

Musconetcong River Management Council

Minutes of a Member Meeting, June 21, 2022

The virtual meeting was brought to order at 7:03 P.M. under the aegis of President Charlie Fineran. Also attending were members Bill Leavens, Pam Bailey, Albert Krouse, Steve Rattner, Tom Dallesio, William McQuade, Binca Chevrestt, Annie Polkowski, Izzy Castiglioni, Jennifer Daly, Katie Parrish, Laura Tessieri, Paul Tarlowe, Robert Delpizzo, Paul Muir, All Ivany, Paul Kenney of the National Park Service and Executive Director, Alan Hunt.

On recognition by President Fineran, new member Tom Dallesio introduced himself as Executive Director of the Musconetcong Watershed Association. He gave his background in different levels of government, as a licensed professional planner, and spoke of his work in volunteer association management.

Notice of this meeting was published in the Star Ledger and the Express Times in accordance with the NJ Open Public Meetings Act. There was a quorum.

The minutes of the April 19, 2022 meeting were approved as previously distributed on motion by Steve Rattner that was given second by Pam Bailey.

The first order of business was the nomination of officers for the coming year. The following individuals were nominated to serve in the indicated positions. Charlie Fineran President, Steve Rattner, Vice President, Bill Leavens, Secretary, and Bob Delpizzo, Treasurer. All who were nominated were elected to their position unanimously. Katie Parrish was appointed as Sergeant at Arms by President Fineran. Alan Hunt is River Administrator under the Cooperative Agreement with National Park Service. The MRMC obligations under the annual reorganization meeting have thus been fulfilled.

The next item was a discussion of the lower river Wild and Scenic designation. This is the last eligible segment for inclusion in the Partnership Rivers program and has been worked on ever since the initial designation of the Musconetcong. The successful nomination of the lower segment is the result of much hard work, hand wringing, and good fortune. The designation of the Musconetcong as Wild and Scenic extends in large sections from Rt. 46 down to the Delaware River. The lower river designation was passed by Congress some years ago and the Secretary of the Interior accepted the nomination and approved inclusion.

The Council then reviewed the standing committees, discussing their meaning and purpose. Charlie called for volunteers to serve on the committees and encouraged them to continue their good work. A number of appointments were made at the meeting who are listed on the attached committee member list. The committee member list is appended to these minutes.

Mr. Fineran noted the strength of the Council rests in the close affiliation among the river municipalities and non-governmental organizations that work in the watershed. He is pleased with the way so much business has been accomplished with lasting member enthusiasm.

Mr. Kenney reminded the group that all of the committees are patterned after and capture the five goals identified the River Management Plan.

Alan Hunt told the group that the Council will be launching an interpretive planning initiative under a grant. We are developing a watershed-wide Arc GIS study map that will identify sites, parks, and other

areas of interest and give a full description of practical and historic information along with a photo gallery. Different historic themes will be keyed to specific sites on the river. We are looking for MRMC members and any other interested volunteers to help with specific site histories. This will be professionally led by Hunter Research and managed for the Council by Mr. Hunt. What are a site's key feature and how does it relate to other sites on the river?

Chief Vincent Mann of the Ramapough Tribe is being included as a contractor to develop early native history. Morris Canal Society and the Morris Canal Greenway will be a central part of the interpretive history of the canal. We will be reaching out to historic societies and commissions to include their stories as part of the effort. Much of this information created by this initiative will be used in the Asbury Mill effort to tell stories as that building becomes an Interpretive and educational Center for the region.

The next topic of discussion was the State Flood Hazard Regulations which are being developed to address potential flooding and climatic events that are anticipated. NJDEP will be updating rainfall data which currently is available only through 1999 to 2021. DEP will also be raising the flood plain zone elevation three feet higher than the present 100 year flood map. In storms like Irene, water levels approached that three foot higher level. There has been some unwarranted delay in adopting the regulations, but the rule should be finalized in a year. This may restrict new construction in the flood plain and will increase the floodwater storage areas in existing low-lying areas. This is intended to protect life and property from flood damage and improve water quality.

Charlie asked if there was any part of the new rules that might affect our watershed? It would not force the relocation of any roads, but it might require any bridge structures to be built higher. The places that might be affected are the MUAs and the Mount Olive Trade Zone.

Laura Tessieri had heard that the impacts might result in larger stormwater areas. Projections of rainfall indicate there will have to be larger stormwater basins. This will only affect new construction and buildings that are being re-constructed. The Council will be advised if there is any public hearing process.

Annie Polkowski reported on Push Back The Lawn. MWA now has funding to install riparian buffers along both public and private riverfront grounds. The brochure is on the MWA website. MWA is targeting parks and open spaces. Annie is working with a GIS specialist to identify parcels that would qualify as candidates for barrier installation. She is reaching out to the local environmental commissions and working to create and distribute additional promotional materials and a planting guide.

The next discussion was the NPS Unigrid brochure. This draft has been sent to the printer who is working on a draft layout. The Recreational and Historic Committees will be asked to review the layout to help out the designer. That should be available next month.

Mr. Hunt then give his report as Executive Director. The draft work plan for the Council work has been passed on to National Park Service for their review and will then be presented to the Council. How can we best present water quality issues to the public?

The Great Waters Valuation Survey was then discussed. It is being developed so we can understand the recreational value of the sites along the river. This involves surveying people to assess the economic impact of recreation, housing and natural attributes of the river amenities. In the first batch of surveys, zip codes were recorded from many areas. The expenditures of fishers who were survey respondents varied between \$20 and \$800 per visit and visits included river patrons of different levels of experience. This is a very rewarding volunteer experience. Bill McQuade reported that many anglers he interviewed expressed strong support for the work that has been done to improve the cleanliness of the river.

Recreation generates dollars for the region. Charlie lauded the project since it provides a real estimation of what recreation does.

Mr. Hunt then reported that Congressman Malinowski visited the watershed and participated in a clean up effort. He visited late in April to celebrate the increased funding through the Delaware River Recreation Act. Eight bags of trash, three armchairs and a number of tires were pulled out. The Congressman was also able to forage for nettles, a childhood pastime. He also visited the Asbury Mill and met with Chief Mann who engaged in a lengthy discussion with him. The Chief serenaded the fish who expressed their joy by jumping out of the water. This high level attention from the Congressman may have been helpful in finalizing the lower river Wild and Scenic designation.

Paul Kenney then gave the report on the National Park Service. A new work plan under the Cooperative Agreement is in the offing. Normally this is a three page document. The current work plan was ten pages with very few comments from NPS staff. Paul then reported that the Park Service presented at the recent River Network's River Rally. There were good sessions including Alan and Paul presenting on the West Portal Creek project. This was very well received by senior staff at NPS. They want to present the West Portal project to a national audience. He reported that it was a good experience. Charlie asked for a motion from the MRMC to recognize Paul and Alan's work on this. Charlie made that motion that was given by Bob Delpizzo. That motion passed unanimously. Great work!

Under municipal and non-profit groups, Charlie reported that Alamuchy is updating their ERI with a professional. Annie reported for MWA that the Beaty's Mill dam removal is underway. Permit applications have been submitted. Pam Bailey announced that the Hampton Fire Department will hold a rubber ducky race in September. She will find out if there are tabling opportunities. Katie Parrish noted that Annie and Princeton Hydro had participated in a lake and watershed management plan. They are also working on the impacts of road salt. The plans for a new municipal building include an outfall on a tributary in the area that is under review by NJDEP. The town's plans may require a flood hazard determination. Paul Muir reported that Bethlehem Township is developing a new tree ordinance. Al Ivany reported from Washington Warren that their draft open space plan has been developed with the Land Conservancy of New Jersey. This will be presented at the next Township Committee meeting. He also noted that there are two study areas along Route 31 along the triangle near Rymon's to the south to the A&P complex. These are being considered for redevelopment as residential use with a package septic treatment plan. The documents are on the Land Use Board web site for public review. He will be attending the June 30 meeting.

Tom Dalessio reported there will be a River Talk on June 28 on Microplastics at the RRC. Camp Musky still has a few openings for children this summer. On Friday, July 29, MWA will be celebrating their 30th anniversary at Donaldson Farm in Mansfield starting at 5:00.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 under the Executive Authority of Mr. Fineran.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Leavens, Secretary

