

Central NH Regional Planning Commission

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Warner River Nomination Committee Meeting

Wednesday, January 20, 2015

Warner Town Hall, 5 East Main St, Warner NH 03278

7:00 P.M.

Minutes:

1. Call to Order and Introductions

- a. Review of what was discussed at the last meeting

2. Review of Minutes from last meeting

- a. Dams and the implication various levels of classification might have. Peter had expressed concern, and we had talked through the options we could pursue to mitigate any restrictions the nomination could add to hydropower.
- b. Mailers and the need to get them out as soon as possible
- c. House Bill on Milfoil (Clean and Drain Bill) to encourage anyone who uses a boat to clean and drain it while traveling from waterbody to waterbody in NH. This bill has high levels of support.
- d. Working through the draft of the nomination, we need to continue the discussion on dams and hydropower.

3. Review of the Classifications

- a. What is the impact of future dam construction?
 - Peter's dam ID numbers are 243.07 and 243.08
 - A number of existing sites are not documented (EX. Mill site in Sutton was washed out in 1820s)
 - A number of potential sites are not documented
 - Owner at the Waterloo Mill site wants to have input but could not make it to meeting
 - Q: WHAT IS THE STATUS OF HYDROPOWER IN NEW ENGLAND?
 - Difference between East and West Coast Hydro, with east coast have much smaller scale operations
 - Current regulation in US Congress is holding further development
 - There is a movement to deregulate small dams
 - Issues raised by the regulation currently in place
 - If you sell power as a commercial producer and sell across state lines there are additional taxes

- Hydro has a long history and a lot of opposition has developed in those years, other forms of renewable energy are more recent and opposition has not developed to these yet
 - INSTREAM FLOW – the state mandates a current flow level for larger dams to make sure that the river can serve all usages. However, this mandated flow did not take into account certain river’s geomorphology. There is a movement towards restricted flow and pulses to create variance in the instream flow.
- b. Other potential issues in the nominating process
 - a. Local Action Committee – The committee makes rules but these are not enforceable unless adopted by local governments into town ordinances.
 - i. They do study the river corridor and are tasked to develop a River Management Plan.
 - b. The Future – Concern expressed that we don’t know the future and things may change, is there a process to remove the restrictions
 - i. Many exceptions exist to the rules. **The Focus of the rules is to create a local action committee to guide the river**
 - ii. The Contoocook watershed is the second most endangered in the country due to outside stresses. Hopkinton high school has been studying watersheds in NH, and the lower Warner River has the best water quality around. **WE SHOULD BE FOCUSED ON THE GREATER WATERSHED, and not just the river itself.**
 - c. The state is not necessarily useful with providing any funding, it is mostly local organizations and private foundations that fund the conservation efforts...why add state regulation when the state can’t provide fiscal support.

4. Looking Ahead

- A. A consensus is developing that we are moving too fast with this project
- B. The committee seems to support creation of a local action committee, but not the regulation that doing it through the river nomination would create.
- C. The project needs to develop a media presence, such as a website, Facebook page, blog, etc.... (Trouts Unlimited with opening a blog that discusses some issues facing the Warner River soon.
- D. **THE PUBLIC MEETING**
 - a. The public meeting should be bumped back at least one month (from March 16th to April 20th)
 - b. It needs to discuss the full watershed and implications, not just the process and procedure for regulation. Regulations scare people without reason.
 - c. The committee should get someone experienced to come and talk
 - d. It needs to be equal parts informational and a listening session explaining the reasons for diverting from the river nomination and also working to incorporate public feedback

- e. Cover all aspects of what makes a healthy watershed and then highlight all of the aspects that impact instream flow. It is important to get all the information out at once because there may not be sustained interest. All towns should be involved.
- f. HOW WOULD THE PRESENTATION WORK?
 - i. Five or Six key topics are presented by an expert
 - ii. These topics are tentatively:
 - 1. HISTORY
 - 2. ENERGY – PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE
 - 3. INVASIVES
 - 4. FISH → WATERSHED HEALTH → CLIMATE CHANGE
 - 5. RECREATIONAL USAGE/ECONOMICS
 - 6. THE FUTURE OF THE RIVER (NOMINATION)
 - iii. Blurbs need to advertise the river protection process in local mailers and newspapers

The next meeting is scheduled for **March 16th, 2016 at 7:00 pm at the Warner Town Hall.**