

**BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENT
CONFERENCE REPORT**

Final

SUBJECT: NHDOT Monthly Natural Resource Agency Coordination Meeting

DATE OF CONFERENCE: March 15, 2023

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: Virtual meeting held via Zoom

ATTENDED BY:

NHDOT

Matt Urban
Andrew O’Sullivan
Jon Evans
Mark Hemmerlein
Leah Savage
Rebecca Martin

ACOE

Mike Hicks

USCG

Absent

EPA

Jean Brochi

NHDES

Karl Benedict
Mary Ann Tilton

NHB

Ashley Litwinenko

NH Fish & Game

Mike Dionne
Kevin Newton

Federal Highway

Jamie Sikora

US Fish & Wildlife

Absent

The Nature Conservancy

Absent

**NH Transportation &
Wildlife Workgroup**

Absent

**Consultants/ Public
Participants**

Samuel Cheney
Lee Carbonneau
Joel Detty
Linda Greer
Amy Sanders
Kristen Clarke
Ben Lundsted
Caleb Dobbins
Anna Giraldi
Jim Bouchard

PRESENTATIONS/ PROJECTS REVIEWED THIS MONTH: *(minutes on subsequent pages)*

[Table of Contents](#)

Finalize Meeting Minutes.....2
Richmond, 29055 (Non-Fed):2
Manchester RAISE Project (Fed Number TBD):.....3

Finalize Meeting Minutes

Finalized and approved the February 15, 2023 meeting minutes.

Richmond, 29055 (Non-Fed):

Samuel Cheney, Quantum Construction Consultants, LLC, (QCC) began by continuing the discussion from the previous NHDOT Natural Resource Agency Coordination meeting that occurred on April 21, 2021. The project was in the Engineering Study phase at the time, and a proposed bridge superstructure alternative had not been selected yet. The NHDES at the time requested the project be re-presented at a subsequent meeting, once the project was further along in design and the plans had been more developed.

QCC presented the latest progress set of the draft preliminary design plans. Sam identified the proposed bridge alternative, which is a 57' span (49' hydraulic span) steel girder bridge with a cast-in-place concrete deck founded on cantilevered concrete abutments with concrete spread footings. Riprap is required along the streambanks to protect the proposed bridge structure from scour. Sam highlighted the proposed limits of riprap on the bridge plan, then shared a section view of the bridge depicting the proposed wildlife shelf. A 2' wide wildlife shelf with 2:1 side slopes will be constructed within the stream channel to improve organism passage through the bridge crossing. The wildlife shelf will have natural streambed material on top and intermingled with the riprap. Sam shared site photographs of the existing streambanks and stream channel, noting the abundance of rocks along the banks and within the channel.

Jim Bouchard, QCC explained that High Performance Turf Reinforced Matting (HPTRM) will be used for slope stabilization to limit the amount of riprap required. The HPTRM locks the soil in place while allowing the underlying vegetation to grow up through the gaps. The HPTRM will be buried and not exposed. Sam added that the HPTRM will be used above the 2-year flood elevation. Jim stated that due to shallow ledge and the abundance of rocky soil on site, spread footings were selected as the preferred substructure alternative over piles.

At this point in the meeting, QCC concluded their presentation and asked if there were any questions or comments.

Karl Benedict of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) stated that he appreciates the inclusion of the wildlife shelf, and that he has no further comments relative to stream bed impacts or wildlife impacts. He requested that QCC implement a planting/restoration sequence for areas disturbed as a result of the access road, and for areas supporting vegetation along the upper banks of the stream. Karl said stabilization of the upper bank and plantings along the streambanks and within areas disturbed as a result of the access road must conform with the requirements of Env-Wt 520 Forestry Rules. Jim noted that the temporary roadway is an onsite detour road for maintenance of traffic. QCC will prepare a planting/revegetation plan for the project. Karl requested that selected plantings be natural looking, and provide shade over the stream; proposed plantings should replicate existing conditions to the extent practicable.

Mike Dionne of the New Hampshire Fish & Game (NHF&G) stated that similar to Karl, he'd like to see the area within the temporary detour road and bridge restored following completion of construction. Other than that, he did not have any comments relative to the project presentation.

Kevin Newton of the NHF&G stated that he appreciated the inclusion of the wildlife shelf for aquatic/reptilian organism passage. He said the inclusion of the natural streambed material on top and intermingled with the riprap was also appreciated. Kevin did not have any additional comments relative to the project presentation.

Michael Hicks of the Army Corp. of Engineers (ACOE) asked if the project was classified as a major or minor impact project. Jim replied that QCC was preparing an NHDES Standard Dredge & Fill Permit Application under the "major impact" classification. Karl clarified that the project would be classified as major, due to the project impacting a Tier 3 or higher stream. Michael asked if QCC has contacted SHPO to discuss potential impacts to historical resources. QCC coordinated with the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources and NHDOT Cultural Resources, and it was determined that there would be no adverse historical/archaeological impacts associated with the proposed project.

Jeannie Brochi of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) had no comments relative to the project presentation.

Ashley Litiwinko of the New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau (NHNHB) had no comments relative to the project presentation, but noted that appropriate erosion and sediment control should be implemented during construction based on the findings of the project's NHB DataCheck Letter. Ashley stated that as long as appropriate erosion and sediment controls are implemented during construction, NHB has no additional comments and no further coordination is required.

This project has been previously discussed at the April 21, 2021 Monthly NHDOT Natural Resource Agency Coordination Meeting.

Manchester RAISE Project (Fed Number TBD):

Linda Greer from Fuss & O'Neill introduced herself as the Project Manager for the RAISE Manchester, Connecting Communities Project for the City of Manchester and briefly presented the project, which has been before the agencies previously (on September 21, 2022). Also present were Lee Carbonneau of Normandeau Associates, Kristen Clarke and Caleb Dobbins, City of Manchester Department of Public Works; and Ben Lundsted and Rebecca Balke, City of Manchester EPD.

Component A – The South Commercial Street Extension, bridge over the CSX railroad and connection to Gas Street.

Component B –The South Willow and Queen City Ave. existing ramp style intersection is replaced with a peanut shaped roundabout.

Component C –The Gas Street Extension and Active Transportation Corridor (multi-use trail) which connects the South Commercial Extension to Willow Street and includes the Active Transportation Corridor (bike/pedestrian path) in the abandoned rail corridor.

Component D – The pedestrian bridge over Granite Street at Commercial Street.

After reviewing the four project elements and their locations, the environmental updates were presented. Soil mapping and geotechnical investigations have been completed. Contaminated groundwater, including PFAS, is present near the proposed peanut roundabout. Other contaminants include heavy metals, pesticides, PAHs and metals in soil as one would expect in an urban area.

Normandeau botanists identified the Virginia stickseed (*Hackelia virginiana*), a state threatened plant, within element C - the proposed Active Transportation Corridor. This plant grows on the slopes above the wetland and is not a wetland plant. The project is likely to impact three or four of the six locations where the plant was observed. NHNHB has requested that an additional survey be conducted during the growing season to ensure complete information regarding the plant population. The northern long-eared bat has also reappeared on the IPaC consultation tool for Manchester, so coordination with USFWS will continue. Gateway Park, a public recreation property within Element D, is a Section 4(f) resource, as are several historical resources in the project area. Gateway Park is also potentially a 6(f) property, which is being confirmed with NH DNCR and NPS. The deed for this City-owned property was reviewed and the proposed use as an anchor for one end of the pedestrian bridge to gain elevation an acceptable use.

Wetland 1 is in Project Element A, shown on the aerial photo, along with the proposed extension of S. Commercial Street and its connection to Gas Street. This is the location of a box culvert that carries flow under the active railroad west to the Merrimack River. The culvert is plugged with stone, possibly from the 2006 Mother's Day storm, and causes water to back up and flood the area of Wetland 1 and other street locations in the City. The City is working with CSX to replace this culvert ahead of the RAISE project construction, but the RAISE project will determine the size and location of the new culvert. Wetland 1 has early successional vegetation, many invasive species, and is in a disturbed area.

Wetland 2 is in Element C and shown on two photos. The existing rail corridor is channel shaped and collects offsite stormwater and funnels it north and into an intermittent channel to the closed drainage system at the Elm Street bridge. The proposed trail will have drainage ditches on either side to collect surface drainage, and direct it to the drainage system, but at a different location. All flow will continue to flow to the culvert near Wetland 1 and out to the Merrimack River. The impact area is shaded blue and the stream is a dashed yellow line. Rare plant locations are yellow points and polygons with labels. Wetland 2 is suitable for floodflow alteration, and sediment/shoreline stabilization.

The impacts to Wetlands 1 and 2 are shown on the conceptual plan. The bridge abutment for the RR crossing will have directly and permanently impact 260 sf of Wetland 1. There will be an additional 2,730 sf of temporary impacts associated with altering the underground drainage system in this area. The construction of the path within the abandoned rail corridor will directly

and permanently impact 34,646 sf of Wetland 2 and fill 266 lf of the intermittent stream channel. As NHDES now allows ARM fund payment as a first choice for mitigation, that is what will be proposed for any mitigation required.

The project team is seeking guidance on three issues which we hope the agencies can address in their comments.

- Contaminated Soils - what are the limitations for reusing soils with PFAS (or other contaminants) at different elements from where the soils were removed within the project limits?
- Endangered Species - would mitigation be necessary for unavoidable rare plant impacts?
- Wetlands - for man-induced wetlands in previously disturbed areas, is there an alternative mitigation approach?

Andrew O'Sullivan asked for agency comments:

Karl Benedict (NHDES): We should direct the wetland application to his attention, as he will be conducting the review given his involvement so far. An invasive species management plan should be included, as well as attention to erosion and sedimentation controls given the fine sediments in the Active Transportation Corridor. A soil and groundwater management plan is also advisable, and he can provide contacts if the project team needs one. He noted that we should continue to coordinate with NHHNB and incorporate their avoidance and minimization measures. An ARM fund payment is reasonable and the project should coordinate with Emily Nichols for that. It is possible that some mitigation credit could be achieved through combination of ARM fund and stormwater treatment, given the proximity of the Merrimack River.

Jon Evans (NHDOT): Jon confirmed that a soil and groundwater management plan would be important, similar to the recent Everett Turnpike project approach. There are two important considerations: 1) Drinking water supply areas should be identified and contaminated soils should not be brought to such locations; and 2) soils should be kept as close as possible to their original location, which also protects the City from creating new contamination areas. For locations with PFAS, it is better to move excavated material closer to the points of origin than further away to less impacted areas. The project should involve a consultant with PFAS expertise.

Mary Ann Tilton (NHDES): Mary Ann confirmed that for man-induced wetlands in disturbed areas, some alternative mitigation can be acceptable, and further planning should also include USACE.

Mike Dionne (NHFG): no questions or comments

Kevin Newton (NHFG): No comments.

Michael Hicks (USACE): Mike asked for the permanent wetland impact quantities (they total approximately 34,906 sf.). Mike indicated the USACE will be happy to discuss mitigation and would include the EPA in those discussions. He also asked for an update on the coordination with the NH Division of Historical Resources, and Lee responded that the project has had several virtual meetings with NHDHR and a site walk; has an approved Area of Potential Effect; and recently submitted historical and archeological reports describing known resources and survey plans. Coordination is ongoing. He also asked about the timing of the project. Linda and Jamie identified the timelines and grant requirements.

Jean Brochi (USEPA): concurred with including USEPA in mitigation planning with USACE and agreed that a groundwater and soil management plan should be developed.

Jamie Sikora (FHWA): Jamie provided some high level background regarding the importance of this project in the City and even to the State, and the RAISE grant process, including the specific time frames required by the grant. The funds must be obligated by September 2024 (the project must go out to bid by then) and all expenditures complete by September 2029 (5 years later). Through no fault of the project team, the schedule is already about 6 months behind.

Ashley Litwinenko (NHNHB): noted that NHB will provide mitigation recommendations once they receive the growing season survey report for Virginia stickseed and specific impact information.