



FARMINGTON RIVER COORDINATING COMMITTEE

100 East River Road – Squire's Tavern

P.O. Box 395

Pleasant Valley, CT 06063

860-738-2456 farmingtonriver.org

DRAFT Regular FRCC Meeting Minutes

July 18, 2022

Via Zoom

Attendance: Barkhamsted (Mario Santoro, Representative, Committee Vice Chair and Roger Behrens, Alternate and Committee Chair, Don Stein, First Selectman), Hartland (Dan Bowler, Representative), Colebrook (Alison Jassen, Representative), Canton (Matt Vinick, Representative), Farmington River Anglers Association (Mark Swenson, Representative), FRWA (David Sinish, Representative, Committee Treasurer, E&O Subcomm. Chairman and Laura Hart, Alternate), FVTU (Jim Buchok, Representative, John DiVenere, FVTU President), CT DEEP (Pete Aarrestad, Representative), Metropolitan District Commission (Jim Randazzo, Representative and Lindsey Strole, Alternate), NPS (Andrew Petitdemange, Representative) Stephan Bastrzycki (River Steward), *Chris Leveck (COO at MDC).*

Absent: New Hartford (Alison Murdock, Representative, Tony Mitchell, Alternate), National Park Service (Liz Lacy, Alternate, NPS staff and, NPS staff), CT DEEP (Matt Goclowski, Alternate).

1. Regular Meeting called to order at 7:02 PM by Chairman Behrens

Deviation from planned agenda to discuss river flow as a courtesy to our non-FRCC guests.

- Introductions
- River Flow
 - Roger Behrens shared that FRCC's role is to coordinate conversation. FRCC has no authority to control flow.
 - Don Stein shared concerns from community, business, and recreation enthusiasts re: low flow. Great deal of water in reservoir that could be released but MDC is bound by DPH to hold as a backup drinking water source. DPH has concerns about water reserves. Asked MDC reps present to explain what is possible to increase flow.
 - Pete Aarrestad shared DEEP has been releasing water from fisheries pool in Colebrook Reservoir (25cfs). DEEP views water in Colebrook as "insurance policy" so that releases can satisfy needs of the river throughout the year. Two pools, each 3+Billion gallons but cannot release 50cfs per day without running out of water quickly during drought. There are 10billion gallons held in Colebrook that could be accessed if control transferred away from MDC.
 - Jim Randazzo shared that source of waters on the West Branch of Farmington are behind Goodwin Dam (Hogback Reservoir) or Colebrook Dam (Colebrook Reservoir). MDC has rights to 100% of water in Hogback (3 billion) and 3.5 billion gallons behind Colebrook. These pools are not the only source of water to the river depending on the location on the river. At Unionville for example, a location that drains 378 sq mi of watershed only 30% of the water at that point comes from MDC sources, 65% from other natural sources. Through June and July 2022 we have had deficit flows, for example July 10, 14cfs per day coming in and 75cfs coming out. Much of determining releases are a guessing game during a drought because we don't know how long drought will last and how long water behind dam will last if not being refilled while drained. Additionally, there are 9 wastewater treatment plants along the Farmington River that need extra

water to assimilate the effluent. Some water must be left in the “bank” throughout the year to ensure the water will last for effluent flushing, even if current flow is disappointing to fishers and paddlers.

- Roger asked if MDC is still in sole control of flow or if Army Corp has control of flow? If Army Corps would they be open to changing their influence over flow?
 - Jim Randazzo answered that when Colebrook Reservoir was created it was created for flood control. MDC already had Hogback Reservoir as water supply and essentially Army Corp built their dam in the middle of the reservoir. Army Corp had to guarantee MDC could hold water as it had planned so partnered with MDC allocating them 3.5 billion gallons. MDC added 10 billion storage for future drinking water supply in Colebrook reservoir but has never accessed. It should be thought of bucket NOT a bucket full of water. Regarding flow and storage, MDC can't store anything unless flow is over 150cfs. Still River and Mad River contributions also influence flow below Riverton. MDC never releases drinking water for recreational use. MDC impoundments are there for recreation. What's changing: MDC out of the drinking water business (ie 10billion gallons in Colebrook), instead of releasing water for riparian rights MDC has been paying instead. What MDC is proposing/asking: Is there some way that stakeholders could utilize this 10billion gallons to benefit the river (wastewater, fisheries, recreation) without MDC involvement? Can DEEP oversee the 10billion gallons? Could FRCC oversee the coordination of such a coalition and facilitate decision-making?
 - Matt Vinick asked if there is a way to change the amount of storage in Colebrook so to allocate it more evenly across the river?
 - Jim Randazzo answered that Army Corp is focused on keeping Colebrook for flood control so more than half the reservoir is always left empty. When inputs become too much they just pass them through to Hogback reservoir (MDC) and MDC passes it on to Farmington River.
 - Is it possible for FRCC or other stakeholders to have a direct conversation with Army Corps?
 - Yes. But answer may need to come out of Washington DC not local staff.
 - What is in the way transferring control of 10billion from MDC to DEEP (or other entity)?
 - DPH questioned the action because they consider 10billion gallons as drinking water supply that can't be decommissioned.
 - MDC position is that it can't be used for drinking water because there is no pipe nor was it ever fully developed.
 - Waiting for a declaratory ruling from DPH to clear the MDC responsibility as drinking water, then control can be transferred to another authority.
- Pete Aarasted, asking for a point of clarification, re: does MDC have responsibility to release 150cfs?
 - MDC has to release all flows up to 150cfs coming into Goodwin Dam. MDC can only hold flow OVER 150 cfs. For example, if inflow is 15cfs, MDC has to release 50 cfs. If inflow is 49 cfs, MDC has to release 50cfs. If inflow is 175cfs, they have to release 150cfs and can retain 25 cfs.
- Mark Swenson asked why other branches of the river aren't responsible for drinking water? Why can't we balance contributions from both East and West branches so that flows and temperatures across the river are more consistent?
 - Jim Randazzo explained considerations. Barkhamsted Reservoir is smaller and its contribution would be minimal. MDC's reservoirs are not the only ones on this river. Other dam operators should be engaged but are not. West Branch has no drinking water

infrastructure, whereas Barkhamsted and Nepaug are built for drinking water and thus hold water and don't release for recreation, paddling or fishing – only overflow.

- Debate on whether East branch would have any influence on Wild & Scenic
 - Alison Jassen reiterated MDC point
 - Pete Aarestad questioned if 10 billion gallons is not being managed by MDC, then it's because the releases are not the contractual releases to the riparian releases. Concurred with Mark Swenson that the concern is temperature.
 - Don Stein recommended a meeting between Army Corp, FRCC, and other stakeholders to understand what is possible. How do we influence DPH determination.
 - Matt Vinick asked if the East Branch releases wouldn't influence water temps.
 - MDC doesn't have infrastructure in those dam to throttle flow to meet the needs in a measured way. Its old infrastructure with either open or closed options. And temp would likely not be cold when released if it could be because Lake McDonough is shallow. Also tradeoff in harming fishing in Lake McDonough and fishing in Farmington River.
 - Dan Bowler shared that without Dam, river would be totally dry. Dam is there for flood control and we don't want another flood of 1955.
 - Pete Aarestad concurred with Dan. Lots depends of declaratory ruling from DPH on whether the 10 billion can be transferred and no longer considered drinking water.
 - Consensus to conclude conversation. Consensus to move some subset of FRCC and other stakeholders into direct discussion with Army Corp as soon as feasible.
- *RESUMPTION OF NORMAL AGENDA*

2. Approval of Minutes: Draft minutes of June 20, 2022 meeting were approved with a change submitted by Jim Randazzo of MDC.

3. Treasurer's Report: Report presented by Matt Vinick. The beginning balance was \$15,920.22 with the restricted scholarship funds of \$194.64, the total beginning balance was \$16,114.86. There was a transfer of funds from the NPS Cooperative Agreement Funds of \$41,250.00. Expenses were \$35,104.83 (payments made to FRWA for wildlife cameras - \$700, project assistance – \$4,050.00, water quality monitoring - \$9,639.82, River Stewards - \$12,676.06, Kiosks - \$23.91, Grants - \$8,000, Office supplies - \$15.00.) \$11k of unobligated funds to date. Must be spent by Sept 30 but projects in line that will likely spend those funds. Awaiting for Barkhamsted to determine if they can utilize grant funds from previous years (~19k). If not, projects are being considered to spend those funds down.

4. Subcommittee reports:

-Executive: - Chairman Behrens welcomed FVTU as new non-core FRCC member

Alison Jassen volunteered to take on the role of Resource Stewardship subcommittee chair beginning September 1, 2022. Petitedemange motioned to approve Alison Jassen as the chair of R/S subcommittee and Bowler seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

-Resource Stewardship: FRWA requested \$1,076.00 for monitoring chloride in the watershed and impact on Farmington River. CT DEEP is also interested in capturing salt data throughout the year and long-term. Data will help understand where chlorides (aka salts) are coming from and could be used to influence the decisions of towns regarding road salt and inform Green Snow Pro Training. Roger Behrens moved to approve the request and Alison Jassen seconded. Unanimously approved. FRWA abstains.

-Education and Outreach: Stephan recommends building more kiosks now but there is a concern that there will not be room to store them. David Sinish motioned that \$1500 be allocated to purchase paddling gear for the River stewards. Dan Bowler seconded. Discussion was short and there was a consensus that the expenditure was necessary. The motion passed unanimously.

Kiosks - Costs varied per structure (\$2400/per up to \$3000/per)

- Panels \$4800 for 10 panels (back panels will be done next year)
- Jim Warner and crew aided stewards in kiosk installation.
 - 2 installed. 2 more this Friday 7/22. 1 more to install
- Should we build 5 more THIS YEAR?
 - Can MDC store 3 kiosks on MDC land prior to installation?
 - Jim R believes MDC can provide needed support
 - What about other 2 kiosks for tubing pullout and Collinsville?
 - Can Canton store and help with install?
 - **Andrew Petitdemange moves to allocate upto \$16,000 for 5 additional kiosk structures and additional panels and design work. This vote is conditioned on MDC temporarily storing and helping to install 3 structures, and Town of Canton temporarily storing and helping to install 2 structure. Alison Jassen seconds.**
 - **Unanimously approved.**

5. New Business/Other: Don Stein, First Selectman of Barkhamsted has heard many complaints about the low water flow in the Farmington River. Jim Randazzo (MDC) responded that MDC is releasing the legislatively required 50 cfs flow rate from Goodwin Dam. There is less water coming in from the tributaries due to drought conditions throughout the state and in MA. MDC maintains communication with DEEP to ensure that there is adequate water in the deep pools for trout management, but MDC has no requirement to maintain water for recreational activities. Because there is not as much contribution of water from tributaries such as the Still River, Sandy Brook, Rugg Brook, Cherry Brook and others, the 50 cfs does not provide as high a flowrate. Normally, Goodwin Dam accounts for only 35% of water in Collinsville but with the dry conditions, Goodwin dam accounts for 65 – 70 % of the water in Collinsville.

MDC has 10 million gallons of water in reserve in Colebrook River Reservoir (CRR) - managed by the Army Corps. MDC would like another entity to assume responsibility for the management for this water storage since they are in the business to provide drinking water. The Department of Public Health (DPH) has communicated that since the water was originally designated for drinking water in the 1950s (when MDC thought that they would need this water to supply the Hartford region), DPH feels it has a responsibility to be involved with the disposition of the 10-million-gallon storage pool of water. At this point, there is no foreseeable need for this water for drinking and there is no infrastructure to carry the water to Hartford. MDC wants another stakeholder to manage the pool of water stored in Colebrook River Reservoir such as DEEP or FRCC. MDC is not involved in water release for recreation.

The consensus at the meeting is that FRCC should follow this closely and work with other stakeholders to find a way to address concerns on water flows and to manage the 10-million-gallon of water storage at CRR to meet the needs of all stakeholders.

6. Local Updates/Organization Reports

- **Barkhamsted** – Don Stein reported that low levels of water in the river are forcing tubers to carry their tubes over entire sections of the River since the water is too low for recreational purposes. He is hearing many complaints.

- **Hartland:** - No report
- **New Hartford:** No report
- **Colebrook** – No report
- **River Steward:** The river stewards are now at work. First payments have been made. Kiosks will be put up Friday, July 22, 2022. Facebook profiles of River Stewards has been well-received. Camping 101 at 2PM Sunday with FALPS
- **MDC: See new business.** Lindsay offered to consolidate info shared by Jim Randazzo in to succinct notes to share with committee
- **Canton:** The town of Canton is purchasing riverfront property approximately one hundred yds upstream from Collinsville kayak and canoe
- **FRWA:** No report
- **NPS:** Andrew Petitdemange requested that all FRCC representatives fill out the survey about volunteer hours. It is important to qualify volunteer time and it may be important in determining future grants.
- **DEEP:** Pete Aarrestad stated that the rain received locally at the beginning of the week have boosted water flowrates temporarily but there is no indication how long the drought will last. Low flow at impoundment in Collinsville will not be refilled soon due to low flow.
- **FRAA:** River cleanup went well and looking forward to fall cleanup with FRWA
- FVTU:** Tree plantings are doing well despite the drought. Hope to make it an annual event.

7. Next Meeting Dates:

Sub-committee Education and Outreach – Monday, 2022 at 5:30 PM Zoom (moved due to July 4th holiday)

Sub-Committee Resource Stewardship – Tuesday, 2022 at 6:30 PM Zoom (moved due to July 4th holiday_

Full Committee: August 15

8. Adjourn: 9:10 pm

Zoom Recording:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/yJ4lx7WiXtbAPs_FORNvFgYRX3gPBtkPDtAsXVgRo8yssaCu3DORzXNmKBpubsZQJztwgo8OQd0D2mJ1.XUFsQdLSz1adsNcP?continueMode=true