

# Winooski Basin Water Quality Council (Basin Water Quality Council)

## Meeting Minutes – 16 May 2024

**Winooski Basin Water Quality Council Members: ✓**

<b>NRCDS</b>		<b>RPCs</b>	
✓	Peter Danforth, Lamoille NRCDS		Darlene Palola, CCRPC
	Emily Porter-Goff, Alternate		Garret Mott, CCRPC, Alternate
	Vacant, Winooski NRCDS	✓	Alan Quackenbush, CVRPC
	Russ Barret, Alternate		Robert Wernecke, CVRPC, Alternate
<b>Land Conservation Organizations</b>		<b>Municipalities</b>	
	Erin De Vries, VT River Conservancy	✓	Annie Costandi, Essex
✓	Remy Crettol, Alternate		Sarah McShane, Stowe, Alternate
<b>Watershed Protection Organizations</b>		✓	Nigel Hicks-Tibbles, Northfield
	Michele Braun, Friends of the Winooski River		Alice Peal, Waitsfield, Alternate
	Taylor Litwin, Alternate		
	Sam Puddicombe, Alternate		
✓	Ira Shadis, Friends of the Mad River		
	B. Shupe, Alternate		
✓	Kinny Perot, Alternate		

**CVRPC Staff:** B. Voigt, L. Frasca

**Guests:** Keith Fritschie (Department of Environmental Conservation – DEC) Chris Rottler (DEC), Dan Albrecht (CCRPC)

**Call to order & Roll call:** N. Hicks-Tibbles called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM.

**Updates to agenda:** none

**Public comment:** none

**Review & Approve minutes from 15 February 2024 meeting (action)**

*A. Quackenbush moved to approve the minutes of the 15 February 2024 meeting. P. Danforth seconded. Motion carried.*

## **FY25 Formula Grants – Project Development Funding (see slides)**

B. Voigt presented on the updated FY25 Formula Grant Funding distribution and Phosphorus reduction target. Beginning in FY25 there will be \$230,503.00 available for Project Identification and Development increased from the \$60,859.00 that was available in FY24. The increase in project Development funding is made possible by a reduction in the funding for Design & Construction phases and is a means to increase projects in the pipeline. Related to this, the Winooski Basin Phosphorus target has been adjusted by the DEC from 69.6 kg/yr. to 53.9 kg/yr. to accommodate for an increase in project development efforts.

I. Shadis asked what the current definition for Project Development is and what are the boundaries for this phase? B. Voigt responded that the development category is broadly defined however there are specific deliverables that need to be met.

C. Rottler referenced the [Clean Water Initiative Program \(CWIP\) Funding Policy](#) for the complete definition of eligible activities. The increase in development funding is a response to comments and concerns made by project implementors and is expected to increase the number of project proposals. Identification and Development activities need to adhere to the CWIP policy which may include hiring new staff to address capacity concerns. K. Fritschie shared the [CWIP Project Types Appendix B](#) spreadsheet which lists all eligible project types and their required deliverables. He also provided the link to the [DEC Project Development Guidance](#) published 1 January 2024.

I. Shadis inquired if the BWQC is being asked to discuss how we will be assessing project development proposals? B. Voigt responded that this discussion is more about working together to find the best way to spend the increased amount of money available for project development. He emphasized that the money spent on development ultimately needs to produce a list of projects eligible for CWSP funding. As of yet, there have not been the sufficient projects proposed necessary to meet our targets.

P. Danforth is currently getting a lot of requests for buffer plantings in Stowe. He asked if projects are all the same type could they be packaged into one development application? B. Voigt confirmed that this would be acceptable pending BWQC approval and so long as the CWSP receives the necessary information to meet the DEC reporting requirements. K. Fritschie added that only one Watershed Projects ID number is needed for multiple projects that are associated with the same development proposal. B. Voigt asked for clarification on whether or not projects developed from that singular effort would all be considered child projects of the original parent ID number? K. Fritschie confirmed this and added that required deliverables include a description of the projects developed and explanation of any projects explored but ultimately not developed. P. Danforth asked what the next

deadline for project proposal submission is. B. Voigt proposed a rolling deadline for submissions in the Project Solicitation section below.

N. Hick-Tibbles considered what can be done to increase the number of applications. He recommended project implementors consider what the hurdles are that may be deterring you or other organizations from the application process? He also questioned what outreach and education efforts may be employed to reach project implementors who are not BWQC members? B. Voigt addressed these questions in the Project Solicitation section below.

### **Project Solicitation (see slides)**

B. Voigt outlined CWSP efforts in progress to promote awareness of the CWSP program and funding opportunities. Direct outreach to municipal leaders is a primary method of communication. A meeting scheduling tool has been created to facilitate one-on-one meetings with interested municipalities ([Schedule time to meet with Lincoln & Brian](#)). Additionally, the CWSP will be reaching out to schedule one-on-one meetings with project partners to identify needs and opportunities for collaboration including assistance with proposal preparation.

L. Frasca has reviewed town plans in the Central VT Region to match municipal goals and strategies with proposed projects in the DEC Watershed Project Database. This is a starting place for more targeted outreach. A similar review will be conducted for any town within the Basin that schedules time to meet. B. Voigt will also be presenting on the CWSP program at the 23 May 2024 [Green Mountain Water & Environment Association](#) in Killington, VT.

B. Voigt proposed moving to an open call for proposals to streamline the project solicitation process and provide a more predictable timeline for funding decisions. Projects submitted by the second Thursday of the month would be shared for consideration at that month's BWQC meeting. A funding decision could then be provided within five weeks. This would also help close the gap between different project phases for project implementors and subgrantees. N. Hicks-Tibble and I. Shadis supported this idea. N. Hicks-Tibble suggested a clear communication policy for late submissions. B. Voigt agreed and proposed setting a cap on the number of proposals that the BWQC and CWSP could realistically review with only one week's notice. If enough applications were received at one time some may have to be reviewed at the following meeting.

B. Voigt expressed willingness to talk with municipal representatives and encouraged them to reach out. The CWSP can assist in isolating projects on municipal land and CVRPC could write a proposal if the town did not have the capacity. N. Hicks-Tibbles expressed the challenge of communicating across different municipalities and asked

for ideas on reaching out to them. B. Voigt suggested customized emails to individual municipal leaders instead of mass emails which have been sent in the past. They agreed to keep thinking about ways to improve communication.

Look forward to an email from B. Voigt and L. Frasca in the coming weeks to arrange one-on-one meetings to discuss how the CWSP can best support project development work and remove barriers to the application process.

### **Preliminary Project Review – FY24 Round 4 Project Solicitation (see slides)**

B. Voigt. announced that Allaire Diamond, Vermont Land Trust project proponent, could not make the meeting today. He introduced her proposal to complete both Final Design and Implementation for the John Fowler Road Winooski Berm Removal project. He noted that two project phases in one application is not preferred for reporting requirements but completing this work within the current calendar year is a priority. The budget has been itemized to display the Final Design and Implementation phases separately and accommodate the CWSP reporting process. The Vermont Land Trust would like to continue working with Fitzgerald Environmental who completed the preliminary design for this project.

The initial engineering study discovered the project is reconnecting less floodplain than originally expected. The berm is actually only keeping water out during smaller floods and water from larger events is already accessing the floodplain. Therefore, the Phosphorus reduction estimate has substantially shrunk from 118.95 kg/yr. to 14.9 kg/yr. From a funding perspective this is not too large of a concern considering the project budget is \$157,481 which equates to \$10,569 per kilogram. The CWSP has a meeting with Allaire next week and will include any new information in the next BWQC meeting packet prior to their June meeting.

A. Quackenbush expressed disappointment in the decrease of Phosphorus reduction and asked when will we vote on funding the next phases of this project? B. Voigt responded, at the 20 June 2024 BWQC meeting.

K. Fritschie agreed the change in Phosphorus reduction is disappointing and noted how this highlights the importance of having separate design phases. He explained that the phosphorus estimate could potentially vary between 11.5 kg/yr. and 14.9 kg/yr. due to a discrepancy in the consultants' calculations. Either way it would be a small change and the project would still be cost-efficient.

### **Announcements (see slides)**

Brian encouraged members to ask questions and announced several upcoming events including the Green Mountain Water Environment Association Annual Meeting (23 May 2024) [Register here](#), and the Friends of the Winooski River's [Onion River Ramble \(9 June 2024\)](#).

P. Danforth advertised a coalition-organized [Free Fishing Day at Smugglers' Notch](#) on 8 June 2024 to celebrate the removal of four dams along the Brewster River.

I. Shadis announced a [Conservation and Recreation Visioning public forum](#) on 29 May 2024 at Lareau Farm in the Mad River Valley

N. Hicks-Tibbles asked when BWQC officer elections will be happening next? B. Voigt advised that elections will occur during the first meeting of the fiscal year in July.

### **Adjourn**

*P. Danforth made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:00 PM. A. Quackenbush seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Next meeting scheduled 20 June 2024