

Meeting Minutes

Herring River Restoration Committee (HRRC) Meeting
Cape Cod National Seashore Headquarters, Wellfleet, MA
Wednesday, March 6, 2019, 9:30 am

Attending: HRRC members: Tim Smith, Steve Block, Steve Spear, Hunt Durey, Eric Derleth, Hillary Greenberg-Lemos; Others attending: Brian Carlstrom (9:30 to 10:15), Melanie Gange (by phone 9:30-11:30), Margo Fenn (by phone 11:00 – 12:00), John Mullaney (by phone 1:30 – 3:00), Martha Craig, Christine Odiaga, Helen Miranda Wilson, Carole Ridley

Administration/Coordination:

-Minutes of the February 7th HRRC meeting were approved on a motion by Steve Block and a second by Eric Derleth (6-0-0).

-The following HRRC meeting dates and times were confirmed, to be held in the same location: Thursday, April 11, 2019 at 9:30 am, and Thursday, May 9, 2019 at 9:30 am.

-Update from National Park Service (NPS)

Brian Carlstrom reported that the exchange of the former Rosenberg property to NPS ownership closed last week, and the NPS should take possession in 90-180 days. A press event will be planned. Brian concurred with comments expressed in an email from John Portnoy that consideration should be given to removing fill and a shallow septic leaching field on the property. Removal of structures will be undertaken via usual NPS protocols, and any grading on the property will be incorporated into secondary management activities.

Brian asked Carole to coordinate with Lauren McKean on invitations to federal agency regional leaders for a spring meeting, and also on the NPS preferred approach in reference to Chapter 91, 401 Water Quality Certificate and Wetland Protection Act filings. Brian mentioned that he would be speaking about the restoration project at an upcoming meeting of the National Park Friends Alliance and would keep the HRRC informed of their interest in supporting the project. He also reported that the funding request for construction of the Mill Creek dike is progressing.

The topic of low roads was discussed. There was no further information related to High Toss Road. Steve Spear will follow up with Joe Powers. Steve Spear will engage a surveyor to survey the town-owned right of way.

Tim provided an overview his efforts to identify and quantify any roadway encroachments into NPS land. The task is difficult because plans reference different data sets. It was agreed that a webinar involving Tim, Louis Berger, the Low Roads subcommittee and the surveyor would be scheduled.

-FY 19 Budget Update

Martha asked about the status of pending scopes of work for USGS water quality monitoring, and the monitoring subcommittee's recommendation for work going forward.

Tim and Eric reported based on a recent meeting with USGS and Wood Hole Group. They are not recommending continuing the sampling as USGS has been doing. This will need to be replaced by something else, but it is likely to be a lower cost. They will test the use of one nitrogen sensor, and may recommend adding more units of that equipment if it works out. They also expect cost savings from the use of the NPS intern and new Friends of Herring River technical support person.

Woods Hole Group will be coordinating with Center for Coastal Studies on some of the geomorphological work, and this should increase efficiency and lower cost.

A draft report on USGS water quality monitoring is going through quality control at USGS and should be available soon.

Also regarding budget, it was discussed that the town should include Herring River as one of its resiliency strategies under the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program so that the project could be available for state coastal resilience funds if they become available. Hillary reported that the Town is holding an MVP meeting in March where this can be discussed.

-Fundraising

Margo joined the meeting by phone to discuss the recent NOAA pre-proposal. Review comments were positive, but included requests for more information. Margo will work with Carole and Martha to refine the tasks and requested funding and letters of support; and with Tim and Eric on some of the ecosystem response questions. The full proposal is due April 16th. Melanie noted that the proposal should frame information in terms of the program objectives and selection criteria.

Steve Spear reported that there was no update on the NRCS technical assistance grant. The grant application is supported by the processing of grant requests has been slowed due to staffing issues.

Discussion & Updates:

-Project Timeline

A revised project timeline was circulated. HRRC members were asked to review and provide comments to Carole for any necessary revisions.

-Permitting

Preparation for the March 7 public meeting with the Cape Cod Commission Regulatory Subcommittee was discussed. Presenters and other project team members can meet at 1:30 pm at the Cape Cod Commission offices. The subcommittee meeting begins at 3:30. Martha mentioned that some members of the Friends of Herring River Board and project supporters would be attending, understanding that this is not a public hearing.

Carole reported that work is under way to begin development of permit applications to MassDEP. A pre-application meeting will be scheduled at the Southeast Regional Office some time in late March. All MassDEP permits will share the approach of seeking permitting for Class 1 elements and bookended levels of secondary management activities.

Christine reported on recent conversations with the Coast Guard to obtain a determination that no Coast Guard bridge permit is required. She will obtain a letter from the Wellfleet Harbormaster regarding the limited navigability of the river, and one from CCNS stating that no commercial shellfishing is allowed upstream of the current dike or future bridge location.

-Herring River Executive Council

Anderson and Kreiger is gathering input from Wellfleet and Truro Town Counsels and the DOI solicitor on next steps for changing the MOU to address Truro Select Board's vote and other requested changes. A meeting is not likely to take place until the required changes are identified.

-Herring River Stakeholder Group

The Herring River Stakeholder Group has not meet in recent months, but could meet as early as April. They have expressed interest in topics such as shellfish and risk management. They also are expected to play a role in discussion the social factors incorporated in the Adaptive Management Plan.

-Preconstruction Monitoring

John Mullaney of USGS provided a web presentation of the USGS groundwater monitoring. The study seeks to understand the influence of various factors on groundwater levels, including water levels in Mill Creek, Herring River and Cape Cod Bay, and also precipitation. Tidal influence drops off within about 1500 ft of a water body. John will seek to prioritize the factors influencing groundwater levels. Improved drainage will lower groundwater and reduce current seeping in low areas. John is currently incorporating comments and awaiting an additional internal peer reviewer.

Steve Spear described questions he is addressing with consultants in the design of the pump at Mill Creek. He asked John to consider recommendations for developing a pump operational threshold that balances groundwater flooding with maintaining wetland hydrology.

The HRRC agreed that Steve should proceed with the pump design contract and fill in the operational threshold as it is defined.

Steve Block reported that the sediment risk assessment analysis required by permitting is still underway and a next meeting is likely to occur in late March or early April.

-Legal Issues

As requested by the Town, a draft agreement between CYCC and the Town of Wellfleet is being developed by Anderson and Kreiger and when ready will be reviewed with Dan Hoort and Greg McGregor.

-LHR Tide Control Structure

Steve Spear requested that the timing of discussions with nearby property owners be reviewed with Greg McGregor and Dan Hoort.

Communications/Coordination with Friends of Herring River (FHR)

Friends of Herring River is hosting an event about other coastal restoration projects on Cape Cod, including Muddy Creek, Stony Brook and others. This will take place March 14th. Martha also announced that the Friends have added three new Board members, and is undertaking a strategic planning process.

March 6, 2019 minutes were approved by HRRC on Thursday, April 11, 2019 and submitted by Carole Ridley, Project Coordinator.