



MEETING MINUTES

January 23, 2024, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Attendees:

Ed O'Donnell	John Starzmann	Sarah Bursky	Olivia Wilson	Jennifer Egan
Sarah Sato	David Hawk	Bob Clark	Rob Campion	Brian Taylor
Rick Mickowski	Melinda Daniels	Jack Hill	April Frantz	April Schmitt
Aileen Parrish	Cori Trice	Doug Janiec	Sierra Taylor	Ken Battin
Martha Narvaez	Lucy Dinsmore	Martin Wells	John Goodall	Laura Lee
Shane Morgan				

Approval of October Minutes

Presentations

Melinda Daniels presented the fish passage data (depth and temperature) collected in 2023 on the stretch of White Clay Creek below Red Mill Dam (Dam 2). Based on the spring 2023 sampling, which was an abnormally dry year, several shallow depth stretches would prevent the passage of American Shad (one of the larger anadromous fish requiring a minimum of 2'). Temperature, however, does not seem to be a limiting factor. Temperature readings during the migration period were optimal for fish passage despite the low flows, which generally correlate with higher temperatures. Temperature readings on the White Clay also tracked nicely with the Brandywine River USGS gauge; therefore, the USGS gauge could be used as a proxy for the White Clay. Melinda suggested that, at a minimum, they do HEC RAS modeling to test out different flow scenarios in the White Clay based on historical data. Additional data could be collected this migration season to validate the model, hopefully during more typical flows. Melinda also noted that dry or low flow years are not atypical in impacting fish passage. Historical data on the Upper Delaware indicate that this is quite common. Ed O'Donnell noted that this also occurred on the Brandywine this year. Shane and John Goodall suggested that other anadromous and catadromous fish species be included in the modeling since the American Shad is not the only species of concern. Melinda will create a proposal for continued research for the committee to review.

Rob Campion, April Frantz, and Jack Hill (DCNR) provided an update on the Evan's Fulling Mill Dam removal (Dam 8) in the Preserve. Sarah Soto and Bryan Taylor were also present. Currently, the permit is with USACE. USACE is trying to set up an on-site meeting with the PHMC and WS staff. Once the agencies work out the details, there will be a public meeting, and consulting parties will be invited to participate. The London Britain Historical Commission is a consulting party. Aileen Parrish requested that London Britain Township also be a consulting party. At this meeting, options will be discussed with the public. After this overview, there were some questions from a few meeting attendees. Bob Clark, London

Britain resident and fly fisherman, requested additional information on the purpose of the removal. Jack Hill (DCNR) noted that the DEP Department of Dam Safety Chapter 105 requires them to either repair the dam and bring it up to their safety standards or remove it. It is more cost-effective for DCNR to remove the dam. Bob Clark questioned whether this applied to dams that have become part of the riverbed and requested a point of contact to get clarification. Shane requested that these types of questions be asked at the public meeting. Jack Hill suggested putting questions in writing and providing them to DCNR before the public meeting. Shane suggested anyone on the committee with specific questions send them to her so they can be put together in one document and sent to DCNR. Those not on the committee can send their questions to Dave Hawk.

New Business

Over 500 people attended the Big Elk State Park Public Meeting. The main takeaway from the meeting was that camping would be tabled for this master planning process. Additionally, a request from the public was made to DCNR to form a local advisory committee to provide input throughout the planning process. Rob Campion added that the timeline for the master plan, initially slated for completion this summer, is tentative. He also noted that the White Clay Preserve Planning is on hold until the Big Elk Plan is finished. Rob also suggested we contact the Big Elk Watershed Association for their input, as several restoration projects are slated for the park.

The initial water quality results from the mushroom farm biochar filter monitoring are not good regarding nutrients. Adam thinks too much poultry biochar was applied. The same results were seen at another biochar filter on a horse farm. The third filter installed on a dairy farm more recently was adjusted to reflect these results, and less poultry manure was used. Better results are being seen at this location, but the wood, sand, and poultry char ratios still need adjusting. Adam plans to dig up and replace the mushroom farm biofilter with a better mix of wood, sand, and poultry char in late winter/early spring. Jenny Egan suggested using only wood biochar (no poultry). Monitoring will continue so we can better evaluate the effectiveness of this type of BMP.

Shane noted that she would begin working on the FY24 budget and work plan for NPS and gave an overview of some of the priority projects she has in mind to get feedback from the committee. Shane is particularly interested in pursuing a flood study for the White Clay. This was discussed briefly at the October meeting, and since then, she has developed an overall vision for the study with input from Martha N. She is meeting again with Dr. Franco Montalto on February 2 as a follow-up to her initial meeting with him. She thinks this will be a multi-year project with several partners and is trying to determine who can do what to develop the budget. She hopes to have something together to apply to NFWF for funding. Since Wild and Scenic federal funds cannot be used as a match for NFWF grants, she suggested using the WCRF/DE Tax Check-off funds. Doug J. agreed that this was a good use of those funds.

Other priority projects would be continuing the fish passage study and potentially some other pre- and post-dam removal studies while we have the opportunity. She also asked committee members to share ideas for any projects they had in mind. The NPS budget will remain flat at \$210K this fiscal year, but Sarah B. noted cuts are going on in several NPS programs, and it is important to note that Wild and Scenic is one of the only programs that did not see any budget cuts.

Old Business

Doug J. noted that he and Tom Zawislak (WCWA President) worked on updating the WCWA bylaws. They have reviewed one round of comments from the remaining board members. Tom is revising the draft to address the feedback received and will circulate them again for final approval. As part of the update, it was decided that the annual meeting of the WCWA should coincide with the April WS quarterly meeting. It will take place directly after the regular meeting. The premise of this effort was to be compliant with nonprofit law. However, Shane hopes that at the first meeting, we can also talk about membership and officers; we also need to celebrate Dave Hawk's several years of service as the WCWA Treasurer. The April meeting will include a review of 2023 programs like Catch the Rain and Stream Watch, and the annual update should also be available.

NPS River Manager Report

Sarah B. provided status updates on other dam removals in the White Clay. Dams 2 and 4 are in the review process, with the outcome of Dam 2 informing Dam 4. Dam 7 is moving forward with a different approach. Kevin Donnelly is working on scheduling a public meeting regarding Dam 7 at Deerfield sometime in late February or March. Dam 3 (a sewer main) also recently came up again as NPS reviewed a sewer relining permit for the City of Newark. Removing Dam 3 would be a substantial cost since it is a sewer line, and the city would like to do an inverted siphon (somewhere to the tune of \$3 million or more). The city would like to remove this barrier if they (or we) can find the funding. They applied for a NOAA grant in 2022 but were denied. Doug J. Suggested another alternative may be to raise the stream bed.

Sarah announced we would host a virtual discussion on dam removals on Wild and Scenic Rivers on February 26 (time TBD but likely 10 a.m. to noon). She stated that NPS sees a net benefit of dam removals and that this meeting would focus on balancing ecological and cultural values and what this looks like for Wild and Scenic Rivers and, more specifically, our committee. The premise of this meeting is to discuss working through issues that arise when balancing cultural and natural resources on a Wild and Scenic River.

Olivia Wilson (NPS Fellow) provided an update on the project she is working on for White Clay. The deliverable from this project will be a report detailing ten properties in Avondale

Borough that would be good candidates for rain gardens or other residential GSI. She plans to present the data to the Committee before her departure, likely in late March.

Wild & Scenic Program Updates

Lucy and Shane are reviewing proposals for the construction of Harmony Park Rain Garden #2 in West Grove. This rain garden should be completed by June 2024 with support from a Dockstader grant.

Lucy mentioned our upcoming virtual Catch the Rain workshop on January 31st. Shane noted that most attendees are outside the White Clay but are interested in learning.

A UD graduate student (Lydia Franks) who helps with year-round water quality sampling is doing her master's thesis on four of our year-round sampling sites with five full years of data. Shane will invite her to present her thesis to the committee at the April meeting.

Bacteria sampling on Bogy Run is complete, but the microbial source tracking still needs to be completed. This will also be presented in April.

Martha noted that the State of the Watershed Report is in the editing phase and that we are compiling a short brochure that summarizes the report. Shane stated that this should be ready by April as well.

Shane highlighted the fact that she and Sarah have been working with the Stroud Education team on grant proposals that involve getting more students, schools, and underrepresented communities/schools (such as the Red Clay Consolidated School District and the Chester County Migrant Ed Program) on-site at Stroud to watershed science field trips. This involves workshops with teachers as well as students. Shane usually does one presentation introducing them to the White Clay Wild and Scenic watershed, followed by an overview of green stormwater infrastructure, which applies to schoolyards and residential properties. We also continue to support the AGIS school district's 4th and 6th grade watershed science programs.

Shane and Cori T. introduced a new service that the Christina Watershed Municipal Partnership offers municipalities. It is called TAG for Technical Advisory Group. A municipality can come to us with a stormwater problem, and we will assemble a team of people to do a free one-hour virtual consultation. An overview of this program will be provided at the elected official's breakfast we host on Feb 28th (at Northbrook Market)

Creek Fest planning has begun. Phung Luu and his live bird show are back for 2024. She also noted that it is the 40th anniversary of the bistate preserve, and we would like to commemorate that somehow.

The Garage Youth Center (NPF/DEPGG grants) is moving along. A site survey was completed in November, and Meliora is working on the design for the permeable basketball area, which should be completed by Feb 26.

John Goodall noted that two parcels (a 38-acre parcel and a 68-acre parcel) were preserved in the headwaters. Both were donated.

Laura Lee shared that 275 acres were preserved in Delaware and will be added to the White Clay Creek State Park. Three parcels will be added over the next few years. There will be a 1-2 year planning process for the newly acquired land, which includes an equestrian loop but no camping, written into the sale at the seller's request.

The financials were reviewed. We have about \$18,000 in Wild and Scenic funding that has yet to be put toward a specific watershed improvement project. Also of note, the White Clay Restoration Fund/DE Tax Check-Off shows \$39K in the budget, but \$7.5K is for the Dam 7 removal. Since its inception, the fund has generated \$ 94 K. Shane believes it will reach the \$100K threshold sometime in 2024.

White Clay Related Updates/Announcements

Catch the Rain Virtual Workshop, January 30, 7 pm

White Clay Creek Fest, May 4, noon – 4 pm

Rt 41 Corridor Study, via Zoom, Feb 1, 7-9 pm. Ken Battin noted that this would be an excellent opportunity to share thoughts on the Route 41 corridor from Route 926 to the state line regarding stormwater and road flooding. A VPP grant from the county was obtained for this study, sponsored by Avondale, Londonderry, London Grove, New Garden, and Kennett Township.

Rob Campion noted that bridge 22 in the Preserve should be repaired and open to the public by the summer. This is the fiberglass bridge over the East Branch that was impacted by Hurricane Ida.

Upcoming W&S Quarterly Meetings

Note the April 23 meeting was switched to **April 25, 10am-noon**

July 16, 10 am-noon

October 15, 10 am-noon