

York River Stewardship Committee

Minutes for the September 23, 2025 Meeting

Voting members present: Karen Arsenault, Beth Cromwell, Joan LeBlanc (Chair), Mary Marshall, Susie Rice, Jim Smith

Non-voting members present: Philip Brekke (Alt), Paul Dest (Wells Reserve), Jenn Hunter (Coordinator)

Guests: Bill Goodwin, Gail Gilchrist, Clayton Smith, Maddie Houston, Liz Walworth

1. Welcome: Joan opened the meeting at 5:30, welcomed the guests and asked them to introduce themselves.

2. Salt Marsh Restoration Project:

Jenn began by explaining that the salt marsh restoration was the first project undertaken by our committee, with discussions beginning in early 2024. To increase the pace of salt marsh restoration on property owned by York Land Trust and U.S. Fish and Wildlife, the committee hired Northeast Wetland Restoration to develop a restoration plan. A project team with experience in this area was also formed. The team, in conjunction with Northeast Wetland Restoration has worked for a year to develop this plan which is the first step in a multi-year project. Maine Coast Heritage Trust will lead the next phase and is currently seeking restoration implementation funding. A timeline is not yet in place.

Geoff Wilson presented our group with his findings and more background on marsh degradation and restoration approaches. There is much more work to be done to restore these marshes to a stable condition which includes a four-tier restoration model: Tier 1: Create a stable marsh platform, restore flow; Tier 2: create conditions for marsh plants to grow, increase productivity; Tier 3: wildlife management considerations; and Tier 4: long term management. The presentation will be posted on the committee's website.

3. July meeting minutes review: motion made by Mary to accept minutes as presented, seconded by Susie, passed unanimously.

4. Committee business:

Paul reported that the Cooperative Agreement amendment was finally approved and contracts were signed. The potential shutdown will not affect us directly. Park Service is operating at a lower staffing level. Fred Akers has asked us to appoint contacts from our committee to represent our river together with the other PWSR groups. Jenn and Joan will be the contacts for the PWSR network for Fred's communications. Jake at the Wells Reserve will be our contact at the Wells Reserve, with Paul's retirement later this year.

Joan thanked Paul again for his diligent work on our behalf. Beth Cromwell has agreed to become a permanent member of our committee and has been approved by the York Selectboard. We recommended that they fill the alternate appointment for York in June.

Jenn asked members to sign the Conflict of Interest forms or initial the previous one.

5. 2025 Watershed Grants Program – projects and contracts: Jenn announced that there were six contracts awarded:

- Blue Ocean Society – education programs and clean-ups. Currently they do mostly beach cleanups but would like to extend to shoreland areas along the river. They will be

coming to our next Outreach Committee meeting to discuss ideas for programs and clean-up locations. Joan noted that they organize monofilament collections and that might be a good fit for our area.

- York Conservation Commission – invasives control at Goodrich Park
- York Parks and Recreation – gear for kayak tour series
- Old York Historical Society – restoration of the Cider House at McIntire Garrison
- York Land Trust – transactions costs to acquire 3 parcels from the Town of York
- York Ready for Climate Action – 2026 fair promotion and outreach

6. Outreach Activities and Project Coordination updates:

Jim announced that he has completed his boat trips for the season with 4 completed trips and 2 cancellations due to weather. He noted the difficulty in organizing groups.

Joan spoke about the recent workshop on Living Shorelines and the decision support tool available. She learned about how decisions were made to pick Steedman Woods as a project due to a variety of parameters. They also expanded beyond the original project of living shorelines to include managing trails and access.

Paul and Sally accompanied the kayak tours to provide river and ecology information. Pete Murray, York Parks and Rec director, will be coming to our next meeting to give an update.

Jenn will be speaking at the York Land Trust Annual Meeting to talk about the Salt Marsh Restoration Project.

The next Outreach Committee meeting is Oct. 10, with Blue Ocean staff attending the beginning.

7. River Access Ad Hoc Committee update:

Mary Marshall reported that GEI (Dan Bannon) presented the preliminary design for the Grant House paddlecraft public dock with preliminary cost estimates. The plan shows the gravel path extending from the brick walkway in front of the Grant House to a concrete pier mounted dock (6' wide) that includes a 12' wide bump out before descending an 80' gangway to a 20'x20' timber landing dock with six dock sections on each side of the landing dock and includes kayak launch sections. The entire plan is ADA compliant. Regulatory permits will take six months. Dan will have GEI start on the permits once the plan is approved by the Selectboard and town manager with a goal of having permits by Spring 2026 prior to the May 2026 vote, so bids can be sought if funding is approved for planned construction in winter 2026-27.

The River Access Ad Hoc Committee voted unanimously at its last meeting to move the plan forward to the Selectboard, town manager and Capital Planning Committee.

8. Public Comments: none

Meeting adjourned at 7:05

Submitted by,
Karen Arsenault, Secretary

approved: 10/28/25