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Description automatically generatedSACO WATERSHED COLLABORATIVE | Steering Committee Meeting**

**Thursday October 29, 2020 9am-1030am**

**Minutes by Robyn Saunders**

**PARTNER UPDATES + INTRODUCTIONS**

Emily Greene – Outreach Coordinator for Saco Watershed Collaborative (SWC)/University of New England (UNE) alum. GOAL: helping other partners achieve their goals in the Saco River Watershed

Robyn Saunders – Project Manager for SWC. GOAL: transitioning from external outreach + action items, to COVID-friendly actions, like poster, brochure, virtual training preparation, grant efforts, etc.

Pam Morgan – UNE Professor. Working on opportunity for living shoreline project on UNE campus with Fall + Spring semester students and new partner, Pete Hanrahan.

Steve Zeeman – UNE Professor. Overcoming COVID restrictions to continue field work for water quality data collection on Saco River with students, including E.coli in Biddeford pool.

Nina Young – Maine Farmland Trust. Addressing rapid escalation of climate change through outreach; elevating how agriculture can do less damage to land by using best management practices and other tools.

Marybeth Richardson – Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Regional Office. Working on licensing reviews and fast-tracked electronic application process this year.

* Statewide level – Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) is emerging contaminant, some hot spot areas in ME due to land applications of sludge; staff participating on climate council + work groups in technical input on Gulf of Maine data, policy on-going efforts; working on final report to legislature to refine rules as they apply to climate change in Maine, considering living shorelines in the existing permitting framework; involved in Presumpscot River landslide in Westbrook (geological phenomenon)
* SWC doing a good job getting word out to partners on efforts

Chris Feurt – Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve (WNERR) Coastal Training Program (CTP) Director. Transitioned training to on-line, reaching more people through virtual training, including efforts supporting SWC; working on climate council and what it means to Saco watershed; listening for ways to help with virtual training for/by partners; acknowledged important role of conservation emerging through COVID (more people getting outdoors).

Ashley Hodge – new source water protection coordinator for Maine CDC Drinking Water Program. Attending to current drought issue and covid response throughout Maine (helping other programs).

Alex Grindle – The Ecology School Director of Programs. No residential programs, but construction underway on school expansion (soon to be complete – living community challenge = ultra green building); secured funding for national teacher institute being held at TES for environmental educators.

Bonnie Pothier – Senator Angus King’s Office liaison for York County to facilitate issues on federal level + contact Sen King on communications. Listening in on funding opportunities to help group; Sen King is on natural resources committee in Senate + appreciates work we are doing on the Saco River for generations to come.

Andy Tolman – Retired Drinking Water Program Director/resident of upper basin (Conway Lake). Missing field trips, but doing them on his own; long term goal is to recreate + drink the water for years to come.

Jim Innes – United States Forest Service (USFS) District Ranger for White Mt National Forest. Busy with COVID as office is closed; great American outdoors act to give Department Of the Interior (DOI) $900M to restore recreation facilities primarily (13% to Forest Services); may be doing Joint Chiefs initiative again this year (like ARRA call to action); record numbers of people recreating (whole new user base, busy picking up garbage)

Wayne Munroe – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Cumberland + York County. 125 active contracts (44 new in August); Environmental Quality Incentives Program “EQIP” + Agricultural Management Assistance Program “AMA” + conservation security program combined for $1M on private working lands; forestry + commodity crop land, erosion and sediment control, silvicultural practices and water quality practices to prevent runoff from entering River; Aquatic Organism Passage “AOP” and stream crossings very popular practices; banner year for irrigation due to drought; new staffing changes at NRCS: Oxford County District Conservationist Luis Aponte + State Conservationists Matt Walker from Tennessee; NH State Conservationist is Becky Ross; EQIP rule scheduled in Federal register on Mon 10/26 from renewal of Farm Bill (customer-centric focus); RCPP efforts going strong/own program with new twists: alternative RCPP = funding opportunity for smaller, as well as large-scale, projects. Deadline of Nov 30, 2020 (Sebago Clean Waters granted $8M from RCPP). Regional local working group meeting on Dec 09, 2020 (Wayne has info) to set local priorities for State Farm Bill program.

Addie Halligan – DEP Watershed Management Unit (taking Kristin Feindel’s place on committee). Finalized NPS grants finalized (4 in Saco Watershed: Watchic Lake, Long Pond (Parsonsfield), Thatcher Brook, plus one); helping to connect to UNE professors on Biddeford pool sampling + mapping to investigate bacteria issues for future grant funding;

Rick Knowlton – Maine Water Company (MWC) President. Public water supply= second largest in Maine. Original funder of the collaborative; our hope was to have meetings exactly like this would share + collaborate on goals to support this fabulous resource; revenues support SRCC from drinking water bills; SWC Action Plan speaks for MWC goals

Kira Jacobs – USEP DW Program. Working with NRCS to identify priority watershed selection process in April as part of 2018 Farm Bill to ensure that the Saco Watershed continues to be a priority in ME + NH; working with USFS on many efforts: research, marketing/messaging, case study for Joint Chiefs; NH statewide WQ RCPP project being submitted; participating in Fryeburg recreation economic development plan with USEPA + others; sharing on StandUp for Forests campaign

Luis Aponte – NRCS Oxford County District Conservationist. Addressing Farm Bill programs with local farmers + landowners (35 contracts in Oxford Co. this year); getting outreach exposure to make public aware of NRCS as a resource for landowners

Tom Milligan – City Engineer Biddeford. Receiving several grants for Thatcher Brook from DEP’s NPS Program, feeling behind on in-kind services match due to COVID restrictions, working to bring Thatcher Brook into Class B status;

Rob Woodman – ACF Environmental Regional Manager/Engineer. Working with many towns in coastal towns to best utilitize grant funds, identifying candidate locations for retrofits; volunteering to be a trainer in the coastal watersheds grant.

Pete Hanrahan – Hanrahan Environmental/retired in July from EJPrescott from construction supply business. Opportunities collaborating with Pam Morgan on living shoreline project at UNE with students; looking forward to assisting the group with work.

Tim Harder – Resident of Saco. Working with Emily + Pam + Robyn on a story on the Saco River as a conservation piece now on website; interested in the Saco Rec. advisory board (boat launch at Rt 5 crossing); volunteer with SSRAH around taking over old water treatment facility with MWC; discussions with local folks on aquaculture products.

Matt Leblanc – Brookfield Renewable/UNE alum. Environmental compliance specialist for region, been on Saco River for 25 years; new natural fishway on Saco River with telemetry project report coming this spring; many recreational opportunities up + down river; working closely with Miranda who works more consistently with the collaborative.

Sarah Nelson – Appalachian Mountain Club. I have been working on research focused on mountain ponds in the Northeast, including in the White Mountains and Maine's Western Mountains. Not sure if the annual meeting is an appropriate venue, but I would be happy to present information about ~4 decades of water quality trends from the region at the very top of the watershed in the Pecha Kucha.

**EOC UPDATE**

Poster. Created by Bill Duffy of Northern Geomantics, through funding from Poland Spring, supplemented by Brookfield Renewables for printing + distribution

* Can share pdf
* Need input on distribution logistics to get posters to schools + teachers

Brochure.

* Same effort as poster, hoping to complete by the end of the year.
* Input needed on reviewing final text – Emily to send around

UNE CLASSES. Emily presented 2x in Dr. Marcia Morena Baez classes to make students more aware of their surrounding environment reinforced with local examples of how we are tackling complex issues; incorporated sense of place themes by going outside + bring special place to class project; pilot for future classes.

UNE Students + SSRAH. Monitoring salmon from NH facility to be transplanted later in year.

NELF TOOL. Looking at landscape futures for regions + places

STAND UP FOR FOREST CAMPAIGN. Marketing tools developed through large stakeholder group (Northeast Forest Network) to permanently preserve land in New England; Kira participated for 6 months to develop 1 of 4 toolkits we can use through our Collaborative as an umbrella campaign for all to use. Toolkits Coming up next: Strong Economies. Healthy Communities.