

# Housatonic River Commission

*“to coordinate on a regional basis the local management and protection of the Housatonic River Valley in northwestern Connecticut”*



## Minutes of the January 13, 2026 Meeting (subject to approval at the next meeting) HRC Office, West Cornwall, and via Google Meet

Christian Allyn – North Canaan – A  
Jack Anstine – North Canaan – A  
TBD – Canaan (Falls Village) –  
Mark Gozonsky – Canaan (Falls Village)– P  
Robin Sweeney – Salisbury – P  
Stacie Weiner – Salisbury – P  
Jim Saunders, Secretary – Sharon – P  
(Acronyms listed on the last page)

William R. Tingley, Vice-chair – Sharon – P  
Phil Hart – Cornwall – A  
TBD – Cornwall –  
Jesse Klingebiel, Chair – Kent – P  
Michael Benjamin – Kent – P  
Marc Andreotto, Treasurer – New Milford – A  
Robert Gambino – New Milford – A

Also present: Madeline Scherff, HRC Project Manager; Jackie Dias, NPS; Rob Phillips and Sarah Better, NHCOC; Mike Jastremski, HVA; and Drew Ransom, CT DEEP.

**Mr. Klingebiel called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.**

**The RIO 2025 Presentation** was moved to the top of the agenda.

Mr. Jastremski thanked the HRC for their support of the RIO program, which involves seasonal river stewards recording river use and speaking with visitors at access sites. 2025 was an interesting year, with high usage and some closures (due to safety concerns) at the end of the season. Closures at one site can spike overuse at others. From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. every weekend, across nine sites, they conducted over 400 site assessments, recording how visitors are using the river and where they are from. There was a discussion about how to alleviate crowding and steer people to safer locations.

Mr. Jastremski also reported that there was more trash than usual, and a suggestion was made to install a dumpster at North Kent Road to alleviate that, although it was suggested that it would be preferable to have a policy like “you bring it in, you take it out,” common at parks and campsites.

Mr. Klingebiel met with the Kent selectmen and was told that the town has jurisdiction only over the road, and anything off the road (parking, site use) requires state permission, which has been difficult to obtain. Could the number of cars be limited? Mr. Jastremski confirmed that formal no-parking signs were posted, leading to fewer cars on one side of the road, but stressed the need for enforcement and issuing tickets to make the capacity limits effective.

Mr. Gozonsky asked what can be done if we want to engage people in the joys and pleasures and wildness of the river? Ms. Scherff said a key is to continue leveraging HRC resources and promoting sustainable access sites.

HRC complimented HVA on its initiation and ongoing management of the RIO program.

**Minutes Ms. Francisco made corrections to the titles of commissioners in minutes from July through October, 2025: William R. Tingley, from Chair to Vice-chair; Phil Hart, from Vice-chair to Chair; Barton Jones, from Secretary to Vice-chair; Jesse Klingebiel, from Secretary to Chair.**

**The December 9, 2025 Meeting minutes were approved as written.**

### **Treasurer and NHCOC Financial Reports**

Ms. Scherff reported on behalf of Marc Andreotto that the W&S account balance is \$59,321.56, and the NHCOC-HRC subaccount balance is \$7,743.72.

**Mr. Klingebiel moved that the following invoice be paid for the Invoice Period 12/2/2025-12/31/2025**

| <b>Date</b>       | <b>Budget Line</b>                | <b>Invoice #</b> | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Check Mailed To</b> | <b>Amount</b>   |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| 12/31             | Organizational Development (FY25) | 377              | Susan's December Hrs | Susan Francisco        | \$172.50        |
| <b>NPS BUDGET</b> |                                   |                  |                      |                        | <b>\$172.50</b> |

**The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

**Communications**

- Mr. Tingley will meet with DEEP representatives at the end of the week to discuss speedboats.
- Mr. Saunders got a letter from Janell Mullen, a town planning consultant, who wants to discuss Sharon's updated plan of conservation and development. She will be invited to a future meeting.
- Mr. Saunders contacts the Department of Transportation every day regarding the placement of signs to no avail. Ms. Dias and Mr. Ransom will reach out to contacts.
- Mr. Saunders learned that septic system work, being a public health issue, doesn't require HRC review.

**Subcommittee Reports**

Communications and Outreach - A suggestion was made to increase notices and links on the HRC website to relevant issues in the seven towns, such as invasive species management and conservation easements.

**River Use and Access**

- Ruggles Landing - Due to his new role as First Selectman, Jesse Bunce stepped down from his lead role in Friends of Ruggles Landing. Tim Abbott is now heading the group, with Selectman Brian Ohler agreeing to join as Canaan town representative. Mr. Ransom has been reaching out and stated that the Friends and the Town of North Canaan must reach an agreement on maintenance and operating commitments before the state proceeds.
- HELCO Field - The Town of Sharon must consider all aspects of assuming responsibility for the site (including upkeep and maintenance). Mr. Tingley said that one of the big questions is how much property is needed and needs to be licensed. Might it be managed more as a park rather than just a river access facility?
- Mr. Saunders noted a location just north of HVRHS, beyond the tennis courts, at a bend in the river, as a possible access point.

**Steering Mr. Tingley moved that the NHCOC MOU (Memorandum of Agreement and understanding for the Protection and Management of the Housatonic River) be approved. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

- 2026-2027 Budget - a rough outline of the Work Plan will be drafted for Steering Committee review.
- Ms. Dias said that the overarching proposed plan is to increase funding for the river to bring it to the same level as the other rivers. HRC could potentially plan for \$210K, since the Senate passed the NPS budget. The option of increasing the NHCOC deminimus from 10% to 15% is on the table. Ms. Better and Mr. Phillips will be discussing this later this week.

## **HRC Member Updates**

Canaan - Mr. Saunders visited the land lab site by the high school. The Town of Canaan has contributed to clearing the land. A rain garden has been created. Water monitoring is planned.

Cornwall - Ms. Dias reported on the wastewater situation in West Cornwall. They are still figuring out how many people (properties) will sign up. A meeting with DEEP regarding pre-application is scheduled for next week, along with a consultation with fisheries.

NPS - Work Plan development should be done by the end of the month. The Cooperative Agreement will need to be renewed by April 2028.

DEEP - Mr. Ransom reported that smallmouth bass fishing on the Housatonic from the Massachusetts Border to the Bleacher Dam is now catch-and-release only. Macedonia Brook State Park is now designated as a trout park, limiting the catch to two fish per person.

**Mutual Concerns** Ways to encourage and increase commissioner attendance and involvement were explored, that might include assignments or incentives. Ms. Dias will share job descriptions and onboarding documents that are used by other Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers.

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 p.m.**

Recording Secretary,



Susan Francisco

CCC – Citizens Coordinating Council  
CCT – Cornwall Conservation Trust  
DEEP – Department of Energy and  
Environmental Protection  
DOT – Department of Transportation  
EnCon – Connecticut Environmental  
Conservation Police  
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency

FERC - Federal Energy Regulatory  
Commission  
GE – General Electric  
HMSP – Housatonic Meadows State Park  
HRC – Housatonic River Commission  
HVA – Housatonic Valley Association  
HVRHS – Housatonic Valley Regional High  
School

JKW – Japanese Knotweed  
NCD – Northwest Conservation District  
NHCOG – Northwest Hills Council of  
Governments  
NPS – National Park Service  
RIO - River Information and Outreach

**Next regular meeting – February 10, 2026**