

## **Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Coordinating Committee**

Meeting minutes, November 25, 2024, 5:00 - 7:00 PM, Burnham Brook Preserve

### Committee and Staff Members Present:

Anthony Irving (ERWSCC Chairman)  
Pat Young (ERWSCC Program Director)  
Abby Bernstein (ERWSCC Environmental Program Coordinator)  
Liz Lacy (National Park Service)  
David Bingham (Salem Land Trust)  
Kim Bradley (Town of Salem)  
Rich Chyinski (Salem Land Trust)  
Bernie Gillis (Town of East Haddam)  
Anthony Griggs (Town of Salem)  
David Gumbart (The Nature Conservancy)  
Ed Natoli (Town of Salem)

Rob Smith (Town of East Haddam)  
Chris Bellucci (DEEP)  
Pete Govert (East Haddam Land Trust)  
Damian Rubino (Town of Lyme)  
Ralph Chappell (East Haddam Land Trust)  
Jennifer Burton-Reeve (Town of East Haddam)

### Absent:

Regan Stacy (Town of Lyme)

### Guests:

Cameron Beard

## Administration

Call to Order: Irving called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM.

Minutes: Gillis motioned to accept the minutes of the September 23, 2024 ERWSCC meeting. Natoli seconded.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Community Grants: The Salem Land Trust is requesting \$500 to contract a professional to mow 30 acres of overgrown field on Woodland Warbler Preserve. The goal is to maintain the field as grassland habitat for ground nesting birds, native plants, small rodents, snakes, turkeys and insects and to control invasive species such as Autumn Olive, Japanese Bittersweet, Garlic Mustard and Multi-Flora Rose. No herbicides will be used. The land trust will also put up an informational sign explaining the importance of grasslands to the Eightmile River Watershed. The executive committee reviewed the application prior to the meeting and had no comments. **Smith motioned to approve the grant request. Natoli seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Bingham abstained.**

The board previously funded a grant to offer 3 free forest bathing programs. The deadline for this grant as it stands was December 2024. The grant recipient is requesting an extension into the spring of 2025. Two of three programs have already been completed. **Gumbart motioned to approve the extension. Smith seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

4 executive committee positions (Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary) are up for re-election in January. Executive committee members serve 2-year terms. Smith recommends a continuation of leadership. No other nominations were heard at this time. Nominations can also be emailed to Young, Irving or Bernstein before the next committee meeting.

Executive Committee/Budget: Young reviewed ERWSCC expenses, year to date. Staff pay raises were not reflected in October paychecks. This has been resolved with the bookkeeper. Future checks will reflect the raise, and November paychecks will include a correction. Additionally, \$36,500 was swept from the account by the federal contracting office. The funds were left over from the previous budget year and were allocated but not yet dispersed. NPS did not authorize this transaction. Lacy spoke with the federal contracting office and the funds were restored. All other finances are in order and are reflected in the budget spreadsheet provided to the committee prior to the meeting.

Young, Irving, Bernstein and Lacy attended the Partnership Wild and Scenic River Conference in Vermont in October. The conference was well attended. All but one of the eighteen Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers were represented. Discussion ensued.

National Park Service, DEEP, TNC updates:

*NPS:* Lacey reported that NPS is preparing for potential changes. NPS is still in the process of hiring a replacement for Jamie Fosburgh. Lacy will keep the committee posted. Lacy reiterated that she is always open to questions via email. The federal budget for October 2024-September 2025 has not passed yet. The federal government is still in continuing resolution until December 20<sup>th</sup> 2024.

*DEEP:* Bellucci reported that USGS Real Time Precipitation Network is no longer funded. The USGS stream gauge on the East Branch of the Eightmile River will no longer collect real-time precipitation data. All other gauge functions remain the same. The East Branch Gauge is one of 16 affected gauges in Connecticut. USGS is trying to drum up support. Young added that ERWSSC may have the funds available if the committee wanted to consider funding the Real-Time Precipitation data collection at the East Branch USGS gauging station. Discussion ensued. Bellucci also reported that DEEP currently has grant funds available. There is a new landing page for all available grants from DEEP to help improve the grant application process.

<https://portal.ct.gov/deep/business-and-financial-assistance/grants-financial-assistance/grants-and-financial-assistance> Bradley reported that Rocky Neck State Park has reopened after the fire. Bradley also reported that DEEP has 10 all-terrain wheelchairs in 5 state parks with 4 more on order. The wheelchairs will open back up again in March/April. Discussion ensued.

*TNC:* Gumbart shared that The Nature Conservancy is still working on policies and procedures for their all-terrain wheelchair. 3 individuals recently tested the wheelchair at Burnham Brook Preserve; valuable insights were gained for improving the user experience. Gumbart also shared that The Nature Conservancy submitted a permit application for immediate repair of the Walden Bridge crossing over the East Branch of the Eightmile River. A meeting is scheduled for next week with The Nature Conservancy staff, TNC's project engineer, Eightmile Staff, National Park Service Representative, Salem Inland Wetland Representatives and Town of Salem Town Planning Staff to review the application.

#### Subcommittee Discussion/Update:

*Unigrid Working Committee:* Bernstein shared a near-final proof of the Unigrid Brochure. The brochure was overall well received. National Park Service approval is still needed before the brochure goes to print. Cost of printing 15,000 copies is roughly \$9,800. ~7,500 copies will be mailed directly to watershed residents, the other brochures will be distributed to town halls and local businesses. Discussion ensued.

*Goodwin Trail Working Committee:* Griggs and Gillis removed hazard trees on the trail in Hartman Park.

*Outreach and Education:* Young, Bernstein and Natoli tabled at Salem's AppleFest in October. The event was widely successful and Eightmile has been invited back for next year. Young, Bernstein and Natoli also collaborated with Jim Arrigoni of the Lyme Land Trust on a Macroinvertebrate Program at Banningwood Preserve earlier in the month. Bernstein reported that she and Young will schedule an Education and Outreach subcommittee meeting to review the previous winter programs and determine which programs to run again this year.

The Event Calendar, is still in the works. Further steps will be reviewed at the next Education and Outreach subcommittee meeting.

2025 Newsletter is in progress. The theme will be Connections. The Newsletter will follow a similar format to previous years. There will be articles highlighting Greenways, Flyways, and Blueways. Discussion ensued.

*Protection and Management:* Young updated the committee on the management of hydrilla in Hamburg Cove. A preliminary meeting for Hydrilla in Hamburg Cove was held on October 15<sup>th</sup>. The goal was to bring local stakeholders together to discuss a cohesive approach to managing of hydrilla. Succeeding the meeting, The USArmy Corps of Engineers (USACE) expressed interested in including Hamburg Cove in their 2025 management project. USACE is beginning environmental review processes and asked for Young's assistance in coordinating another meeting with local individuals involved in the management of Hamburg Cove. Discussion ensued. The review of Tier 1 & Tier 2 Goals in the Watershed Management Plan is nearing completion. Following completion, a subcommittee, focused on review of the report and implantation of suggestions will be formed. Young solicited interest from the board. Subcommittee will begin meeting after the holidays. Discussion ensued.

*Science and Monitoring:* Bernstein reported on data monitoring efforts from this summer and fall. Results and monitoring sites for all 4 monitoring programs are hosted on the Interactive Water Quality Map on the watershed's website. Bernstein shared the map and illustrated how to view monitoring sites and results. New this year, Bernstein has submitted ERWSCC Summer Baseline Monitoring Data to the National Water Quality Monitoring Council's [water quality portal](#). Bellucci stated that DEEP also submits their data to this portal and that is becoming the main platform for all Water Quality Monitoring Data. Discussion ensued.

*Project Review:* The Town of Lyme is replacing the East Branch crossing on Salem Road. A mussel survey was completed, and no endangered mussels were found within the work area. As noted earlier, The Nature Conservancy filed an inland wetlands permit for emergency repair of the bridge over the East Branch on Walden Preserve. A field meeting is scheduled for next week.

Partner Updates:

*Salem Land Trust:* The Land Trust closed on the ~50-acre Stahlschmid property in early October.

*Town of Salem:* Tyche Planning and Policy Group is the new consultant for Inland Wetlands and Planning and Zoning Boards. Salem Inland Wetlands representatives will be attending the Walden Bridge meeting with The Nature Conservancy.

*East Haddam Land Trust:* The Land Trust's annual calendar that has been mailed out to East Haddam Land Trust members and will be disseminated at locations throughout the watershed for public consumption. ERWSCC approved grant funds for the completion of this calendar. The Goodwin Trail Challenge was a success; numbers doubled from last year. The land trust is looking into a 46-acre property off Mitchell Road, the entirety of which is in the Eightmile River Watershed.

*Town of East Haddam:* None

*Lyme Land Conservation Trust:* None

*Town of Lyme:* None

Old & New Business: Irving inquired about moving the meeting time to 4:30. Discussion ensued. No action was taken. Bingham shared that a report on NPR cited a study that found wild populations of ash trees with natural resistance to emerald ash borer. The board reviewed 2025 meeting dates (below)

**2025 Meeting Dates (4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month—unless otherwise noted)**

**January 27, 2025, March 24, 2025, May 19, 2025\*, July 28, 2025, September 22, 2025, November 24, 2025.**

**\*3<sup>rd</sup> Monday due to federal holiday.**

Adjournment: Chyinski motioned to adjourn. Smith seconded. No discussion. Chairman Irving adjourned the meeting at 6:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Abigail Bernstein  
ERWSCC Environmental Program Coordinator