

# Winooski Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC) Meeting Minutes – 20 June 2024

**Winooski Basin Water Quality Council Members:**

<b>NRCDS</b>		<b>RPCs</b>	
✓	Peter Danforth, Lamoille NRCD		Darlene Palola, CCRPC
	Emily Porter-Goff, Alternate		Garret Mott, CCRPC, Alternate
	Vacant, Winooski NRCD		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:** Dan Albrecht (Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission), Royal DeLegge (CVRPC Commissioner)

**Call to order & Roll call:** B. Voigt called the meeting to order at 1:06 PM.

**Updates to agenda:** none

**Public comment:** none

**Review & Approve minutes from 16 May 2024 meeting**

*A. Peal moved to approve the minutes of the 16 May 2024 meeting. P. Danforth seconded. Motion carried.*

**Preliminary Proposal Review (see Proposal) – Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission – Project Development in Huntington.**

D. Albrecht, Senior Planner with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, presented the details of the Huntington River Select Reaches – Project Development proposal. He noted assistance from L. Frasca and B. Voigt in drafting the Scope of Work. The proposal requests funding to scope 15 priority water quality restoration projects and conduct specific project development for 3 – 5 of the most promising opportunities. Project types include:

- 7 riparian buffer planting projects,
- 5 river corridor protection projects,
- 2 berm removal projects, and
- 1 stormwater project

The proposal requests \$36,000. The phosphorus reduction cost-efficiency is unknown. A Request for Proposals for engineering services was issued and three proposals were received. Two of the three proposals were significantly under the proposed budget.

D. Albrecht spoke of his experience as a project manager and described a detailed list of deliverables that will be produced through this effort, including a 2–5-page summary of each of the 15 projects. The summary information will allow for the identification of the most promising projects for which additional Formula Grant funds will be requested for preliminary design.

B. Voigt further explained the genesis of this proposal, which began with a meeting with Huntington’s new Town Administrator, Adam Argo, and outgoing town administrator, Barbara Elliot. The town had several sites of concern that involved hazard mitigation along road projects. They were also interested in a wider study of the Middle Huntington River to identify flood mitigation and water quality projects.

A. Peal inquired about the potential wastewater project in Huntington and D. Albrecht responded that that is a separate effort and still a work in progress. M. Braun asked if the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission would be sole-sourcing Arrowwood Environmental or if this would be a competitive process. D. Albrecht stated there has already been a competitive procurement process that included direct solicitation of prequalified engineering firms.

M. Braun asked whether procurement can happen before a funding decision has been made. B. Voigt stated that the Clean Water Service Provider is willing to work with Project Implementors to offer flexibility so long as there is a competitive procurement process.

P. Danforth asked if there is a specific project type that D. Albrecht is hoping to develop. D. Albrecht responded that he is not attached to a specific outcome but this is very similar to a project he managed in Basin 5.

B. Voigt further explained the work the CWSP did with town staff to identify the area of interest and potential projects that have potential for clean water benefits.

D. Albrecht said there could be a process in which cost-efficient projects outside of the original 15 are recommended for further development. A. Peal asked if this effort would include water quality testing. B. Voigt stated that no water quality testing will be conducted as part of this project and that phosphorus-reduction estimates would be based on one of the Department of Environmental Conservation's phosphorous calculators.

B. Voigt asked Basin Water Quality Council members to submit any additional questions for D. Albrecht to B. Voigt by the middle of next week.

**Final Proposal Review (see slides) – Vermont Land Trust – John Fowler Rd Berm Removal**

Allaire Diamond, Ecology & Restoration Program Director at the Vermont Land Trust, was not able to attend the meeting. B. Voigt offered an overview of the proposal which seeks funding to complete both the final design and implementation of the berm removal along the Winooski River. The preliminary design phase of this project was relied on Formula Grant funding. Work on that project phase is largely complete. The phosphorous-reduction estimate is significantly less than originally anticipated (14.9 kg / yr instead of 118.9 kg / yr). In addition, the cost of the preliminary design was lower than anticipated. The current funding request yields a total project cost of \$144,377 (which equates to \$9,690 / kg phosphorous reduced).

A. Peal asked why the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation would be involved in a project like this. B. Voigt explained that whenever work is done in the river corridor the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation looks for potential archeological evidence or artifacts of significance. The Vermont Land Trust has reached out to the University of Vermont's Consulting Archeology to request a quote for services.

*E. De Vries made a motion to prioritize funding for the Vermont Land Trust – John Fowler Rd Berm Removal Implementation. A. Peal seconded. No Discussion. Motion carried unanimously.*

## **Project Development (see slides)**

L. Frasca presented CVRPC's work on project development funded by a Block Grant from the Addison County Regional Commission. CVRPC contracted with Watershed Consulting Associates to scope 15 water quality restoration projects and identify the 4 – 5 highest priority projects for further development. The priority projects have the potential to achieve a nearly 25 kg phosphorus reduction in the Winooski River Basin (combined). These projects occur on a mix of municipal and private property in Calais (2), Barre Town (1) and Plainfield (1-2). L. Frasca highlighted CVRPC's goal of requesting funding to advance these projects to preliminary design at the July 2024 Basin Water Quality Council meeting. He asked if any Basin Water Quality Council members / Project Implementors were interested in taking this work on.

E. De Vries expressed the feeling that the timeline to prepare an application for the July 2024 meeting is too tight. M. Braun agreed. B. Voigt noted that the timeline could be extended if there was demonstrated interest by Project Implementors to take on any of these projects. Short of that, CVRPC intends to submit proposal(s) for preliminary review at the July 2024 Basin Water Quality Council meeting. L. Frasca mentioned the importance of keeping the ball rolling with landowners and municipal staff who are currently engaged in this project development effort. E. De Vries indicated the Vermont River Conservancy is tentatively interested in the Calais Route 14 Buffer and Floodplain Restoration project pending staff capacity. Vermont River Conservancy is currently engaged in a scoping effort in Calais and there could be some overlap with this project. She expressed concern that Vermont River Conservancy has not gone through the pre-qualification process and wondered if this would cause any delay. B. Voigt responded that the Vermont River Conservancy can submit their pre-qualification materials at the same time they submit a proposal. No other Project Implementors expressed an interest in taking on any of the priority projects described by L. Frasca. Project Implementors were encouraged to contact Clean Water Service Provider staff by the middle of the following week to signify interest in one (or more) of the projects.

B. Voigt presented "Agricultural Streams Project Development Proposal" prepared by Keith Fritschie, Winooski River Basin Planner, who was unable to attend the meeting. Agricultural streams likely have buffer, in-stream and floodplain restoration opportunities that are good for habitat and water quality and can be cost-effective. Buffer plantings and low-tech floodplain reconnection projects both offer about 2.5 kg phosphorus reduction per acre in the Winooski River Basin. Many of these streams are small and therefore not accounted for in River Corridor Plans and the Watershed Projects Database. An analysis of potential planting sites found approximately 1,380 acres of unforested agricultural land within a 50-ft buffer of streams in the basin. A project development proposal could include a targeted outreach campaign to select

farms in cooperation with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture and Food Markets. Even with a very low response rate this effort could prove to be cost-effective if only a couple of two-acre buffer sites are planted.

M. Braun recommends not pursuing buffer planting projects smaller than 2 acres. She also recommended referring projects to the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District. B. Voigt noted the capacity challenges at the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District. WNRCD has a new district manager, Daniel Koenemann. The Central Vermont and Chittenden County Regional Planning Commissions will be meeting with D. Koenemann in the coming weeks to introduce the Clean Water Service Provider Program and discuss priority projects and opportunities for collaboration.

B. Voigt mentioned recent Clean Water Service Provider staff conversations with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets regarding conservation funding programs for agricultural properties. Staff will continue to coordinate and share knowledge to ensure potential projects are matched with the best funding opportunity.

P. Danforth explained how the Natural Resource Conservation Districts work in tandem with local work groups to prioritize agricultural best practices, project types, and advertise Natural Resources Conservation Service funding opportunities. This could be a useful tool to inform these efforts. Outreach efforts involving local work groups are part of each District's memorandum of agreement with the Natural Resource Conservation Service. The Lamoille County Natural Resource Conservation Districts will be hiring an Agricultural Specialist focused specifically on work group activities and promoting a local funding pool. They will be looking at projects that may be suitable for Formula Grant funding. The Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District also has a local work group, and this buffer analysis would be useful for them. P. Danforth just planted 3.5 acres on flood-damaged agricultural lands with Formula Grant funding in Lamoille County.

M. Braun mentioned that a lot of land being farmed is leased and not owned by the farmers. This can add complexity to project development and outreach efforts. B. Voigt noted this challenge with a project that was included in CVRPC's project development work.

I. Shadis asked what the next steps are for this project development idea. He expressed interest in (watershed organizations) reviewing the design of the mailer / outreach campaign prior to its release. B. Voigt responded that the best opportunity to be involved in the review of the campaign is to work on the development of the

outreach materials. B. Voigt mentioned a variety of possible next steps to move this forward based on interest amongst the Basin Water Quality Council and Project Implementors. The Clean Water Service Provider will bring this idea to the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District to gauge their interest in the work and the capacity to take this on. I. Shadis said he would be interested in exploring this data further and will follow up with K. Fritschie.

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

B. Voigt noted the following:

- Operations & Maintenance + Verifier Certification:
  - Tier 1 training: two parts; available via recorded video
  - Tier 2 training:
    - Part 1: Verification Tools, 28 June 2024, 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM, register [here](#)
    - Part 2: Verification Process & Survey 123, 10 July 2024, 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM, register [here](#)
    - Part 3: Verification Field Training, under development
- Clean Water Service Provider presentation to the Berlin Planning Commission (26 June 2024)
- Project proposals are now being accepted on a rolling basis. Submit proposals on the second Thursday of the month for preliminary review at that month's Basin Water Quality Council meeting.

### **Adjourn**

*P. Danforth made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:10 PM. I. Shadis seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Next meeting scheduled 18 July 2024.