



## Meeting Notes

Wednesday, May 13, 2015 - 9 to 10:30

NVCOG Conference Room

49 Leavenworth St. 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Waterbury, CT, 06702

See last page for attendance and a roster of steering committee members.

Co-Chair **Chuck Berger** opened the meeting and introductions were made.

Progress on the **NRG Economic Impact Study** was discussed.

- Two additional grant requests have been submitted:
  - Northwest Hills Council of Governments has submitted a request for funding for the project to the [Community Foundation of Northwest Connecticut](#) (CFNC). CFNC's service area includes Torrington, Litchfield and Harwinton. Grants have already been received from the [Valley Community Foundation](#) (VCF) and the [Connecticut Community Foundation](#) (CCF) whose service areas cover the remainder of the municipalities along the NRG route.
  - NVCOG has submitted a grant request to the [Bank of America's Katharine Matthies Foundation](#) to help fund the project.
- NVCOG has been in discussion with Laura Brown and UCONN Extension to establish UCONN's role in the project, develop a work plan, and assess costs and potential fees. Laura has been working on a first draft of an intercept survey and stressed the importance of proper survey design in collecting valid useable data.
- At the last NRG meeting, it was suggested that we investigate a state wide multi use trail user survey, and we are working to make this a reality. Rather than design a survey and collect data exclusively for our project, it was agreed that this would be an excellent opportunity to collect solid statewide trail user data. The current idea is to solicit input from other trail user groups, the CT Greenways Council, and other stakeholders to ensure that the survey is developed to address their needs as well as ours. The survey and methodology would be developed by UCONN, and the survey would be deployed statewide with the help of volunteers, students, and trail groups. The data collected would be submitted centrally and made freely available. Conducting the survey on a statewide basis will provide comparable user data across the state, something that has not previously been available. It will provide the necessary information for the NRG Economic Impact Study, and will make the same data available for state agencies, municipalities, or other trail groups to assess their trails and conduct analysis of their own.
- A project subcommittee was formed to help oversee the NRG Economic Impact Study. Jack Walsh, Ingrid Manning, Rista Malanca, and John Monroe volunteered along with Aaron Budris and Mark Nielsen from NVCOG and others are encouraged to join them.
- A wider group will be assembled to look specifically at a statewide survey. In addition to those listed above, it was suggested that Laurie Giannotti, Kate Rattan, and Bruce Donald (CT Greenways Council Chair) be included.
  - A meeting has been scheduled for June 4, 9am at Waterbury City Hall to bring statewide trail stakeholders together to discuss the survey.

**Mark Nielsen** discussed recently submitted **grant requests and potential grant opportunities**.

- Naugatuck recently submitted a [Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement](#) (CMAQ) grant to the FHWA for funding of the Borough's [northern section of NRG](#). The funds would be used to design and construct the section of trail stretching approximately 1 mile from the Pulaski footbridge on the west bank of the river north to the Waterbury line. The proposed footbridge across the river to connect to the Naugatuck River Access park on Platts Mill Road (and Waterbury Phase I) would cost more than is available through the CMAQ program, and was not included in the scope. The bridge and other options to connect to Waterbury Phase I would, however, be studied as part of the design under the grant.

- Mark discussed a [Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery](#) (TIGER) competitive grant program application that NVCOG will be submitting to the 2015 round. The grant would be used for train station improvements on the Waterbury Branch Metro North line, and bike and pedestrian improvements throughout the lower valley, specifically around transit. Several sections of NRG and connections to the greenway trail will be included. The application is a strengthened and expanded version of an unsuccessful bid by former Valley COG in last year's TIGER round when Waterbury was awarded a grant for its WATER project. Mark explained that chances to receive funding might be hurt by the close proximity to Waterbury, but it is worth the work to improve alternative transportation access in the Valley.
- A new grant round of the **National Recreational Trails Program** has been announced by DEEP with a deadline of July 1. More information can be found on [DEEP's Rec Trails webpage](#).
  - Several municipalities noted that they will be submitting applications to the program, and the committee encouraged all municipalities to apply. The committee also encourages the submission of multi-town or regional applications which have been successful in the past. Assistance is available from NVCOG with grant submissions provided adequate lead time is given. Please contact Aaron at [abudris@nvcogct.org](mailto:abudris@nvcogct.org) for assistance or if you have questions.
  - The committee discussed how best to handle endorsement of projects and support letters. It was decided to **move the July regular NRG Steering Committee meeting up to June 25<sup>th</sup>**. This will allow for discussion of proposed projects, and give time to draft support letters.

**Susan Peterson** raised the issue of **trail design and how it relates to water quality**. Since the trail will be in close proximity to the river for the majority of its route and in many cases will be located within current riparian buffer, she suggested that Low Impact Design (LID) be encouraged in trail design. LID is an approach to development that aims to recreate natural drainage in the built environment by minimizing impervious surfaces and encouraging stormwater to seep into the ground using bio-retention, rain gardens, and permeable surfaces. Susan suggested encouraging the use of pervious pavement in areas where a hard surface trail is preferred. For more info on LID: <http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/green/>

- Mark Nielsen explained that there are design standards attached to FHWA funding, and by extension DOT projects funded using FHWA programs. Since trails built with federal highway funds are being built as transportation infrastructure there are standards dictating the type of surface and dimensions, typically paved and 12' wide for non-motorized multi-use trails. This may make inclusion of LID difficult, as could the added expense of some of the typical LID features.
- It was suggested that trail design and LID would be an excellent topic for discussion as an agenda item or guest speaker in an upcoming meeting.

**John Monroe** gave an update on the **NRG Uniform Trail Signage & Wayfinding Project**. John and NVCOG have received, and will be administering a \$15,000 grant through the National Recreational Trails Program for the project.

- John is currently working with NVCOG to hire a signage designer to develop a Uniform Signage and Trail Guide. A signage sub-committee has been formed, and will begin working on the project shortly. John reported that the project should be completed by the fall.
- John also discussed the potential for publication of a **Naugatuck River Paddle Guide** similar to [this one](#) that he helped publish for the Willimantic River. Most of the background information from other guides can be reused, so the main coast would be in designing and publishing the guide. John is collecting information with Dave Faber about paddling on the Naugatuck. He hopes that the project could be undertaken in fall/winter, and estimated that publishing a guide would cost around \$2,000. Sponsors are being looked into, and Aquarion was mentioned as a potential partner.

**Chuck Berger** and **Will Cummings** gave an update of the **Watertown/ Thomaston DEEP Recreational Trails Grant**, which is still pending as a result of required wildlife and archaeological reviews, and reported that they are "almost there". The grant is for the design of the Watertown section and construction of a 2000' section of trail in Thomaston from the Watertown border to the vicinity of the Thomaston water pollution control facility.

- Chuck explained that DEEP has "everything they need" and Watertown is waiting for word to proceed with

design. DEEP has agreed to fund additional required studies, and the routing will be changed to avoid an archaeologically sensitive area.

- Will explained that Thomaston will be required to do additional reptile monitoring work soon to determine the potential impact on endangered, threatened or special concern species, specifically wood and box turtles. The springtime window when this monitoring could take place is approaching, and the town is looking for funds to undertake the study. Will questioned why this requirement would not come up earlier in the process, and warned future rec trails grantees to plan for such eventualities.

**Aaron Budris** discussed the **Waterbury Greenway Phase I** delays.

- The phase II archaeological survey in the vicinity of the park which will be constructed at the corner of South Main and Platts Mill Rd. uncovered additional prehistoric artifacts. It will be recommended that the archaeological deposits be preserved in place for future study. This may limit the amount and type of trail and trail feature development that will be allowed in the area of the finds. Typically sites can be capped, and limited development can take place without impacting archaeological context. Regional Native American Tribes will also perform a review of the site. DOT is waiting on final approval by SHPO before beginning ROW negotiations and allowing the city to proceed with final design.
- CT DOT has of yet not officially replied to requests to replace a crib wall that will hold up a section of the trail along S Main St. The wall is nearing the end of its useful life, and there is concern that if the trail is built before the wall is replaced, the section adjacent to the wall will have to be dug up and replaced during construction. The City requested that DOT expedite replacement to avoid the cost of building the trail twice. Without cooperation to date, the City may choose to go forward with design and construction without the wall being replaced.
- Construction of Phase I is now not likely to start until 2017

**Ingrid Manning** introduced **Jared Sloan, the new Naugatuck River.net website administrator**. Jared was hired to oversee the website, and will be committing a few hours per week to updating the site, soliciting and adding content, and making the site more attractive and user friendly. Jared explained that a large part of what he will be doing will be creating a social media presence for the website, and hopes to drive visitors to the website using Twitter and Facebook. If you are on Facebook, please like and share the page.

- If you have any content, calendar events, or recommendations for the new site let Jared know by submitting comments through the "[Contact Webmaster](#)" page
- There is a need to make the website self-sustaining which would involve long-term sponsorships and possibly advertising. Several sponsors have recently committed funds to the site including [Ion Bank](#), The [Siemon Company](#), and [Aquarion Water Company](#). [O&G](#) was suggested as a sponsor going forward.

**Rista Malanca** discussed the upcoming [16<sup>th</sup> Annual CT Greenway Awards & National Trails Day Celebration](#) that the NRG Steering Committee is hosting at Torrington UCONN on June 5<sup>th</sup> at 10am. The three co-chairs will share hosting duties and will give a welcome speech, and it should be a great opportunity to gain exposure for the NRG. NVCOG will be providing refreshments and will bring posters and NR.net business cards.

- The event is held annually by DEEP and the Connecticut Greenway's Council, and serves as a kickoff for Trails Weekend. This year 8 awards will be handed out and one greenway will be designated. A hike on the John Brown Trail will follow the meeting.
- Some other [Trails Weekend events](#):
  - Torrington: [Nature Walk at Sunnybrook State Park June 6, 10:30](#)
  - Litchfield: [Bike on the Litchfield Community Greenway June 6 at 10:00](#)
  - Thomaston/Watertown: [Branch Brook Trail Hike June 6, 9: 00](#)
  - Waterbury : [a day of activities at Lewis Fulton Memorial Park June 6 at 11:00](#)
  - Beacon Falls: [Educational Walk at Lantern Ridge Open Space June 7 at 10:30](#)
  - Ansonia: [Nature walk at Ansonia Nature and Recreation Center June 6 at 9:00](#)
  - Derby: [Nature Walk ant the Kellogg Estate June 6 at 2pm](#)

Next Meeting: June 25<sup>th</sup> (re-scheduled) – Details to Follow

# Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

Present in **bold**.

## **Aaron Budris – Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments**

Bill Purcell - Valley Chamber of Commerce

Bob Gregorski - Naugatuck River Watershed Association & Trout Unlimited

Christopher Way - US Army Corps of Engineers

## **\*Chair\* Chuck Berger - Watertown Town Engineer**

Clifford Cooper - Litchfield Community Greenway

Dave Faber - CT Outdoors (outfitter in Watertown)

Elaine LaBella - Housatonic Valley Association Land Protection Director

Fred Messore - Town of Seymour

## **Ingrid Manning – formerly of CT Community Foundation**

## **Jack Walsh - Valley United Way**

Jim MacBroom – Milone and MacBroom

Jim O'Rourke - Waterbury Y

Jim Stewart - Naugatuck Borough Engineer

Jim Whitney - Western CT Convention & Visitors Bureau

## **Joan Kirchner - Harwinton Conservation Commission**

Jolene Podgorski - Watertown DPW

## **John Monroe – National Park Service: Rivers & Trails Program**

Josh Carey – Connecticut Community Foundation

Kate Rattan - CT DOT Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator

Kathy McNamara - City of Waterbury

## **Kevin Zak – Naugatuck River Revival Group & Housatonic Valley Association**

Laura Wildman – Princeton Hydro

Laurie Giannotti - CT DEEP Greenways

Mark Jewell – VHB, Inc (CT DOT)

Maura Martin - Thomaston Trails Committee

## **Mark Nielsen – Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments**

Mike Jastremski – Housatonic Valley Association

Peter Kisselburgh – Thomaston Trails Committee

## **Rich Minnick – Beacon Falls**

Richard Knoll – TEAM Inc. (Community Action agency in Ansonia)

## **Rista Malanca - Torrington**

Sam Dziekan - Housatonic Valley Association

Sheila O'Malley – City of Ansonia

## **Susan Peterson - CT DEEP Watershed Management Program**

Vicki Barnes - Watertown - Steele Brook Rangers

Vincent Gualtieri - US Army Corps of Engineers

Vinnie Scarlata – Ansonia Economic Development Commission

## **Will Cummings – Thomaston Trail Committee**

Also Present:

**Laura Brown - UCONN Extension**

**Jared Sloan – Naugatuck River.net Website Administrator**