



Shaping
Our Region
from the Ground Up

Summary of Revisions to Environment & Natural Resources element for 3/10/2015 Commission Meeting

Below is a summary of revisions based on 2/10 Commission meeting feedback, the 2/17 Regional Plan Draft Review Committee meeting and additional comments received via phone/email.

Overall:

- Some key information that was in the longer profile has been added to shorter version, i.e. more accurate description of watersheds, more info/description of resources themselves (lakes & ponds, dams, etc.), info on threat of forest pests and aquatic invasive species issues.
- Some of the technical info/graphs were deleted from the "Flood Resilience" profile to shorten and info was added regarding available flood mitigation grants and the Community Rating System. A few Flood Resilience policies & strategies were also could be trimmed per comment received at meeting.
- Additional references/sources were added to the shorter version of the profile.
- **Note:** though we are not recirculating a revised draft of the longer version of the profile, ALL changes discussed will be reflected in that document as well.

Specific discussion:

- Removed Strategy 2.i. related to Brownfields as it's covered in other elements and there is no discussion of Brownfields in the narrative.
- Revised Strategy 2.k. so that it's clear we're not recommending removal of *all* dams.
- Revised Strategy 6.e to place emphasis on upstream floodplains that provide flood protection functions for downtowns and village centers.
- Added a strategy to Policy 18 that recommends zoning as a tool to preserve wildlife corridors.
- Added a strategy similar to 20.d that recommends linking forest landowners to USDA Forest Service technical assistance.
- Adapted Policies 28 and 29 to better reflect the fact that there are no air quality monitoring stations located in the Region. Also revised Air Quality section.
- Strategy 31.d. *Utility infrastructure and corridors shall be sited so as to minimize aesthetic impacts. Wherever feasible, utility lines will be installed underground.*

Following Draft Review Committee discussion, this was revised to: *Utility infrastructure and corridors shall be sited so as to minimize aesthetic impacts, particularly in areas of local and regional scenic importance. Wherever practicable, utility lines will be installed underground. In downtowns and village centers, a*

practicable alternative may be siting utility lines in the rear of buildings.

Staff spoke with **Allen St. Peter at the Public Service Board on 2/13**. He noted the following:

- The big question is “who pays for it” and in VT the policy is that whoever wants the line to go over ground pays for it, not the utility/ratepayers
- For distribution lines to be buried it can cost as much as 2-10 times the cost of overhead lines
- This happened in Woodstock where private (Rockefeller) funds were used to bury the lines
- For transmission lines to be buried it can be up to 100 times the cost of overhead lines
- For new private development, sometimes the developer will pay the cost to bury the lines (they have an incentive to cooperate/pay for it in order to get their development proposal permitted).
- “Line loss” is not a concern. Insulated cables prevent any energy leakage from occurring. These insulated cables, however, do contribute to the increased cost of burying lines.