



RIVERS MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
NH Rivers Management and Protection Program



New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services
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DRAFT

RMAC MEETING MINUTES

January 5, 2024, 9:00 AM – 11:20 AM

New Hampshire Fish and Game – 1st Floor Conference Room
11 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH

Members Present

Michele L. Tremblay, Chair
Larry Spencer, Vice Chair
Peter Bowman
Mark Hemmerlein (*online*)
Christopher Hodgdon
Brooke Kenline-Nyman
John Magee
Frederick McNeill
Madeleine Mineau
Cory Ritz
Mitchell Thayer
Donald Ware

Representing

Conservation Community
NH Association of Conservation Comm.
Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources
Commissioner, NHDOT
NH Fish & Game Commission
Historical and Archeological Interests
Executive Director, Fish & Game Dept.
Municipal Government
Granite State Hydropower Assoc.
Local River Management Advisory Comm.
Business and Industry Association
Public Water Suppliers

Term

Dec. 28, 2026 V
Oct. 12, 2025 V
Indefinite NV
Indefinite NV
Sept. 28, 2024 V
June 15, 2025 V
Indefinite NV
Nov. 16, 2023 V
Jan. 5, 2024 V
Sept. 5, 2025 V
Sept. 28, 2025 V
Sept. 28, 2025 V

Members Absent

Austin Brown
Allen Wyman
Vacant
Vacant
Vacant

Department of Safety
Dept. of Agr, Markets, & Food
Agricultural Community
Recreational Interests
Director, Office of Strategic Initiatives

Indefinite NV
Indefinite NV
March 22, 2021 V
Dec. 28, 2023 V
Indefinite NV

NHDES Staff Present

Erin Holmes (*online*)
Nisa Marks
David Neils (*online*)
Tracie Sales (*online*)
Joe Schmidl

Watershed Management Bureau
Rivers and Lakes Management and Protection Programs
Jody Connor Limnology Center
Rivers and Lakes Management and Protection Programs
Instream Flow Program

Guests

Jane Beaulieu
Kate Buckman (*online*)
Judy Faran

Piscataquog River LAC
Connecticut River Conservancy
Pemigewasset River LAC

I. Introductions and Agenda Overview

Chair Michele L. Tremblay called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. Michele asked RMAC representatives, staff, and guests to introduce themselves.

II. Review Decisions and Action Items from August 10, 2023, Meeting

Michele reviewed decisions and action items made at the August 2023 meeting in Exeter. No remaining action items were noted.

III. Acceptance of the Consent Agenda

- ***Larry Spencer motioned to accept the Consent Agenda, consisting of the August 10, 2023, Draft RMAC Meeting Minutes and the 2024 CORD SLR 002 in Bennington. The motion was seconded by Fred McNeill and passed unanimously.***

IV. 2024 River-related Legislation

1) 2024 Legislative Positions

Larry introduced the bills that were considered by the RMAC's Policy and Legislation Subcommittee. Popular topics of interest to the RMAC this session include remote meetings, cyanobacteria, and wake boats.

- ***Larry Spencer moved to accept the recommendations of the RMAC Policy and Legislation Subcommittee, which consisted of HB 1049, HB 1103, HB 1113, HB 1121, HB 1139, HB 1140, HB 1141, HB 1143, HB 1158, HB 1208, HB 1229, HB 1250, HB 1291, HB 1293, HB 1294, HB 1301, HB 1304, HB 1314, HB 1360, HB 1390, HB 1401, HB 1417, HB 1429, HB 1440, HB 1503, and SB 533. Cory Ritz seconded the motion which passed unanimously.***

The RMAC discussed bills that did not have text available when the Policy and Legislation Subcommittee met:

- HB 1562: RMAC track.
 - HB 1576: RMAC oppose- RMAC supports for water quality reasons, including stormwater utilities.
 - HB 1613: RMAC support (or with amendment)- important that funds are used for remediation. Tracie expressed concern about potential impact on the Rivers and Lakes fund. Staff will check on that impact, and RMAC will support with amendment to exclude the Rivers and Lakes fund if it will be impacted.
 - SB 394: RMAC support- funds to the cyanobacteria fund.
 - SB 431: RMAC track.
 - SB 511: RMAC delete- Not applicable to rivers, applies only to Merrimack, NH.
 - SB 533: RMAC support- Helps LACs in particular during poor weather. Chris opposes due to concerns about loss of transparency when not in person. This bill is not included in the legislative consent agenda vote.
 - SB 539: RMAC track- consistent with HB 1429.
 - SB 543: RMAC support- increases awareness of climate change supports towns' need for resources to implement adaptation measures.
- ***Larry Spencer moved to accept the RMAC's proposed positions on HB 1562, HB 1576, HB 1613, SB 394, SB 431, SB 511, SB 539 and SB 543. Cory Ritz seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.***
 - ***Larry Spencer moved to support SB 533, with a second by Don Ware. The motion passed with one negative vote by Chris Hodgdon.***

2) RMAC Standing Positions

- ***Larry Spencer motioned to readopt the RMAC’s Legislative Standing Positions, which was seconded by Fred McNeill. The motion passed unanimously.***

V. Surplus Land Disposals

1) 2024 CORD SLR 001 Lebanon

Tracie Sales described the proposed sale of state-owned railroad land on the Connecticut River to Lebanon for a park. Part of the property will remain an active railroad, separated by a fence from the park. The RMAC and Mascoma River LAC had previously supported creation of a park at this location. The CRJC Upper Valley Subcommittee has not submitted comments. Cory asked if there will be shoreline impacts. Tracie replied that is not indicated in the project materials but that a shoreland permit would be required. Brooke asked if all the historic railroad components had been removed or destroyed, like the turn table or a depot. Mark Hemmerlein confirmed they have been removed and that the project has been cleared through the Department of Historical Resources. Brooke said if the parcel is converted into a park that would protect any remaining historical resources. Larry asked if there is connectivity from the parcel to the Northern Rail Trail. Tracie said the city of Lebanon intends to develop a trail to connect the park with town roads. Cory suggested the RMAC recommend the city follow best management practices to minimize runoff and maintain trees and significant vegetation on the parcel. The RMAC was in favor of the proposal because would increase access to the river, an objective of the RMAC.

- ***Cory Ritz motioned to support disposal provided NRCS best management practices to preserve the riparian buffer and shoreland are implemented. A second was made by Chris Hodgdon. The motion passed unanimously.***

2) Update on RMAC/LMAC State Lands Mapper

Michele said there is again a representative of the LMAC on the subcommittee and invited other RMAC members to join. The subcommittee has been working on parcels in Rockingham County.

VI. Instream Flow Program Update

Joe Schmidl summarized the recent work of the Instream Flow Program. Baseline data on stream flow was collected on the Isinglass and Pemigewasset rivers, the Cold River was sampled for fish species and numbers, and the Ashuelot River was surveyed for its riparian ecosystems. All of the state’s designated rivers now have streamflow stations to support a Protected Instream Flow (PISF) study and flow management. The Warner River PISF study report was finalized and PISF criteria established. PISF studies for the Isinglass and Pemigewasset rivers have been contracted, and work on the Isinglass River has started. The Cold River water management plan is close to completion, and outreach started to Warner River dam owners for its management plan. Release tests were conducted on the Warner River but will need to be repeated. Staff also installed and maintained streamflow stations.

The third year of long-term monitoring on the Souhegan River was completed. Don asked when a summary of results from management on the Souhegan River will be available. Joe responded that it is part of the plan for 2024.

In 2024, staff will continue flow monitoring on the Pemigewasset River, sampling for fish on the Isinglass and Warner rivers, and surveying riparian ecosystems on the Ashuelot and Isinglass rivers. PISF field studies for the Isinglass River will be completed and started on the Pemigewasset River. The Cold River water management plan will be completed, including public comment. Outreach to

priority dam owners will begin on the Ashuelot River. Staff will continue to study water use on the Isinglass River. Madeleine Mineau asked how FERC dams are treated, since they must be managed according to their operating plans. Joe said no FERC dams are part of the priority list on the Ashuelot. Chris Hodgdon asked about management on the Warner River where there are few regulatable dams. Joe said Blaisdell, Todd, and Keyser lakes are all in consideration. All dams in the watershed are considered, and release tests are done to verify that the releases would be able to accomplish the objectives.

Chris asked if there has ever been a situation where the needs of the river have not been able to be met by releases from the dams. Joe described that the program goes through three phases of management: water conservation, reduced withdrawals, and then releases as the last step.

VII. RMPP Updates

1) LAC Corridor Management Plan Status

Tracie noted the following plan updates completed in 2023: Ashuelot, Exeter-Squamscott, Lower Merrimack, Pemigewasset, and the Saco-Swift rivers. Plans or updates in progress now are the Cochecho (new plan), Lamprey, Upper Merrimack, and Souhegan river plans. Advisory committees on the Connecticut, Contoocook and Piscataquog rivers are discussing plan updates. Judy Faran confirmed that the Pemigewasset River plan was approved on January 2nd. Larry highlighted the hyperlinks in that plan especially for the maps.

2) RMAC membership

Tracie welcomed Brooke Kenline-Nyman. She reminded Fred and Madeleine that their terms have expired. Michele asked the group to consider potential contacts for the seats representing recreational interests and agricultural community. Fred highlighted that there is also a vacancy from the Department of Business and Economic Affairs. Tracie said that the staff role is currently vacant but once filled that person will sit on the RMAC.

3) Staffing

Tracie informed the group that Amanda Barker-Jobin left the Rivers Program for a job with NHDES' Wetlands Bureau, leaving the Program Assistant role vacant. Lauren Zelinski, who has been helping in the ISF Program and with miscellaneous GIS work for LACs, is also leaving.

VIII. Cyanobacteria Plan and Rivers

Nisa summarized the recently published New Hampshire Cyanobacteria Plan and its impacts for rivers. After describing cyanobacteria, how it forms blooms, and why blooms should be prevented, Nisa noted that cyanobacteria blooms in rivers are similar to blooms in lakes, and occur most often in low-flow areas of rivers. However, blooms are less well understood in rivers than in lakes.

The plan identified four strategies to reduce, manage and monitor cyanobacteria blooms: 1) Reduce nutrient inputs; 2) Increase education and outreach; 3) Enhance monitoring and bloom communication; and 4) Protect drinking water. Implementation will require stakeholder support. For strategy 1, Nisa described that stormwater is the primary source of nutrient pollution into rivers and lakes. Fred pointed out that the state and municipalities have already spent millions to reduce nutrient pollution from wastewater discharges, as required by EPA permits. For strategy 2, NHDES emphasizes teaching people how to do a self-risk assessment. For strategy 3, Nisa reminded members that the cyanobacteria warnings are issued based on reports from members of the public. Reports from river users thus are important for learning more about bloom occurrences in rivers in New Hampshire.

Nisa said highlighted three action items that RMAC stakeholders can do: 1) advocate for bills to address the causes of blooms and that secure funding for the actions in the cyanobacteria plan; 2) spread the word about how to identify and report blooms, and the risk they post; and 3) report potential blooms. Nisa's [presentation](#) is posted on the RMAC website, and the cyanobacteria plan is on the NHDES website's cyanobacteria page.

Michele said there have been two picocyanobacteria blooms on the Blackwater River in the past couple years. Mitchell asked how long blooms typically last. Nisa said it is highly variable, ranging from a few hours to over 100 days. The average length for a warning is 25 days. Cory pointed out that times with more rainfall and runoff would lead to higher flow in the river, which would help disperse blooms. Cory asked if there is a temperature range typical for blooms. Nisa said that blooms have been documented under ice, but are more typical in summer. The largest number of warnings are issued in late summer.

Brooke asked how the public is notified of blooms. Nisa said that notification includes signage at public access points, an email newsletter that lists all waterbodies with active warnings, and posting on the Healthy Swimming Map, which is searchable by waterbody. Kate Hastings also emails lake associations and anyone on her waterbody-specific email lists. Fred asked if there is a link between invasive species and blooms. Dave Neils said there is not. Nisa said that NHDES has not found a connection between treating aquatic invasive species and an increase in blooms. She invited anyone whose stakeholder group may be interested in a presentation to reach out to her.

IX. Member Comments

Larry reported on a grant to purchase four properties in Plymouth/Holderness/Ashland on the Pemigewasset River. He met with the Pemigewasset River LAC to help develop a management plan.

X. New Business and Action Item Review

Michele reviewed the action items from the meeting:

1. Legislative testimonies will be prepared by staff and reviewed by Michele and Larry.
2. A letter to support the proposed disposal of the Lebanon property will be prepared by staff.
3. Staff will update the date on the standing positions to reflect readoption.
4. If anyone knows of candidates for the agriculture or recreation seats, contact Michele.
5. If possible Nisa will post a pdf of her presentation and links to cyanobacteria resources.
6. All members should submit financial disclosure forms. Contact Nisa if you have not received one.

Next meeting: Staff will poll for a meeting around legislative crossover, which is April 11.

Chair Michele L. Tremblay adjourned the meeting at 11:10 AM.

Meeting summary prepared by Rivers Program staff.