

MINUTES
Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership
Executive Committee Meeting – September 19, 2022

Committee members in attendance: Henry Art, Williamstown (Board Chair); Alain Peteroy, Franklin Land Trust; Bob O'Connor, EOEEA; Rick Chandler, Ashfield; Kate Lindroos Conlin, Massachusetts Forest Alliance; Keith Ross, Society of American Foresters.

Guests/ staff present: Constance Carpenter, USDA Forest Service; Whit Sanford; Brian Rhodes, iBerkshires; Lisa Hayden, NEFF, Partnership Admin. Agent; Sophie Argetsinger, NEFF, Partnership Assistant.

1. Call to Order at 2:04 p.m. by H. Art, with Land Acknowledgement.

2. Approval of Minutes from August 22, 2022 Executive Committee Meeting.

H. Art requested an amendment to include additional information from the Partnership Plan meeting that took place with the New Ashford Select Board, to include their interest in developing an educational program for K-12 school children similar to the forestry education program at the Smith Vocational & Agricultural School in Northampton. R. Chandler motioned to approve the minutes with the above amendment and B. O'Connor seconded. Unanimously approved.

3. Review of August Executive Committee vote to bring Partnership name change recommendation to full Board.

A 4-0 vote took place at the August 22 Executive Committee meeting to bring the potential Partnership name change to the full Board for discussion and vote. With all Committee members present at this meeting, the topic was briefly revisited and brought to another vote. Several Committee members expressed hearty support of the name change to Woodlands Partnership of Western Massachusetts. R. Chandler hoped the Partnership region could eventually be expanded to include other areas of significant forest in Western Massachusetts.

K. Conlin motioned for a vote to bring the name change recommendation to the full Board. K. Ross seconded. Unanimously approved by all members of the Committee (6-0).

4. Partnership funding updates (L. Hayden).

- a. \$100,000 USFS (Federal) 3-year grant for: at least 2 demonstration forests, outreach to and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, Forest Center space needs and programmatic planning.
- b. \$100,000 matching grant (State)—Rowe state MVP grant for: Rowe climate open space plan, Virtual Forest Center web site development, collaboration with Ohketeau Cultural Center.
- c. ~\$500,000 Congressional Request (pending) for Action on Forest Climate Resilience, possibly including: Implementing climate forestry practices in Partnership region, developing a training program to recruit job candidates from underserved communities and provide climate-smart stewardship training, due diligence funding for towns, Conservation Circuit Rider to work on projects across town borders, 1-year USFS Fellowship based in Partnership region.
- d. \$30 million USDA Commodities grant to New England Forestry Foundation (some of this funding may come to the Partnership region) for: building a climate-smart, forest-based economy as a tool for climate action.
- e. USDA Commodities grant round 2 (smaller grants): proposal has been submitted; awaiting decisions. Climate training for underserved populations at technical colleges, climate-friendly tree nursery, local wood for home repairs.

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f. C. Carpenter gave an overview of upcoming grants that can be applied for through the USFS, funded through the Inflation Reduction Act. Most have an emphasis on climate resilience and mitigation and on reaching underserved communities. Quarterly reports will be required. Visit: [grants.gov](https://www.usfs.gov/grants.gov) for more info.

5. Board insurance quotes (L. Hayden).

The Partnership Administrative Agent was asked to research insurance for Board members. L. Hayden has received a quote from Travelers Insurance Company for \$1600 for the year (30-day quote). She is reviewing this to see if it includes everything the Partnership needs as a public body. She is waiting to hear back from Blackmer Insurance Agency for a second quote.

H. Art moved to allow the Agent to purchase the insurance from Travelers before the quote expires; or if the quote from Blackmer is lower and gives the needed coverage, L. Hayden can go with that option. R. Chandler seconded. All voted in favor.

6. USFS civil rights compliance (L. Hayden).

The USFS requires all grant recipients to do a civil rights compliance interview when at least one grant has been awarded that year. L. Hayden completed the interview with Peter Beringer from the USFS. Compliance requirements include ensuring that all programs are open to everyone and accessible to all, communicating with the public about how to file a complaint with the USDA, posting a Justice For All poster, providing non-English materials when appropriate, and 508 compliance (closed captioning, sign language interpreter if requested).

With improvements planned for the Partnership web site as work on the grant begins, compliance can be addressed by posting directions for filing a complaint on the Partnership website; adding the Justice For All poster to the website (currently posted at NEFF headquarters); researching what non-English-speaking communities are in the Partnership area that might benefit from translated materials; researching translation services; and considering an accessible trail project in the region.

7. Board open slots, new members, reappointments, and Committee assignments (L. Hayden and S. Argetsinger).

Members who have recently left the Board: Beth Girshman (Conway), Doug McNally (Windsor), Ed Munch (Peru), Emily Johnson (FRCOG), Jennifer Morse (Cheshire), Nicole Pyser (BNRC).

Joining the Board: Colin Mettey (Conway), Dicken Crane (Windsor), Doug Brown (BNRC).

Vacancies at this time: FRCOG, Peru, Cheshire, Clarksburg.

Several members of the Board are due for reappointment soon—Board members will receive an email from the Agent if their appointment needs to be renewed by their appointing entity.

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8. Final Plan revisions: Board vote to approve Plan at full Board meeting on October 11.

L. Hayden noted that a final draft of the Plan should be ready to send out to the full Board by September 26. A new chapter focused on climate change is being drafted, in response to public comment at one of the public listening sessions. H. Art and others suggested that the draft should also be sent to former Board members, members of the public who have provided feedback, and town Selectmen who the Partnership has met with at outreach meetings. R. Chandler suggested that the draft should be presented to non-Board members as approved by the Board (after October 11) so that revisions do not drag on indefinitely. Members of the public can continue to suggest what they'd like to see in the next yearly revision if they have further ideas. H. Art suggested listing the Plan outreach sessions that have been conducted (listening session and town Select Board meetings) in the Plan. W. Sanford said the final Plan should also be sent out to libraries, planning boards, and organizations in the region to have on file.

9. Status/possible collaboration with forest centers and organizations in Northern New England/NY.

The Partnership should reach out to other centers and organizations for support and collaboration, in order to create relationships and to avoid reduplicating efforts in the area. Several suggestions were offered: [American Friends of Canadian Conservation](#), [Northern Forest Center](#) (ME, NH, VT, NY), [Northern Woodlands](#) (NH), [Hitchcock Center for the Environment](#) (Amherst), [CISA](#) (food miles > lumber miles?), [Harris Center for Conservation Education](#) (NH), [Merck Forest & Farmland Center](#) (Rupert, VT). W. Sanford suggested creating a database of organizations.

10. Proposed bylaws changes.

H. Art has only received one response regarding the topic of Board alternates. Since the parties that this was affecting have since left the Board or joined the Board as full members, H. Art suggested that the Partnership should leave the issue for now, and not take up time on the topic at the October 11 Board meeting.

11. Any item(s) not anticipated within 48 hours.

R. Chandler wondered what the status of UMass's participation in the Partnership is—the enabling legislation requires the participation of UMass but they have not attended meetings of late. L. Hayden said that she and H. Art should set up a meeting with the UMass representatives to make sure they are on board to participate fully.

K. Conlin noted that Tony D'Amato (University of Vermont) has a webinar on September 20 at 1pm: Natural Disturbance-Based Silvicultural Strategies, Adaptation, and Wildlife Outcomes, as part of the Climate Change Response Framework's Climate Adaptation for Forest-Dependent Wildlife Webinar Series. [Register here](#).

12. Adjournment.

K. Conlin motioned to adjourn and A. Peteroy seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 3:35pm.