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Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership
Executive Committee Meeting – August 22, 2022

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

Guests/ staff present: Gregory Cox, Hawley; Constance Carpenter, USDA Forest Service; Jon Gould, Hilltown Community Liaison, Office of Senator Hinds; Ben Kargère, Williams College; Whit Sanford; Brian Rhodes, iBerkshires; Lisa Hayden, NEFF, MTWP Admin. Agent; Sophie Argetsinger, NEFF, MTWP Assistant.

1. **Call to Order** at 9:04 am by H. Art, with Land Acknowledgement.

2. **Legislative Updates and Discussion with Jon Gould from Senator Hinds' Office.**

H. Art noted that a robust funding conversation took place with staff from various legislative offices at the Executive Committee meeting in July. H. Art was interested in finding out from J. Gould about a Partnership funding request to Sen. Hinds' office that asked for short-term funding (\$200,000) that would help the Partnership move forward with programs.

J. Gould said the request was not moved forward; he had sent some questions to staff last week about why it was not approved, but has not heard back. However, senators could request about \$500,000 for projects in their districts, and the office received many more requests for funding than they could advance. He noted that Sen. Hinds, who had success in getting more rural school aid, only has three more months in office, and suggested that the Partnership invite Hinds to another meeting as his term is winding down. J. Gould remarked that Sen. Hinds was a co-sponsor of the Partnership's enabling legislation, and that he hopes to get updates from Hinds' chief of staff and legislative team.

J. Gould noted that there are various funding sources that may be available to the Partnership, including funding through the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Bond bills for environment or transportation are fairly frequent opportunities and supplemental budgets may be other possible funding sources. He suggested that the Partnership should keep in regular contact with as many legislative offices as possible. To be considered in the annual budget, the Partnership should begin outreach efforts in January and be very clear about what the Partnership is asking for.

L. Hayden will reach out to Stephen Maher, Sen. Hinds' Chief of Staff, to invite Sen. Hinds to a meeting.

3. **Brief Update on Wood Residue Study Conducted by Ben Kargère, Williams College Student.**

The Wood Residue Study was funded by Williams College and administered by the Partnership, with advising from H. Art. B. Kargère, a junior economics major, defines wood residue in his study as wood that can't or shouldn't be left in place but that has no regular economic value. This wood residue can come from two sources: forests (tops of trees, leaves and branches from harvests) or urban areas (areas where the human built environment interacts with trees). In forest settings, it doesn't make sense economically to remove low value material, as it is difficult and costly to remove and there are no markets for it. The main source of wood residue in the Partnership region therefore comes from urban areas—from arboriculture (residential tree pruning and maintenance), powerline trimming and tree removal, transmission line clearing, road clearing, and invasive species removal. The wood residue

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produced by these operations often involves the tops of trees and is almost always chipped. These chips usually can't be left in place, are difficult to put to use, and are illegal to put in landfills in Massachusetts—the chips are therefore currently mostly shipped out of state, often for use in biomass plants.

B. Kargère researched possible ways that these wood residue chips could be kept in the Partnership region and bring economic and environmental benefit to the region. Potential uses include:

a. Wood fiber insulation. Pros: Store carbon long-term. Cons: wood fiber insulation is currently only being manufactured in Maine in the northeast (currently big in Europe, may eventually gain traction in the states). Additionally, sawmill residue (sawdust) is the preferred material for use in wood insulation, not chips.

b. Compost. Pros: Puts carbon back into the soil. Cons: can only be used on a small scale; large scale composters have more specific chip needs that couldn't be met with the wood residue chips.

c. Wood chip heating. Pros: Best use of chips. Would require little processing or transport. Green chips can be burned hot and particulate emissions kept low. Could be used to save on heating costs for schools, municipal buildings, and hospitals in the region. Heating with wood chips is 75% efficient. Cons: may run into protest of use similar to biomass protest. However, direct combustion of wood chips is different from the use of biomass and wood pellets to create electricity, and would be utilizing wood residue only.

H. Art suggested that the study be added to the Partnership website, and B. Kargère could give a public presentation / Zoom webinar on the project at a Board meeting or at an Education, Outreach & Research Committee meeting. K. Conlin (chair of EOR Committee) is very interested in having B. Kargère present at an EOR meeting or forum. The presentation could be a panel discussion with Sean Mahoney (Director of Wood Utilization, DCR).

C. Carpenter suggested that Lew McCreery (Forest Products Technologist, USDA Forest Service) be contacted re: potential for a future Wood Innovations Grant.

4. Grants Updates.

L. Hayden reported that the bulk of the state \$60,000 tree-planting and climate forest stewardship planning grant had been completed with plans for properties in Rowe, Heath, Conway, North Adams and Shelburne, but about \$15,000 will be extended to the next fiscal year to fund an additional planting site, care for trees already planted in Conway and to complete outreach activities and walks at some of the town forests. Three more tree-planting sites will be selected in the Hoosic and Deerfield watersheds over the last two years of the matching federal USFS grant. Meanwhile, proposals are pending for Partnership activities through the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program that would be matched by another USFS grant to the Partnership, this one for \$100,000.

5. Partnership 10-year Plan Updates.

Listening Sessions are coming up on Aug. 24 and Sept. 14. Registration numbers have been low and no one has seen the press release in any of the papers—S. Argetsinger will contact the papers again

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and K. Conlin will list them on Facebook. W. Sanford suggested reaching out to the local NPR stations—WAMC and NE Public Media. H. Art also attended the Heath Fair to speak about the Partnership and said he interacted with many people interested to learn more.

Select Board meetings—L. Hayden and S. Argetsinger will follow up with Hawley and Buckland in the next few days. At the New Ashford Select Board meeting there was a request to include prioritizing invasive species control in the Plan, as well as development of K-12 sustainable forestry programming or curriculum (potentially modeled on the Smith Vocational School Forestry Program). The goal is to meet with Leyden, Windsor, and North Adams (the remaining member towns) in September.

6. Update on Forest Legacy Application.

Lindsay Nystrom (Forest Legacy Program Director, DCR) has informed H. Art that the state has approved the Partnership's application to include the Partnership region in the Forest Legacy Program. The application has been sent on to Washington for further approval. The Forest Legacy Program provides federal grant funding to landowners who wish to protect their environmentally important forestland from conversion to other uses, and it was noted the new federal climate bill includes significant funding for the program

7. Items 8 and 9 on the agenda will be moved to September's agenda due to time constraints.

8. Items not anticipated with 48 hours of the meeting.

Building on past EOR and Executive Committee discussions, B. O'Connor brought forward a potential name change of the Partnership—the EOEEA is hoping to get language into the supplemental budget proposing minor amendments to the enabling legislation that could clarify the Partnership Trust Fund structure, and the name change could be included in this process. While the name of the Route 2 highway may have been chosen as a way to connect Berkshire and Franklin Counties as the Partnership was forming, H. Art noted that the highway does not run through many of the member municipalities. The change would respond to feedback from some local Indigenous Peoples representatives that the "Mohawk Trail" name could be considered cultural appropriation. After brief discussion, those present agreed that a name change would be beneficial to the Partnership moving forward. B. O'Connor moved to support an amendment to the enabling law that would propose changing the name of the Partnership from the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership to "The Woodlands Partnership of Western Massachusetts," or The Woodlands Partnership for short; A. Peteroy seconded. The committee voted 4-0 to approve the name change (those voting in favor included H. Art, K. Conlin, A. Peteroy and B. O'Connor – K. Ross and R. Chandler left before meeting's end). It was agreed that the issue will be put on the September Executive Committee agenda and will be brought to the full Board meeting on October 11 for further discussion and vote.

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9. Approval of Minutes from July 19, 2022 Executive Committee Meeting.

K. Conlin motioned to approve; B. O'Connor seconded. Unanimously approved with no amendments.

10. Public Comment. None.

11. Adjournment. K. Conlin motioned to adjourn, and H. Art seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 am.