



Niantic River Watershed Committee

Minutes

Niantic River Watershed Committee Meeting

June 14, 2011

4-6 pm

LTA Room, Waterford Town Hall

15 Rope Ferry Road, Waterford, CT

Attendees: Maureen Fitzgerald, Town of Waterford; Fred Grimsey, Save-the-River, Save-the-Hills; Don Landers, East Lyme; Franca Parra, New London; Chris Tomichek, Waterford; Eric Thomas, CT DEP; Judy Rondeau, Watershed Coordinator

1. Welcome: Judy Rondeau opened the meeting at 4:03 pm.
2. Review of May 10, 2011 Meeting Minutes: Don Landers made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Chris Tomichek. All were in favor of the motion, minutes were approved.
3. Watershed Coordinator's Report: Judy briefly summarized her activities for the past month. She has been working with the four watershed towns to complete the appointment of Directors to the Watershed Board. She sent letters to the school superintendents, principals and curriculum directors informing them of the availability of the Teacher Water Quality Loan Kit. She also emailed the teachers who responded to the 2010 questionnaire directly. She submitted an application to Unilever United States Foundation for development of a watershed-wide volunteer water quality monitoring program. She will also be submitting an application to the US EPA Equipment Loan program for additional equipment. She spoke with staff at Ledge Light Health District about comparing STR-STH's bacteria data to Ledge Light's beach sampling data. She continues to work with Friends of Oswegatchie Hills to manage invasive species and install a riparian buffer at Clark Pond. She also submitted a letter of support for a STEAP grant application being submitted by the Town of Salem for creation of a regional watersheds resource center.
4. Partner Reports: Fred Grimsey updated the group about STR-STH's bacteria sampling in the Niantic River. Fred has had discussions with Ledge Light Health District regarding how to use the data, as Ledge Light does not regulate bathing water in the upper river. Eric Thomas reported that CT DEP is narrowing in on 2011 §319 grant applications that will be approved. He also stated that it appears that federal funding for the 2012 §319 program will be significantly reduced over previous years.

5. Discussion:

- a. Establishment of Board of Directors: Judy reported that appointments are going well. She asked members if an end date should be set so planning can begin for the publicity event. Fred suggested that the publicity event could be held at the STR-STH Kayak Regatta in August. A large crowd (150 people) and VIPs would be present.
- b. Plan of Work: Board members reviewed the draft Plan of Work and prioritized the Plan goals. Members are asked to prioritize the activities within each goal and submit them to Judy for compilation prior to next month's meeting.

6. Monitoring Data:

- a. Monitoring Program Development: Judy submitted a grant application to Unilever United States Foundation for development of a watershed-wide volunteer water quality monitoring program, and will be submitting an application to the US EPA Equipment loan program for stream monitoring. The group briefly discussed various monitoring efforts already underway in the watershed, including Fred's STR-STH Niantic River monitoring, East Lyme Conservation Commission's RBV monitoring, Maureen Fitzgerald's stream monitoring and the USGS stream monitoring. Judy passed a watershed map around the table and asked members to mark where monitoring was occurring, in order to identify potential areas to initiate monitoring efforts. She also asked members to identify areas where problems were known. Maureen suggested that the area in Waterford known as "the Avenues" might benefit from NPS outreach.
- b. Niantic River Nitrogen Work Group: Several NRWC members attended the most recent Work Group meeting, held at UConn Avery Point on May 26th. The group has been focusing on identifying data gaps in studies conducted in the Niantic River and Bay, with the goal of recommending studies and monitoring programs to address those gaps. Don Landers reported that as an outcome of the Work Group meetings, Millstone Environmental Lab has begun to collect water quality samples as part of its regular monitoring program.
- c. RFP Funding Opportunities: Judy is continuing to search for grant opportunities to fund this RFP.

7. Outreach:

- a. Watershed Stakeholder meeting: The Watershed Committee is planning a half-day meeting to update watershed stakeholders on progress made since the inception of the Watershed Committee. The group settled on Friday, September 23rd to hold meeting (to coincide with Saturday, September 24th, which is National Estuary Day). Anyone interested in assisting with the planning please contact Judy.
- b. Teacher Loan Kits: Watershed schools have been notified that the kit is available. Several teachers have responded, and are interested in using the kit. We will be conducting in-service trainings in the fall for interested school districts. Judy will be meeting with one teacher from the Montville school system on June 20th to discuss the kit.
- c. Rain Barrel Sale: Pick-up for the rain barrel sale will be held on Saturday, June 18th at the Waterford Highway garage on Route 85. Thanks to everyone who distributed flyers

and/or placed orders. This sale will benefit the Landscaping for Water Quality Outreach program.

- d. Social Marketing Strategy Update: Maureen Fitzgerald reported that she has been referring wetlands applicants to the participating nurseries and landscapers to assist with development of wetland buffer restorations. She has also been working with Juliana Barrett of the CT SeaGrant Program to develop a riparian buffer brochure.

8. WBP Implementation

- a. Clark Pond Riparian Buffer Restoration: Judy is continuing to work with Friends of Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve to manage invasive plants and develop the riparian buffer. It is likely that invasive plant control and buffer design will take place this summer, and planting will be conducted next spring.

9. Other Business: Committee members briefly discussed possible display ideas for the Celebrate East Lyme Day display.

10. Next Meeting: **July 10, 2011, 4:00 PM, LTA Room, Waterford Town Hall.**

Meeting adjourned at 5:48 PM.