

ARROWSIC FISH COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
14 November 2024
ARROWSIC FIREHOUSE AT 6 P.M.

Present:

Commissioners

Karen Robbins, Mike McMahon, Jack Witham, & Angel Braestrup

Member of the Public: Wendy Van Dyke of Arrowsic

Absent: Jeff Pinette

1. **Call to Order:** Karen Robbins called the meeting to order at 6:04
2. **Minutes** A motion to approve 27 June 2024 minutes as read passed unanimously.
3. **Public comment:** Wendy stated that she was there to learn more about the Fish Commission's work. She was told that she would find additional information and historical context on the Commission's website.
4. **The Arrow:** Angel agreed to draft a short article on the 2024 alewife season with a particular emphasis on the Commission's gratitude to all of the many volunteers in time for the 15 November deadline for the Arrow submissions.
5. **Recording Volunteer Hours:** Mike agreed that he would work to create a means by which commissioners and other volunteers could record the hours spent on Fish Commission activities to support funding requests.
6. **Restoring the fish passage through the upper (woodland) marsh.** Progress is being made towards defining the scope of the planning and the use of grant funds.
 - A. Status of DMR grant: The contract for the grant of \$25,000 cash and the \$8,000 in DMR time was signed in early November. Discussions had been underway with three environmental engineering firms about the project—one dropped out due to the unknowns of funding and timing. Karen discussed how much assistance SWCA environmental engineering firm had provided in identifying the opportunity and helping with the completion of the application. The missing element for the hydrodynamic modeling is a topographical survey of the creek from the culvert at 127 west to the edge of the woodland marsh area. Karen promised to email copies of the topo survey bids to those who wanted them, although the survey will be part of the SWCA contract bid rather than a separately let contract.
 - B. Status of NFWF grant: Karen reported that she had asked Angel to reach out to her contacts at NFWF to determine A) when decisions might be made on grant awards (the original announcement was to be November 1; and B)

whether going ahead and starting various contract and other processes on December 1 would adversely affect the grant award or the project support. Angel said that had not yet heard back by the time of the meeting.

7. Review of Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission reports:

- A. 2024 River Herring Stock Assessment—Every four years, a stock assessment of river herring and other migratory prey fish is undertaken. According to the ASFMC report, *“The 2024 River Herring Benchmark Stock Assessment found the coastwide populations of both alewife and blueback herring were depleted relative to historic levels, with the habitat model indicating that overall productivity of all stock-regions for both species is lower than an unfished population in an unaltered landscape. The “depleted” determination was used instead of “overfished” and “overfishing” to indicate factors besides fishing have contributed to the decline, including habitat loss, predation and climate change.”*
- B. River Herring Sustainable Management Plan and Technical Review
Committee decision making: In October, ASFMC adopted the 2024 River Herring Sustainable Fisheries Management Plan.
https://asmfc.org/files/RiverHerringSFMPs/ME_RiverHerringSFMP_2024.pdf
The plan restored commercial harvesting rights to Arrowsic. The Commissioners discussed the potential for the Town of Arrowsic to decide to permit a broader commercial harvest as per the new Management Plan. The consensus was that there is still a lack of data to support reopening the fishery at scale, that the annual one-day community harvest is sufficient, and that the impending restoration plans may affect the population in ways that need to be monitored. It was agreed that further discussion and a decision about the 2025 season would be made at the Commission’s January Meeting.

8. Summer 2024 Activities Summary Report: Karen summarized the pending data following the count of 19,688 fish as previously reported, the fifth highest since counting started in 2007.

Report on the scale samples (and thus the alewife population’s demographics) is due from DMR at the end of January.

Challenges of low water flow for departing juveniles—limited ability to count properly or lethally sample as would normally be done. Karen noted that Nick Stoneman had been down the day after a storm and the juveniles out-migration was plentiful

The Commissioners discussed the continuing gap in understanding when and what triggers juvenile out-migration. For example, out-migration has been observed towards the end of the time the trap is in place early in the season and continuing into November.

Vince Capone an Alewife Project volunteer and Karen took sediment core samples from the pond and stream bottom, noting the presence of grit, organic matter (leaves) with silt over a blue marine clay horizon.

Karen said additional information about the temperature and salinity data captured over the season would be available at the January meeting. She noted that particularly warm days had a remarkably immediate impact on the temperature of the water in the stream and at the river.

Karen reported that Jeff has been discussing the possible fabrication of a new frame for the fish trap and the cost and deliverability had not yet been discussed.

9. Other

- A. As suggested by members present, ideas for the data gaps and other missing information would be collected over the course of the next two months for further discussion in January. Ideas for information needed included the criteria by which one could determine the true carrying capacity of the pond (in response to DMR concerns that too many fish might return); consideration of a timetable for continuing population count data collection that took into consideration the construction period for the fish passage restoration and for five years following completion; any information that seemed appropriate when the DMR 2024 season report is issued; and the potential for less time consuming counting methods. Karen agreed to learn about eDNA methods as they relate to monitoring the young-of-the-year and report back.
- B. Meeting Dates: It was agreed that the 4th Thursday of January through June was appropriate. It was further agreed that the 2nd Thursday of November would be better for all each year. For the calendar year 2025 the dates would be January 23, February 27, March 27, April 24, May 22, June 26 and November 13th. Karen agreed to let the Town know and to ask that the schedule be posted on the website.

10. Adjournment occurred at 7:02 p.m.