volk (NPS), Jenn Hunter (Coordinator)

Guests: Jessica Brunacini, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve; Abbie Sherwin, NOAA contractor (formerly with SMPDC); Doreen MacGillis, York Land Trust; Tim Greer, Harbor Board; Clayton Smith, Kittery; Wayne Boardman, York Planning Board; Taylor Maquire, York Planning Department; Peter Murray, York Parks and Rec; Sarah Palmer, York Ready for Climate Action

1. Welcome and introductions

Joan opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. As there were a number of guests, she asked for introductions.

2. Coastal Resilience Session

Jenn introduced the session presenters: Joan LeBlanc, YRSC Chair, Abbie Sherwin, NOAA contractor, Jessica Brunacini, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve. Presentations covered:

- How improved climate resilience and nature-based strategies, like living shoreline projects, can help protect York River resources.
- Results and recommendations from the Climate Ready Coast-Southern Maine project for three areas of the York River that are particularly vulnerable to sea level rise impacts.
- Plans for developing designs to improve coastal resilience at Steedman Woods.

Presentations can be found on the York River Stewardship Committee's website in PDF format.

3. Federal budget/Cooperative Agreement updates – Paul

Paul noted that uncertainty and lack of information surrounding the budget continue. We've contacted our delegation but there is no new information. Jim M. noted that on the Park Service financial assistance database a PWSR in Florida had cleared one hurdle for approval for its cooperative agreement but there wasn't any more movement. Paul suggested that most likely there wouldn't be approvals before the 7/1 start date. Could be 1-3 months late. We have funds for July left from the past year.

4. York River Watershed Grants Program for 2025

Jenn reported that there were 7 applications for grants: 4 new and 3 repeat applicants from 2024. The Review Team completed its review and recommendations for funding. Jenn shared information about the proposals and the review team's funding recommendations.

Motion made by Judy and seconded by Mary to approve funding for the projects recommended by the review subcommittee, pending anticipated federal funding - unanimously approved.

Nothing will be communicated to applicants until there is funding certainty and Executive Committee agreement to proceed. Jenn reached out to applicants at the beginning of May to tell them that they wouldn't be notified by mid-May as originally planned, as everything is on hold.

5. Other Business and Updates

Minutes review for April Meeting: A motion was made by Judy Spiller and seconded by Mary Marshall to approve the minutes of the April meeting, unanimously approved.

River Access Ad Hoc Committee - Mary and Beth

There was a preliminary design presentation made by GEI mid-May. Beth articulated her concern that the dock and ramp have become much longer than originally anticipated, now at 180', and is concerned about what voters will think about it, given past concerns about dock lengths. Once there is a final design, there will be public meetings. Next meeting of the River Access committee is June 10.

Executive Committee: No Executive Committee updates

6. Public Comments

Paul noted Jim MacCartney's pending retirement from NPS, and that he has been with us for 10 years, starting with the study and forward. We wouldn't be where we are today without Jim. Both Joan and Jenn also talked about how important Jim has been to our committee, the river and for achieving designation. He will be missed.

Submitted by:

Karen Arsenault, Secretary

Approved: July 22, 2025