

Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers Wild and Scenic Committee Minutes
Thursday, February 18, 2021 – Zoom

Attendees: Jacques Couture, John Little, Cynthia Scott, Wendy Scott, Jeff Parsons, Dan Seeley, Jim MacCartney, Ellen Fox, Russ Ford, Bethany Remmers, Ari Lattanzi, and Lindsey Wight

Welcome/introductions; call to order: Meeting called to order at 6:36pm.

Review of the January minutes: WS motioned to accept the minutes (and thank you Wendy for keeping those minutes); JL seconded; minutes were approved as written.

Administrative: TNC - Rebuilding a More Resilient VT document – they will be sending to VT legislators and have asked groups to sign on. Finalizing for official print tomorrow. DS moves that we sign on; WS seconds; all in favor. Lindsey will send our logo to The Nature Conservancy, so we can be officially signed on.

Troy Covered Bridge: A snowmobile caught fire on Feb 6 while inside the bridge – bridge burned and collapsed. Debris was quickly recovered from the river (including the snowmobile parts). About 40 ft of floor/deck was salvaged. The Troy Selectboard is interested in replacing with another covered bridge, depending on costs. VT League of Cities and Towns covered the cost of the removal and will cover the cost of the temporary bridge. There is a lot of local support and attention and energy to support this. Norwich Engineering students interested in doing design work – though it's unclear what the State would say about this. Jim mentioned a covered bridge in Newport NH that was lost to arson in the mid-1980s and was replaced by a company in Ashland, NH Bridgehunter.com | Corbin Covered Bridge 29-10-05 | <https://bridgehunter.com/nh/sullivan/19201160014200/>

Lindsey showed photos of the aftermath and during the removal; Jeff shared an anecdote that he read in the Chronicle about the bridge previously being washed downstream in a flood, and hauled back up with horses. Lindsey will send out links to stories and photos to the Committee, as well as the link to the Facebook group that is energized around rebuilding the bridge. Other suggestions coming from Montgomery – use parts of the bridge as mementos/auction items. Longley Bridge reconstruction was over 1 million. If not covered, then farm could use the bridge instead of the ford. Longley was reconstructed to convey heavier loads to meet modern needs – did have to get permission from “historical folks” to diverge from the historical construction techniques. Montgomery has insurance on the covered bridges as structures; does Troy?

Troy didn't actually have the plans for the bridge in the town office, but the person who did the restoration work in 2007/2008 was able to provide these. Perhaps something we could consider is in-depth drone footage of all our bridges (fly-throughs, look at the unique features of each, make a record).

Role for UMATR: potentially tap into other funding sources. Also put some of our budget towards this? There are spots we can shift around – for instance, we're unlikely to need \$1,500 for travel this year. Discussion of this and other budget line-items. Would speak well for UMATR to be able to offer financial assistance. Move budget around to free up \$5,000 now, with more budgeted next year? These funds could be used to investigate the feasibility of a new covered bridge, for plans, or even for actual construction costs – let's not put too many strings on this funding, but really do it to help the town in their time of need (and also get some good press for UMATR). Can include language that these funds

may be used to leverage dollars from other sources – get the ball rolling for feasibility studies. We can free up \$5,000. Ari and Lindsey will draft a letter, then circulate it for review.

River Community Grants: We have \$30,000 budgeted for RCGs this year. We received 11 project proposal requesting \$48,762. Lindsey described the 11 projects and relayed the recommendations of the subcommittee. Discussion included concerns about landowner buy-in, the value of biological studies to identify where Rare, Threatened, or Endangered animals may be within our rivers, the value of educational programs to inspire, and the continued value the Committee feels is connected to providing experiences on and along the rivers. JL motions that we fully fund the top 7 projects, as discussed and recommended; CS seconds. An eight project will be primarily funded by our partners at the MRBA, but an additional small amount will enable the program to better meet its objectives. All approved this motion. Lindsey will follow-up with the unfunded projects to encourage them to provide feedback about the projects, and to help explore other options for funding or partnership.

FY2022 Budget: It looks like there will be a slight increase to our budget again next year - \$165,000! Lindsey presented the draft budget for discussion. Earmark a line item to assist with the covered bridge effort, though there was discussion about next year only supporting if it is, in fact, a covered bridge rebuild. That is not something we need to determine at this point in our budget. JL motions to accept the budget as currently proposed; DS seconds; all in favor.

2021 Events: State COVID guidelines now allow for outdoor recreation – should we offer our usual snowshoe events, with masks and social distancing? Yes. Lindsey will reach out to the County Foresters to see if they are willing/able to guide. If not, perhaps we can find another local guide.

Wild and Scenic Film Fest: VNRC will hold theirs as a virtual event in April. We had asked if they wanted to partner, and maybe amplify the event – hold it at a drive-in? But they are forging ahead on their own. The Committee liked the idea of a drive-in – several options ranging from Sunset in Colchester, a pop-up in Morrisville, or the local “walk-in” that was held in Montgomery last summer. It would be nice to have it within the watershed, and we have good partners locally. Let’s pursue this, perhaps as early as July? Lindsey and Ari will explore costs and options.

River Explorers trip – Keith is advocating for getting kids out for the full week-long trip. The Committee agrees that it should be safe to sponsor this year.

Great meeting – very full and very accomplishful; we will hold remaining items until the March meeting, which will be help via Zoom.

Wrap up and Adjourn: JL motions; RF seconds; meeting is adjourned at 8:34pm.