

York River Stewardship Committee

Minutes for the July 22, 2025 Meeting

Voting Members Present: Karen Arsenault, Joan LeBlanc (Chair), Sally Harold, David Marshall, Mary Marshall

Non-voting members present: Beth Cromwell (Alt), Paul Dest (Wells Reserve), Hannah Volk (NPS), Jenn Hunter (Coordinator)

Guests: none

- 1. Welcome:** Joan opened the meeting at 5:40. She announced that Allan Kawrse was resigning from the committee due to travel commitments. Joan indicated she would work with Beth, who is the Alternate for York, in stepping in as a full member, assuming that is desired. In accordance with our bylaws, an alternate would become a full member if a seat is vacated. We would notify the York Selectboard accordingly.
- 2. Minutes of the last meeting:** Joan asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the May 27 meeting. Mary made the motion, Sally seconded, all approved.
- 3. Election of officers:** The executive committee discussed and suggested that with all the chaos currently with federal funding and administration, it might be wise to keep the same slate of officers for another year to provide continuity. Paul noted that many organizations' bylaws have 2-year terms for officers, not 1-year, like ours. Perhaps we should reconsider terms in the future. If people are interested in leadership positions for the future, they should contact Joan.

Motion made by Mary to approve the current slate of officers for the upcoming year, seconded by David, and passed unanimously.

- 4. Retirement, Fiscal Agent, and Cooperative Agreement Updates:** Paul's tenure at the Wells Reserve ends at the end of the year, with his retirement. Jake Aman will step in to be the Wells Reserve staff contact for the Executive Committee, Jenn and the National Park Service for continuation of the Cooperative Agreement and fiscal agent responsibilities. Jake will be involved, but unlikely at the level Paul has been. We will be responsible for working with our elected officials. On behalf of all, Joan expressed sincere thanks for all that Paul has done and how irreplaceable he is.

Cooperative Agreement: The cooperative agreement amendment seems to be working its way through the system, but timing and process is still unclear. We are still trying to get our funding increased to meet other PWS rivers' levels. That will be an ongoing issue. Jenn is currently working at a reduced level because of funding delay. A new contract for her will come when the funds are awarded. Jenn commented that she still is not contacting grant applicants until we have stronger indication of funding availability. She'll coordinate with Paul and the Executive Committee, if needed, on future communications and awards.

- 5. Treasurer's Report:** Sally noted that everyone has a copy of the financial report, which she reviewed with the committee. Two projects remain open past June 30: Northeast Wetland Restoration and Town of Kittery-Save Kittery Waters.

- 6. NPS/PWSR Program Updates:** Hannah reminded the group that Emma began her maternity leave. Lauren Bonatakis is covering our program temporarily. Lauren and Hannah are available to assist.
- 7. Boat trip Planning:** Jim was unexpectedly unable to make the meeting and share updates. Jenn showed recent white ibis photos taken by Chuck while cruising with Jim. Jim's trips are "back in business" focusing on different boards, partners, and committees. He has put together 20 possible trip dates in Aug/Sept. Jenn reviewed some of the coordination that is in the works and asked if there were other groups members wanted to take out.
- 8. Projects Summary:** Jenn reported that 4 out of 5 Watershed Grants projects are completed. Save Kittery Waters projected timeframe has been extended to December. Others have invoiced and submitted final reports. Project summary reports are on our website on the Projects page.

Salt Marsh Restoration Planning project: ongoing to September 30. Work still needs to be done: data merged into narrative to create a plan, data mapping, potential for August site visit, finishing up planning stage. Next stage is restoration implementation. Maine Coast Heritage Trust will take the lead in this next phase to assist landowners York Land Trust and USFWS. Sally is assisting with the permitting process, coordinating with MCHT, YLT and USFWS as well as identifying other landowners/abutters. MCHT is looking to identify funding opportunities: NFWF (no) and MNRCP. MNRCP has asked MCHT to submit a full proposal after reviewing the initial letter of intent.

Outreach and Project Coordination Activities: even with Jenn's reduced hours, there are ongoing activities the committee will be involved with, including boat trips (Jim), kayak trips with Parks and Rec (Paul and Sally), partner activities and site visits, website updates (Jenn), and social media (Hannah and Jenn). Jenn asked the group to identify any future events for tabling. The newsletter will wait until there is funding and time to develop the next one. The Outreach Team will meet when needed. Thanks to Beth and Mary for continuing to participate in the River Access Ad Hoc Committee.

Living Shorelines Project/GEI (Wells Reserve/SMPDC/YCSWCD project): Joan reported that there have been two meetings with Parks and Rec and other town committees. GEI and participants walked the site to review places where a living shoreline might work. A site near the bridge was selected where it's sloughing off. With more funding available than originally anticipated, they will incorporate other management issues involving overuse, proliferation of trails, unplanned access points, and Wiggly Bridge and Fisherman's Walk resilience. Two more meetings are planned to go over management approaches and conceptual designs. Collaboration will be key to the success of this project.

- 9. River Access Ad Hoc Committee update (Mary & Beth):** Jenn shared a map of the areas that were considered for a dock. Beth showed a map of the chosen location, as well as parking and access. Dock dimensions: 25' height x 200' length, float 120' wide. It needs to be ADA compliant. The ad hoc committee has voted for this option. Jenn will get the most up to date schematics to go in next newsletter. Our committee encouraged the ad hoc committee to have public info meetings this fall.

10. Public comments: none

Meeting adjourned at 7:10. No meeting in August.

Submitted by:

Karen Arsenault, Secretary

Approved: September 23, 2025