Musconetcong River Management Council

Minutes of a Members Meeting, June 18, 2024

Attendees:

Charlie Finneran

Albert Crouse

Pam Bailey

William McQuaide

Robert Delpizzo

Casey Ezyske

Tyler Greenfield

Bill Leavens

Marcia Benovengo

Stephanie McMoran

Cathryn Schaffer (NJDEP)

Alan Hunt, (NPS)

Darrin Feguson (NPS)

Ben Yaskulka

Steven Gransky

Tom Dallessio

Christa Reeves

Linda Cerceau

Jennifer Correa-Krugel, guest

The meeting was brought to order by Chairman Finneran at 7:03 P.M. A quorum was achieved. Notice of this meeting was published in the Star Ledger and the Express Times in accordance with the NJ Open Public Meeting Act. This was a hybrid meeting with participants at the MWA headquarters in Asbury and on Zoom.

The minutes of the May 14, 2024 were discussed as distributed. Bob Delpizzo moved to approve the minutes and Albert Krouse gave second. The minutes were approved on a voice vote.

Warren County Park Naturalist Jennifer Correa-Krugel was introduced. She gave a presentation on Warren County and the DEP Commissioner’s Conservation Challenge. Her objective is to qualify Warren County as a Certified National Wildlife Habitat. She explained the purpose of the program and procedures to achieve recognition. Jennifer needs 36 additional households in the county to register with the program to achieve that certification. She presented a slideshow of the amazing wildlife that exists in the county. National Wildlife Federation has a goal of informing and uniting Americans to defend wildlife in a rapidly changing world.

The Garden for Wildlife program was initiated by the Foundation in 1973 to support wildlife. Plants are the foundation of our food web. Diversity in our plant species determines the health of all populations. No matter what sort of yard you have or how big it is, you can contribute to that diversity.

Food, water, cover, and places to raise young are critical elements of that habitat. Native plants provide the most appropriate support for animals in the habitat. Insects that thrive on native plants and provide food for birds and other species. Birdbaths and small ponds are a boon for the wildlife. Sustainable gardening involves not using chemicals and pesticides. All of this can lead to certification from the National Wildlife Foundation. www.NWF.org/garden

Nothing is completely deer proof, however, fencing works. Learn about invasive species and how to limit or remove them. The NJ Invasive Species Strike Team is a good site for identifying and reporting invasive plants. Not all nurseries sell natives. Jennifer mentioned Pinelands Direst, Wildridge Plants, Toadshade Wildflower Farm, The Pollen Nation as good North Jersey sources.

Environmental Commissions can promote this program. It is all about supporting the natural world.

Following was New Business. The first order of Council business was a discussion of officers. At the last meeting, the following nominations had been made: For Chairman, Charlie Fineran was nominated by Steve Rattner, second was given by Nancy Roberts Lawler. For Vice Chair, Steve Rattner was nominated by Charlie Fineran and Nancy Lawler gave second. For Treasurer, Nancy Lawler was nominated by Charlie Fineran with second by Steve Rattner. For Secretary, Bill Leavens was nominated by Charlie Fineran, seconded by Nancy Lawler. The Sergeant at Arms is appointed by the chair. Charlie Fineran appointed Bob Del Pizzo. After a brief discussion, his slate was approved by an individual vote called by Chairman Fineran.

The next order of business was a discussion of the Council committees. Encouraging Committee participation has always been a challenge.

MRMC UPDATED STANDING COMMITTEES

COUNCIL GROUP EMAIL LIST: mrmc@musconetcong.org

RECREATIONAL AND SCENIC RESOURCES

1. Paul Kenny, Chair (NPS) Paul\_Kenney@nps.gov

2. Blanca Chevrestt (NJ State Park Service) Blanca.Chevrestt@dep.nj.gov

3. Charlie Fineran (Allamuchy) cafjr@comcast.net

4. Al Krouse (Warren Co.) akrouse@co.warren.nj.us

5. Bill Leavens (Washington, Morris Co.) bill.leavens@gmail.com

6. Peter Dlugos

7. Alan Hunt (NPS) alan\_hunt@nps.gov

HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

1. Charlie Fineran, Chair (Allamuchy) cafjr@comcast.net

2. Pam Bailey (Hampton) marbail@embarqmail.com

3. Paul Muir (Bethlehem) pmuir@bethlehemnj.org

4. Paul Tarlowe (Mansfield) ptarlowe@comcast.net

5. John Wetzel (Morris Co. Alt.) johnrwetzel@gmail.com

6. Robbie-Lynn Mwangi (Lebanon Township Museum) shilohgifts@gmail.com

LAND USE (formerly Farmland and Open Space Preservation)

1. Charlie Fineran, Chair (Allamuchy) cafjr@comcast.net

2. Al Ivany (Washington, Warren Co.) awivany@yahoo.com

3. Tom Dallessio (MWA-River Administrator) tom@musconetcong.org

5. Mary Paist-Goldman (MWA Alt.) criticalflow.mpg@gmail.com

NATURAL and WATER RESOURCES

1. Dwight Pederson, Chair (Holland) streambed2000@gmail.com

2. Beth Styler Barry (Franklin) barryfamily7@comcast.net

3. Paul Kenny (NPS) Paul\_Kenney@nps.gov

4. Nancy Roberts Lawler (Lebanon) nerlawler@comcast.net

5. Laura Tessieri (NJ RC&D) ltessieri@northjerseyrcd.org

6. Charlie Fineran (ex-officio, Allamuchy) cafjr@comcast.net

WARREN HERITAGE SCENIC BYWAY COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE

1. Charlie Fineran (Allamuchy) cafjr@comcast.net

2. Alternate is Bill Leavens (Washington, Morris Co.) bill.leavens@gmail.com

We need all members to ensure that their contact information is correct. Ben will be reaching out to verify emails. The MWA webpage on the Council will be updated with this contact information.

Ben reported that there are two forums scheduled for public comment on the Vision Plan in Hackettstown on June 24 and one on the 25th of June at Lake Hopatcong Foundation. We will also be scheduling a forum for the lower Musconetcong. Environmental Commissions, Town Council Members and Green Teams should be invited and encouraged to attend.

Holland Township considered applying for a National Park Foundation Rivers and Trails grant. This is a potential $50,000 grant for collaborative conservation, water quality and stewardship. The grant has a very tight turnaround and is something that will more likely be considered for the future. It seeks to provide accessibility to Wild and Scenic areas through signage and trails. Note was made that the Musconetcong is a National Water Trail which takes us well above Saxton Falls dam. This is a competitive grant and our dual status as W&S and a National Water Trail would work in applicants favor.

Next was a discussion of the week-long Delaware River Sojourn. Charlie thanked MWA for putting a table up at the event. It was a successful event and there was support expressed to the Association.

Under Old Business, the next discussion was the Vision Plan forums that have been undertaken by staff. Public responses will be on the MWA site describing the plan goals and purposes. Stephanie McMoran will be emailing it out to the Council Members. She was grateful for member contributions. It is important to get stories relative to the plan out to the public. There are recommendations and guidelines as to what individuals can do.

The Watershed Implementation Plan – 319 update. That will also be coming out soon and will be circulated to the Council. Christa presented a few slides and comments on the plan. What is the 319 addressing? This is a tool kit than be used to address non-point source pollution. It does not address point source pollution. The document will be updated continually. It is for water quality improvement in the community, not for regulation. It is a look into best management practices to implement plans. It will schedule the implementation of specific remediation measures. If it can’t be measured, it cannot be monitored. A rough draft is ready. BMPs have been identified. Technical advisory Committees have contributed. Reduction targets have been calculated. BMPs can be undertaken now. Hot spots have been identified and can be addressed now. Reduction targets have been identified for bacteria, phosphorous and sediment.

The Beatty’s Mill floodplain restoration has been completed. We need people to monitor and manage the site. The site needs physical monitoring, and the plants need to be watered as needed. Linda Cerceau is developing a monitoring schedule.

Camp Musky is coming up shortly. Get your kid engaged. There are still openings.

We need to fill seats on the MRMC. Tyler Greenfield introduced himself. He is on the Pohatcong Environmental Council and is looking to activate that group. Bloomsbury and Hackettstown need to appoint Council members.

The next discussion was a thought to distributing the MRMC meeting minutes or memos to constituent municipalities. They are publicly available but this would direct a discussion of our purpose and work them to the decision makers in our area.

The River Administrator’s report: Mr. Dallessio reported that the river trail is being worked on however Student Conservation Association lost grant funding and will not be participating this year.

A group working on Mill displays toured the National Canal Museum in Easton and learned a bit more about the mechanics of displays. Masons are currently performing restoration on the interior of the Mill. We have also met with Warren County and with the State Historic Trust and discussed proposed changes in funding as the project is adapted to current realities.

The MWA annual meeting is this Thursday, June 20 at 7:30 P.M. at Hawk Pointe.

Charlie also recognized and acknowledge Alan Hunt in his endeavors with NPS. Tyler Greenfield made a motion that was given second by Bob DelPizzo to acknowledge Alan’s outstanding governance as River Administrator prior to his NPS appointment. The motion passed by acclamation.

Under the National Park Service report, Alan Hunt reported that the cooperative agreement with NPS has been submitted and is on track. There are some river access projects that are underway funded by the National Park Foundation. A NJ Audubon grant has also been received to sponsor that. NPS is working with DEP to update the Surface Water Quality Standards to reduce pollution and temperature degradation on Wild and Scenic rivers. A report will be prepared and submitted to DEP after their report is completed.

Darrin Ferguson reported that Corrita Waters at NPS is looking for photos of the Musconetcong and other rivers for promotional use and other considerations. Darrin will be undertaking some of that. We will have access to that work. He requested that NPS be kept informed of the positive stories on the rivers. The Council members are closest to what is newsworthy. There is always a story to tell.

Under community reports, Bob Delpizzo reported that he will be having a meeting with the owner of two minor dams in Mount Olive. They are seeking Highlands Council funding for their removal.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 on a motion by Bob Delpizzo that was given unanimous seconds and immediately approved by acclamation.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Leavens, Secretary