

## Draft Meeting Minutes

### General Electric/Housatonic River Natural Resource Restoration MA SubCouncil Public Meeting

November 1, 2005

**Prepared for:** Massachusetts SubCouncil  
**Prepared by:** Woodlot Alternatives, Inc.  
**Location:** Lenox, Massachusetts (Lenox Town Hall)  
**Time:** 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

*Public meeting began at 5:40 pm.*

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

1. Purpose of the meeting is to provide an update on the project status and the impending release of the Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment (Draft PEA).
2. Introduction of Massachusetts SubCouncil (MA SubCouncil):
  - a. Dale Young, Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA [State Trustee])
  - b. Veronica Varela, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS [Federal Trustee])
  - c. Rachel Fletcher, currently of Housatonic River Restoration (ex officio member)
  - d. Tim Gray, currently of Housatonic River Initiative (ex officio member)
3. Introduction of Consultant Team:
  - a. John Lortie, Stephanie Lindloff, Todd Chadwell, and Michael Chelminski, Woodlot Alternatives, Inc.
4. Personal introductions by members of the public (see attached attendance list).
5. Brief project history describing the release of contaminants into the Housatonic River from the General Electric Company's facilities in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the \$15M Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) settlement, and the partitioning of the settlement between Connecticut and Massachusetts.
6. The responsibilities of the Natural Resource Damage Trustees for distributing the NRDA settlement funds.
7. Project documents released to date: Restoration Planning Strategy, Restoration Project Selection Procedure.

#### **II. Presentation of Project Schedule**

1. Discussion of May 11, 2005, public meeting in Lee, Massachusetts
2. Presentation by Stephanie Lindloff using a slide show describing the anticipated process and schedule for release of the Draft PEA.

3. Veronica Varela described the Federal process and schedule for submission of the Draft PEA to the Federal Register. The Draft PEA was submitted by the regional office of the USFWS on October 18, 2005, with publication in the Federal Register to follow.
4. John Lortie noted that the project solicitation would follow the publication of the Draft PEA by 1 to 3 weeks.

### **III. Discussion of Public Input Process.**

1. Public question regarding the Berkshire Citizens Review Committee's review of project proposals. Response that comments submitted by the Citizens Review Committee will be considered as public comment.
2. John Lortie described the need to streamline the process to provide for timely allocation of funds for project implementation.
3. Public question on the due date for public comments on project proposals. Response that public comments are due within four-months following the proposal submittal deadline.
4. Public question on whether public comments are attributable to the commenter? Response that public comments are attributable.
5. Public question on when MA SubCouncil reviews will be available to the public. Response that reviews will be available to the public when they are completed for Threshold Criteria, Applications, and Preferred Alternatives
6. Stephanie Lindloff noted that members of the MA SubCouncil's review team would not be personally identified.
7. Public question on whether budget information in project submittals will be made public. Response that this information would be made public<sup>1</sup>.
8. Public question on whether and how ideas for projects could be implemented and funded. Dale Young responded that ideas would be submitted in response to the Requests For Ideas section of the project solicitation. A variety of funding methods might be used, and that money could be set-aside in anticipation of funding the development and implementation of project ideas.
9. Public comment that the MA SubCouncil has been responsive to socio-economic concerns.
10. Public question on whether project funds would be supplied as disbursements or reimbursements. Response that funds would be supplied as reimbursements.
11. Public question on whether the MA SubCouncil is concerned that there will be too few applications, and whether the MA SubCouncil should cultivate potential applicants such as schools, colleges, and municipalities. John Lortie responded that this is a concern. Stephanie Lindloff responded that the amount of funding available in each funding round is flexible, and that outreach to potential applicants could occur during future funding rounds to increase participation.
12. Public question from a landowner along the Housatonic River on what types of projects are anticipated by the MA SubCouncil. Response from John Lortie that a broad range of projects are anticipated.
13. Public question on whether land acquisition projects would need to be in the development phase prior to the first funding round, as it may not be possible to provide required materials within the 90-day solicitation period. John Lortie responded that the appraisal required for land acquisition projects is relatively straightforward. Dale Young

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<sup>1</sup> Land appraisal costs may not be publicly available. This will be determined in accordance with land acquisition procedures applied by EOEAA.

- responded that the requirements for land acquisition projects are still being refined by the MA SubCouncil.
14. Rachel Fletcher noted that the MA SubCouncil is looking for a suite of projects, as described in the project documents released to date.
  15. Public question on whether a single entity can submit applications for multiple projects. Response from MA SubCouncil that multiple applications could be submitted, and if multiple projects are “bundled” into a single project application, the MA SubCouncil may not be able to select for funding distinct projects within a bundled application.
  16. Rachel Fletcher asked whether projects could be done on private land. MA SubCouncil’s response was yes.
  17. Public question on whether there is a minimum amount for requested funding. Response that there is no minimum amount for requested funding.
  18. Public question on the distribution of solicitation round funding for different project types, and how this is accounted for in the project scoring. Stephanie Lindloff responded that the objective of the MA SubCouncil is to fund a variety of project types.
  19. Public question on project selection criteria for partnering and use of matching funds. MA SubCouncil responded that partnering and matching funds are considered in the selection criteria, and that at least two of the selection criteria address these factors.
  20. Public question on whether all of the NRDA money would be spent after the final round of funding. Response that this is the goal of the MA SubCouncil. Tim Gray noted that the NRD settlement included a provision for possible future funding from the Pittsfield Economic Development Authority, and that this could result in the availability of additional funds and funding rounds in the future.
  21. Public question on who will administer projects. Dale Young responded that EOEA would administer majority of projects.
  22. Public question on whether overhead costs could be funded as part of project costs. Response that overhead costs would need to be explained in the project budget, and must be directly related to the specific project.
  23. Public comments that the application process could be expensive, and the costs of attending meetings prior to the selection of projects could be expensive. Question whether costs for attendance at meetings could be included in the project cost.
  24. Public question on whether there will be feedback to the public on projects that are not selected. Response that evaluation summaries will be made public.
  25. Rachel Fletcher discussed state procurement requirements and how they apply to the project application and selection process.
  26. Public comment that the anticipated funding of the first round of project during the winter of 2007 would coincide with the application process for the second round of funding.
  27. Public question regarding the baseline for restoration projects. Veronica Varela responded that the objective is to restore to conditions that would exist if impacts had not occurred.
  28. Tim Gray noted that restoration goals for the Rest Of River reach of the Housatonic River are ongoing.

***Meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.***