

York River Stewardship Committee

Minutes for the December 16, 2025 Meeting

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

Non-voting members present: Philip Brekke (Alt), Deane Rykerson (Alt), Emma Lord (NPS), Jake Aman (Wells Reserve), Paul Dest (Wells Reserve), Jenn Hunter (Coordinator)

Guests: Clayton Smith, Jim MacCartney, Anna DiChiara, Peter Murray (Parks and Rec)

1. Welcome: Joan opened the meeting at 5:35, welcomed the guests. Paul Dest said a few words about Jake Aman who will be taking over his role on behalf of the Wells Reserve. Jake has extensive experience with rivers, fish, marsh restoration, and habitat stewardship.

2. Kayak Tours update and coordination: Peter Murray, Director, York Parks & Recreation Department

Peter Murray thanked the YRSC for help funding the town's kayak programs. He presented a slide show providing an update on the first two years of trips and thanked our volunteers for helping tell the stories of the river, its conservation values, and watershed importance. He also provided a quick Steedman Woods update stating that the town is still working on a conservation easement, with the town's environmental planner potentially being in charge, and that the ownership transfer is not complete. He also noted that the Selectboard will not be putting the dock development project on the May ballot.

Joan thanked him for all the work he's been involved in - recreational and environmental stewardship. Jenn noted a potential partnering opportunity with Blue Ocean Society for their grant funded work.

3. Nature-based Strategies project updates: [Decision Support Tool for Nature-Based Strategies in Southern Maine](#) & [Steedman Woods Conceptual Design Report](#) – Jake Aman, Stewardship Director, Wells Reserve

Jake reviewed both products that were developed for this project. With additional funding available, the Steedman Woods project designs were more comprehensive than first planned. Once ownership transfer is complete, the town can use the designs to apply for funding for next phases of the project. The report and tools are online. Wells Reserve and project partners plan to offer future workshops or assistance to communities related to the data and tools.

4. Review October meeting minutes: Jim made a motion to accept the October minutes, seconded by David, all approved.

5. Administrative Updates and Discussion

NPS update: Emma reported that they are down to 5 staff from 10. She will continue to work with us. The current Continuing Resolution is in place until January 30th. After that date, they will start thinking about workplans. Jenn asked if there was any path forward to get us level funded with other PWSRs? Could Emma see if Helen would be willing to talk with the Executive Committee?

Executive Committee: Joan reminded all that it was time for committee members to make reports to their respective town boards. Jenn will put together an annual report by January 15. Joan asked for volunteers for each town: Sally for Kittery, Mary & Joan for York, David Marshall for Eliot. Sally reported on new rules/revisions being brought forward for the Clean Water Act that will loosen federal wetland protections. We cannot comment as a group but our members can do so individually. Sally will share information if others wish to comment.

Fiscal Agent: Paul is working on transition. Jake is now our contact in terms of interface with Jenn and the committee. Still determining how other components will be worked out. The political/policy realm will be more centered with our committee, less with the Reserve, in the future.

Coordinator: Jenn thanked Deane for organizing the McIntire site visit. It worked out well and was a good opportunity to get a closer look at the property.

6. River Access Ad Hoc Committee update: Tabled, members not present

7. Public Comments: None

8. Meeting adjourned at 6:40

Submitted by,
Karen Arsenault, Secretary

Approved: 1/27/26