

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 March 10, 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

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

Also present: Madeline Scherff, HRC Project Manager; Jackie Dias, NPS; Rob Phillips and Sarah Better, NHCOC; Drew Ransom, CT DEEP; Julia Rogbers, HVA; Gabriela de la Vega and Nikko Sedgwick, Salisbury zoning permit applicants; and Aarron Wagstaff, rep for permit applicants.

Mr. Klingebiel called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The February 10, 2026 Meeting Minutes were approved with the following correction: under Brian Wood's comments regarding potential closure periods for Fisherman's Parking Lot in New Milford - DEEP Fisheries has been consulted and is supportive.

Treasurer's Financial Reports

Mr. Andreotto reported a W&S account balance (remaining balance of FY2024–2025 funding) of \$24,778.69, and a NHCOC-HRC subaccount balance of \$7,743.72.

Mr. Andreotto and NHCOC have agreed that going forward, the dues/budget request will go out in July, with invoices to towns following in December, keeping these two processes separate to reduce confusion.

Mr. Benjamin moved that the following invoice be paid for the Invoice Period 2/1/2026–3/3/2026: Susan's February hrs—Susan Francisco—\$187.50

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Communications

Ms. Scherff reported that she has caught up on forms submitted through the website. Members were asked to alert Ms. Scherff if they hear from constituents who contacted HRC but received no response.

Mr. Saunders shared an interesting program involving schoolchildren, Trout Unlimited, and CT DEEP to help raise fish and release them into waterways. He will reach out to Trout Unlimited to explore the possibilities of a similar program being developed on the Housatonic.

Zoning Permit Application

Solar Panel installation—Housatonic River Road, Salisbury

The plan is for ground-mounted solar panels on the side of the property, in a cleared field/meadow area. No tree clearing is required. Battery storage equipment will be located at the side of the home. The property is surrounded by a privacy fence and mature plantings.

The installation is not near the Housatonic and is a small system consistent with similar projects on other Wild and Scenic rivers. Ms. Dias confirmed review of the project under her Wild and Scenic oversight role and had no concerns.

Ms. Scherff will draft a letter to the Salisbury Zoning Board indicating HRC has reviewed the application and has no objections.

Subcommittee Reports

Communications and Outreach

Mr. Gozonsky spoke about a pitch to the *Lakeville Journal* for a series tentatively titled "Life on the Housatonic," in which he would explore the river through personal experience and write about it for a general audience. The intent is to raise awareness of the river as a local resource. It was noted that any articles should reflect Mr. Gozonsky's personal perspective as a Falls Village commissioner and not purport to speak for the Commission officially.

Resource Protection

Ms. Scherff and Ms. Sweeney met with the owner of a Salisbury parcel previously reviewed by HRC (house construction). The owner has engaged a consulting forester and is interested in working with HRC to develop a plan for sustainable vegetation management using the forester's suggestions. Ms. Scherff would like to use the project as a pilot for HRC's emerging program to incentivize private landowners within the Wild and Scenic stretch to adopt sustainable land management practices. She would like to expand this kind of individual property-level outreach in partnership with town commissioners.

River Use and Access

- Ruggles Landing - Mr. Tingley was optimistic that movement is in the works and Mr. Ramson reported that the demolition of the building at Ruggles Landing remains in the state's queue, with no confirmed timeline. North Canaan may vote on a formal agreement with the state at a May or June town meeting.

- HELCO Field - Mr. Tingley is in discussion with the Sharon first selectman and may have an update for the April meeting.

Steering

Nominating Committee

Mr. Benjamin has agreed to serve as chair of the three-person Nominating Committee. Mr. Gozonsky agreed to serve, and Mr. Benjamin will recruit one more.

Amendment to Officer Election Cycle

The Steering Committee discussed a potential amendment to the Commission's Rules of Procedure to change officer elections from annual to biennial (every two years), with a maximum of two consecutive terms (four years total).

Community Grant Application – Invasive Removal and Riverbank Restoration near Boardman Bridge

The project proposes removing invasive species and brush from a site near the Boardman Bridge in New Milford. A portion of the proposed work area is south of Boardman Bridge and thus partially outside the official Wild and Scenic designation boundary.

Ms. Dias said that, given the work is immediately adjacent to the designation and HRC is now in year four of federal funding, she does not see a basis for disqualifying the project on

geographic grounds and confirmed the expenditure would be allowable under federal cost principles.

However, members raised concerns about the riverbank stabilization component of the proposal:

The application references "establishment of native vegetation and improvement of riverbank stability," but does not specify methodology. Commissioners and Ms. Dias expressed concern that hardening the bank (e.g., stone or riprap) would be undesirable. Members requested a planting list, a description of stabilization methods, and a timeline for the restoration phase following initial invasive removal. Ms. Sweeney noted that the application lacks documentation of existing habitat (birds, fish, turtles, etc.), which should be considered before disturbance.

The project is noted to have a start date of April 1. The Commission will vote on the application pending receipt of additional information.

Riverfront Community Grant Update (Phase 1 Completion)

Ms. Scherff summarized a letter received from the Riverfront project grantee, indicating the grantee is nearing completion of the conceptual design plan (Phase 1) and will share the plan and a final update with HRC upon completion. The organization expressed interest in applying for HRC community grant funding for Phase 2 and was encouraged to do so.

HRC Member Updates

Canaan - Coulter Rule has been appointed as the new alternate Canaan commissioner.

Cornwall - Wastewater Treatment Facility Update

The town has narrowed its contractor pool to one and continues to work with that contractor and state agencies. The facility will be located on a property adjacent to the post office in Cornwall, at an annual lease (officially signed) cost of approximately \$95,000.

A public vote on the final design will be held once the plans are approved by the DEEP Water Quality Division. Ms. Dias noted she will be included in future project meetings. Estimated discharge flow rates have been submitted to DEEP Water Quality for review; DEEP will then issue design limits.

Kent - Trout Unlimited is working with HVA on potential habitat restoration on Macedonia Brook.

NHCOG - Sarah Better reported that the last \$37,000 of the old funding has been spent down from ASAP (Automated Standard Applications for Payment), so they are now operating on the October 2024 federal funds.

NPS

- FirstLight - Ms. Dias met with the NPS solicitor regarding FirstLight's obligations under the Wild and Scenic designation. FirstLight's Shoreline Management Plan, though updated last year, contains no reference to the Wild and Scenic designation, and is under review. The solicitor is providing guidance on how to engage FirstLight more constructively as a project partner.

- Gaylordsville Stone Dumping - Ms. Dias reported that the Army Corps contact assigned to the stone-dumping issue has retired. She is reaching out to determine whether the matter will be reassigned. She also noted that the issue may be actionable through DEEP's Water Quality Division, as stones that appear clean may still carry contaminants.

CT DEEP - Mr. Ransom reported that the riverwide angler survey was launched the previous day, as snow conditions had finally receded enough for field work. Anglers encountered on the river may be approached by DEEP staff as part of the survey.

HVA - Julia Rogers, HVA Conservation Programs Director, reported on current HVA activities:

- Environmental Education Coordinator Hiring - HVA received over 75 applications. First- and second-round interviews were conducted, and the new coordinator will be introduced to HRC at the April meeting.

- River Information & Outreach (RIO) Program - HVA is hiring four summer interns to staff the RIO program. Forty applications were received; eight interviews will be conducted next week. Interns work in teams of two and cover river access sites from Falls Village to New Milford on weekend days. In addition to the RIO program, interns will conduct streamwalks in the Bantam River watershed, water quality monitoring in the Twin Lakes watershed, and other work with land conservation partners in Northwest Connecticut.

- Macedonia Brook Habitat Restoration - HVA does not yet have full plans for the Macedonia Brook project.

Mutual Concerns

- Consider amending the Rules of Procedure regarding the officer election cycle.
- Expect a zoning application for a pool installation at a property on Housatonic Road in Salisbury
- Community Grant application for Boardman Bridge area in New Milford needs additional information.
- Get update on Ruggles Landing from Tim Abbott.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 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
HMSF – 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 – April 14, 2026