



Chicopee-Ware-Quaboag-Swift

4 RIVERS

One River System Initial Gatherings

January 28, 2015

In 2014 a number of gatherings were held that began discussions on forming a fresh effort to launch a group to serve the stewardship needs of the Four Rivers, which comprise the Chicopee River Basin. I would like to share with you notes from these gatherings.

Six gatherings were held (Ludlow, Gilbertville/Hardwick, W Brookfield, Belchertown, and Three Rivers/Palmer at which over 50 people attended in total. W Brookfield and the field walk in July had the strongest turnouts. Many came to get a sense of what this effort was about, but others came as they felt there were things that can be done to help people better appreciate this watershed. I also received many emails from folks who regretted that they could not make a given night, but did want to participate in efforts as we progress. This seems to be a clear indicator that people in the region wish to have a watershed group acting on behalf of river stewardship.

Here are notes on main items discussed:

- Need for improved river access
- Paddling trails (Blue Trails)
- Walking paths along rivers
- Need for clean ups
- More people need to see the rivers
- Some interest in water quality monitoring

Folks who attended these gatherings all voiced an interest in looking into options for improved access locations. From this “Blue Trails” or walking trails were discussed as a way to connect more people to the rivers. There is a concept for a water trail on the Quaboag from E Brookfield to Warren that could be a good first effort.

Less time was placed on reviewing formal organizing considerations, but it was suggested that perhaps CRWC or some non-profit organization could assist with 501c3 non-profit fiscal agent support. This would help our effort seek funding and grants to carry out projects as we organize.

We have not settled on an official name yet, we are still using a blend of the former Chicopee River Watershed Council and the Four Rivers moniker. *A name which people can relate to across the region will be useful to adopt as we progress.*

Next steps:

Opportunities

1. We have an opportunity to partner with PVPC on a water quality study regarding stormwater along the lower Chicopee River in the summer of 2015
2. We can initiate a stream temperature study in partnership with a North East climate change monitoring project
3. We can also partner on a potential stream restoration project on Abbey Brook in Springfield/Chicopee with the US Fish & Wildlife Conte Refuge

Trails & access

1. Identify potential Blue Trails - paddling stretches along the 4 Rivers
 - a. Create trail vision/concepts
2. Organize local access teams to identify potential river access points
3. Identify access point land owners (best to use public sites)
4. Create list of natural & historical points of interest along the trails
5. Create Trail Map draft
6. Recon paddle(s)
7. Consider water quality monitoring needs along the trail
8. Use winter/spring to advance and firm up the trail concepts

This approach could be similar for land trails, though there is more need to deal with land ownership and access permissions. Perhaps this effort could team up with local land trusts.

Water Quality

1. Identify WQ monitoring needs in the watershed
2. Identify river clean up needs (possible "Earth Day" events)
3. Stormwater, NPS, POTW issues

Organization

1. Identify funding needs
2. Investigate non profit status and assistance
3. Group name, mission, formal structure & organization

Please contact me where you wish to help on these steps. I see small teams beginning on these items through the late winter and laying some groundwork. We can then plan to organize our formal watershed group to move plans forward. It would be great to bring this to life in 2015; with perseverance and patience we can make this happen.

Keith Davies chicopeewatershed@gmail.com