

**ARROWSIC FISH COMMISSION
27 FEBRUARY 2025
TOWN HALL @ 6 PM
MINUTES**

PRESENT:

Karen Robbins, Fish Warden
Jack Witham
Angel Braestrup
Jeff Pinette, Deputy Warden

Members of the Public: Wendy Van Dyke; Vince Capone

1. **Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order by Karen Robbins at 6:05 p.m. She reported that Mike McMahon was unable to attend.
2. **Minutes.** The minutes from the 23 January 2025 meeting were reviewed and approved as presented by unanimous consent.
3. **Public Comment.** Wendy Van Dyke and Vince Capone did not have a comment at this time.
4. **Proposed Amendment to the Enabling Ordinance**

The commissioners completed their review of the proposed amendment to the enabling ordinance to allow for alternates to serve on the commission, similar to the roles played by alternates to the Arrowsic Planning Board and Arrowsic Planning Board of Appeals.

By unanimous consent, the Commission approved a resolution to ask Karen to recommend to the Arrowsic Board of Selectmen that Fish Commission's Enabling Ordinance be amended at the annual meeting of the Town.

The new approved new language is as follows (changes from existing **in bold**):

*The Arrowsic Fish Commission shall be made up of five voting members (**commissioners**) and two non-voting alternates appointed by the Board of Selectmen to a renewable three-year term. One of **the five voting members** shall be nominated by the chair of the Arrowsic Conservation Commission as its representative to the Arrowsic Fish Commission. If there are vacancies, three commissioners **and the alternates** may carry out the duties of the Commission, **with any three serving as a quorum for any vote. The Commission shall act by a majority of those present and voting.** The Commissioners shall elect one of their number to be **Chair** who, during a renewable two-year term, will serve as liaison to the Arrowsic Board of Selectmen and ensure that the Commission fulfills its responsibilities. **In the absence of a commissioner, the Chair shall designate an alternate member to act.***

5. Sewall Creek Project Update

Karen reported that SWCA completed their survey and is working on the hydrological modelling. It is hoped that the recommendations will be complete by the next Commission meeting at the end of March.

eDNA: In keeping with ensuring that any work undertaken to improve the stream as a viable run for alewives, additional sampling and testing needs were discussed. Karen briefed everyone on her conversations with Bigelow Lab staff who are working on river herring eDNA assessments. They are willing to test samples collected under their protocols by Arrowsic volunteers.

It was agreed that knowing what vertebrates, fish in particular, were present in Sewall Pond was an important baseline. It was also agreed that knowing what species migratory fish are using the Creek from the Spinney Mill Road culverts to the Route 127 culvert was also important.

By unanimous consent, the Commissioners agreed that additional information would enhance the effectiveness of the design for streambed restoration.

- 1) Karen should move ahead finding out how much a “what vertebrates are present” study of a sample from Sewall Pond would cost, with potential refinements such as determining only what fish are present in Sewall Pond.
- 2) To collecting (and testing) the stream samples for migratory fish (e.g. river herring, eel, smelt, striped bass, and tomcod) at the culvert at 127, at the point at which streamside woodlands become marsh, and at the culverts at Spinney Mill Road in April and again in late summer or early fall.
- 3) Approving the expenditure of the balance of the Arrowsic Fish Commission budget (\$475) in pursuit of eDNA knowledge.

It was also noted that the Designated Alewife Account has a balance of \$8706.14.

6. Alewife Count Report 2024 and Alewife Season 2025 Updates

Angel reported that the announcement of the Annual Alewife Harvest on May 10 had been sent to the Arrow in time for publication. Karen reported that the permit for the count was in hand, although the formal letter permitting the harvest would not be forthcoming until the new head of DMR is seated.

The Commissioners discussed the DMR report on the 2024 alewife scale samples collected by fish count volunteers. According to DMR: *A total of 199 scales were submitted in 2024. A subsample of 120 scales were selected from the scales samples that are representative of the season.* The full report will be posted on the Arrowsic Fish Commission website.

Carrying Capacity: At this point, the Commissioners had a preliminary discussion about a study Karen had shared just before the meeting. It was published by the American Fisheries Society in 2020. Titled *Feeling the Squeeze: Adult Run Size and Habitat Availability Limit Juvenile River Herring Densities in Lakes* and written by Matt Devine et. al, the study suggests that when body of water reaches a density of 1000 adult fish per hectare (ha), the productivity of juveniles peaks. Sewall Pond is roughly 47 acres or 19 ha in area.

It was noted that the water quality, temperature, and habitat of the body of water was also important to determine carrying capacity. Karen explained that there are longitudinal records of depth, temperature, clarity, dissolved oxygen and other data. However, dissolved nitrogen and other characteristics might also be worth monitoring. Karen agreed to look into the equipment needs for such data collection.

The Trap: Jeff reported that the current trap will be rebuilt in time for the 2025 season, and that the proposed aluminum frame was unlikely to be part of the 2025 repairs, but would be pursued during the off-season before the 2026 fish count begins.

7. Annual Report of the Commission

Angel agreed to draft the 2024-2025 annual report language for everyone else to review. It was also agreed to table the budget request until more was known about upcoming needs.

8. Other business & adjournment.

The Commissioners agreed to review the Commission's website within the next few days and to report back to Karen about any errors or omissions they spotted.

Angel informed everyone of an upcoming Gulf of Maine Research Institute event premiering a film on the Presumpscot River's alewife recovery project. April 10th from 5:30-7:30 at GMRI in Portland.

The meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 7:30 p.m.