

**General Electric/Housatonic River Natural Resource Restoration
Public Meeting Presenting Round 1 Draft Restoration Plan and
Supplemental Environmental Assessment**

July 9, 2007

Prepared for: Massachusetts SubCouncil
Prepared by: Woodlot Alternatives, Inc.
Location: Lenox Town Hall, Lenox, MA
Time: 5:30 pm – 6:55 pm

Public meeting began at 5:30 pm.

I. Opening Statement by John Lortie, Woodlot Alternatives, Inc., and Introductions

1. Introduction of voting members of Massachusetts SubCouncil (MA SubCouncil):
 - a. Dale Young, Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (State Trustee representative).
 - b. Veronica Varela, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Federal Trustee representative).
2. Introduction of Consultant Team:
John Lortie, Todd Chadwell, and Michael Chelminski, Woodlot Alternatives, Inc.
3. Minutes of prior meeting were not read.

II. Slideshow Presentation Round 1 Draft Restoration Plan and Supplemental Environmental Assessment by Todd Chadwell, Woodlot Alternatives, Inc. (available at <http://www.ma-housatonicrestoration.org/library.htm>)

1. Description of Draft RP/SEA.
2. Summary of Preferred Alternatives.
3. Summary of Non-Selected Project Applications.
4. Review of Round 1 timeline.
5. Description of proposed Round 2 timeline.
6. Announcement that Public Comment on the Draft RP/SEA would be received until July 22, 2007.

III. Questions and Comments from Public

1. Public input during Round 1 has been very important.
2. Public Question about whether elimination of certain public meetings during Round 2 process is feasible. Trustee Response: the only meeting Trustees are proposing to eliminate is on threshold criteria.
3. Public meetings have not been a problem, rather the time between the meetings has been.
4. Public meetings are important for transparency for proposals not passing. For people who didn't pass threshold criteria, the threshold criteria meeting would be important.
5. Threshold criteria results should be posted on the web first, followed by public meeting to allow for feedback.
6. The meeting covering evaluation criteria was valuable, particularly for people who wrote proposals to receive feedback.

7. There is an expectation that Round 2 would begin later than as proposed by Trustees, i.e. within six months to one year after Round 1.
8. The second RFR release should not stall disbursement of funds from Round 1. Trustee Response: the Fall release of Round 1 funds depends on EOEEA's schedule related to contracting associated with Round 1 projects.
9. Sufficient time may not be available for preparing quality applications if Round 2 RFR time period is shortened from 3 to 2 months as proposed.
10. A Second to previous comment – public does not want Round 2 proposals to suffer for lack of sufficient preparation time. Suggestion made to extend application period for more difficult proposals.
11. Public question about whether Round 2 will include different types of proposals. Trustee Response: there is no decision as yet, but Round 2 RFR may focus on two restoration categories, i.e. Wildlife and Aquatic Biological Resources and Habitat, instead of all four.
12. There is concern about focusing on particular restoration categories and Trustees should focus on quality proposals, not categories.
13. Trustees should see this as an opportunity to implement large scale projects with significant impacts.
14. Public Question about whether the trustees liked the depth, quality, and quantity of the proposals received for Round 1 funding. Trustee Response: Trustees would have liked to have seen more Aquatic Biological Resources and Habitat, and Wildlife Resources and Habitat proposals
15. Public Comment regarding surprise that more proposals were not received.
16. Discussion regarding how Trustees could have solicited more proposals. Suggestion from public to invite local groups, such as the Berkshire/Taconic Foundation, to encourage others to submit proposals. Trustees' response to follow-up on increasing awareness and participation by posting grant request on Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT) Website.
17. Amount of work involved in writing proposal was intimidating. Suggestion made to streamline applications and potentially create special categories for smaller projects. Trustee Response: discussion occurred around this in Round 1, but wasn't enacted and a Request for Ideas was made instead. Application process can change, but changing the process requires public review. All proposed changes would need to be reviewed. Trustees will consider a simplified application process.
18. Streamlining proposal evaluation process may not be possible. Trustee Response: a lot was learned about process during Round 1, particularly related to proposal review by multiple parties and coordinating issues. Therefore, Trustees should be able to shorten proposal evaluation process and maintain public involvement and transparency.
19. Trustees should hold a grant proposal writing workshop. In response, the Trustees asked whether small workshops or one-on-one assistance may be perceived as providing an unfair advantage to some projects.
20. The Trustees should keep their message consistent to avoid bias and use same written guidelines for all parties.
21. Different grant proposal writing workshops could be held for simple or complex applications. The Massachusetts Cultural Council conducts

- workshops to educate people, and may provide a good example. Also, the Berkshire Taconic Foundation could potentially assist in conducting grant writing workshops.
22. Conservation Commissions may not be able to complete the application process; some people may have been scared away by the complexity of the application process. Suggested that people be encouraged and contact successful applicants for help.
 23. More people may apply in Round 2 because of numbers of applicants that were successful in Round 1.
 24. There may be more people for Lake and Pond Associations applying in Round 2 due to increased awareness of funding availability.
 25. Permanence of projects should be considered. Some projects funded in Round 1 (i.e., Environmental Education and Outreach) may not see results until 10 to 20 years out. Suggested that there should be a focus on land acquisition and habitat restoration/enhancement.
 26. Work on wetlands presents hurdles due to permitting; therefore it would be beneficial to provide ideas of projects that Trustees are looking for. Response that a Project Idea could be used to handle projects with permitting requirements if the applicant is not prepared to undertake the permitting process alone.
 27. Public was surprised there weren't more restoration and acquisition projects proposed and funded because land acquisition is considered valuable.
 28. An individual expressed dismay that \$450,000 is being proposed for searching for improved access on the Housatonic River (Re Project No. 8 - Proposal to Provide Enhanced Public Access to the Housatonic River in Massachusetts). Further comment that this information already exists. Response: Trustees suggested that commenter submit more detail regarding development of existing information.
 29. The Lee River Walk should be funded.
 30. Public Question about whether proposals not selected for Round 1 funding would be eligible in Round 2. Trustee Response was "yes."
 31. If non-selected proposals from Round 1 are eligible in Round 2, then extending the period between funding rounds makes sense for projects that feed off of one another.
 32. Public Question regarding any news on PEDDA (Pittsfield Economic Development Authority) money. Trustee Response: no net revenue has been generated yet, but Trustees are following process.
 33. Public Question if PEDDA money includes CT. Trustee Response was "not sure."
 34. Public Question of when Round 3 will start. Response was not until Rest of River (ROR) cleanup is determined. According the schedule issued in the Restoration Project Selection Procedure, Round 3 may begin in approximately 2009.
 35. Public Question of how funds will be distributed. Response that funds will be distributed through the EOEEA process for reimbursement. Reimbursement may be in quarterly installments or after certain milestones.
 36. Public Question of when fund disbursement will be initiated. Response that funds will be disbursed upon contract execution.
 37. Public Question about if a match occurs could match funds be utilized prior to 6-month

period before project commencement. Trustee Response was “yes.”

38. Public Question whether the project match period will be stretched out. Trustee Response: match requirements need to be clarified by Trustees.
39. Public Question about submitting receipts for work performed as match. Trustee Response: match requirements need to be clarified by Trustees and information will be posted on the web site.
40. Public Question about Round 1 funding to start in October and if all projects will be funded at once. Trustee Response: this depends on the contracting complexity. Some contracts will take longer to negotiate. Anticipated that some projects will receive funding prior to others.
41. Public Comment to support Berkshire Conservation Agent Project (Project No. 13) and City of Pittsfield projects (Project Nos. 7 and 15).

Meeting adjourned at 6:55 pm.