

York River Stewardship Committee

May 26, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Voting members present: Karen Arsenault, Philip Brekke, Beth Cromwell, Sally Harold, Mary Marshall, Jim Smith, Judy Spiller

Non-voting members present: Anna DiChiara, Deane Rykerson, Emma Lord (NPS), Jenn Hunter (Coordinator)

Guests: Patrick Fitzgibbons (Kittery Land Trust)

1. **Welcome:** Judy Spiller opened the meeting at 5:35 in Joan's absence, welcomed everyone and asked members to introduce themselves to KLT's new Stewardship Director, Patrick Fitzgibbons.
2. **Minutes of April Meeting:** Judy asked if there were any corrections to the April minutes. Hearing none, Sally made a motion to accept the minutes, seconded by Mary, all approved.
3. **Treasurer's Report:** Sally shared the quarter 3 budget report. She reported that she was working with the finance director at the Wells Reserve to understand changes in reporting and will resolve differences in the next quarter. There is still significant funding available for the committee to award to special projects in the future.
4. **Nominations and Election of Officers:** Karen nominated a slate with Joan LeBlanc as Chair, Judy Spiller as Vice Chair, Sally Harold as Treasurer, and Mary Marshall as Secretary; seconded by Jim and passed unanimously. Officers serve on the Executive Committee.
5. **Watershed Grants Program:** Jenn described and summarized the proposals received, the subcommittee's review process, and funding recommendation.
 - 9 applications received totaling over \$69,000; 4 were new applicants, 5 applicants from prior years; more geographically diverse project locations than in the past; variety of approaches and topics (assessment/monitoring, community engagement, historic preservation, land conservation, trail improvements)
 - The proposal review subcommittee members individually reviewed each application using criteria from the RFP. Jenn compiled the results and sent them back to the review team for group discussion during a meeting to develop its funding recommendation. The Executive Committee provided guidance on available funding. Two review team members had connections to applicants and did not provide any input for the review or discussion of those projects.
 - Recommendation: Fund 8 projects from applications submitted by Great Works Regional Land Trust, York Land Trust, Old York Historical Society, Eliot Conservation Commission, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation, York Parks and Recreation Department, and York County Soil & Water Conservation District for a total of \$59,083.
 - Includes allocating \$8,925 from Special Projects to the Watershed Grant Program
 - Work scope modifications to two projects: (1) In-person presentation for the WNERR project; and (2) Four surveys at two sites for the YCSWCD project, plus education events not at boat launch sites.

A motion was made by Judy Spiller, seconded by Karen Arsenault, to approve the Project Review Subcommittee's recommendations to award funds to 8 applicants, with suggested project modifications, not to exceed \$60,000, including up to \$9,000 in funds from our special projects

budget line. All approved; Mary recused herself from discussion and voting due to a family connection to one of the projects.

The subcommittee will report back at next meeting. Jenn will work on notification during the coming month with a news release after July 1. Grantees will be invited to Outreach Committee meetings where appropriate.

6. Outreach: Jenn sent out a summary via email with more information. **Boat Tour Group** finalizing information and the tour guidebook, doing a practice run on the boat June 4 at 1:00. YRSC is invited. YRSC members were asked to get the word out to connect with groups interested in York River; dates available on Google docs. **Celebrate York River Month**, following lunar cycle September to October. Largely other groups' events; we will promote and make the connection to the YR watershed. Mary and Karen are approaching groups. We will be looking for YRSC involvement in some activities.

7. Other updates and discussion

- **National Park Service:** Updates from Emma were sent by email. Notes from the Partnership Network Meeting will be sent out. NPS has an Experienced Services Program through which Jim McCartney is being hired to provide specific project assistance.
- **Executive Committee Meeting:** The liability waiver brought up at a previous meeting was out discussed but no decision was made. David Marshall, our Eliot member, will be terming off in June. There will then be two vacancies for the Town of Eliot.
- **Coordinator Update:** Shirts and hats still available for those members who are interested. We will provide hats to folks who are regularly involved with us.
- **River Access Ad Hoc Committee:** No meeting had taken place recently. Ad Hoc Committee was hoping the dock would be on the ballot in May 2027. They are going to be review how many docks could be added on the river, as well as temporary docks that could be installed seasonally. There was concern about the York River Landing dock—that if it goes in, there could be less support for the Goodrich Park dock, even though the York River Landing's dock is private.
- **Other members:** Jim noted the Great Bay National Estuary Newsletter with a story about nonpoint source pollution and stormwater and hoped it could be circulated.

8. Public Comments: none

Meeting adjourned at 6:40. Next meeting planned for June 23.

Submitted by,

Karen Arsenault, Secretary

Approved: 7/28/26