

Winooski Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC) Meeting Minutes – 21 November 2024

Winooski Basin Water Quality Council Members: ✓

NRCDS		RPCs	
✓	Peter Danforth, Lamoille NRCD	✓	Garret Mott, CCRPC
	Emily Porter-Goff, Alternate	✓	Lisa Cicchetti, CCRPC alternate
✓	Daniel Koenemann, Winooski NRCD	✓	Royal DeLegge, CVRPC
	Macie Broussard, Alternate	✓	Rich Turner, CVRPC alternate
Land Conservation Organizations		Municipalities	
✓	Erin De Vries, VT River Conservancy	✓	Annie Costandi, Essex
	Remy Crettol, Alternate		Vacant, Alternate
Watershed Protection Organizations		✓	Alice Peal, Waitsfield
	Michele Braun, Friends of the Winooski River		Vacant, Alternate
	Taylor Litwin, Alternate		
✓	Sam Puddicombe, Alternate		
✓	Ira Shadis, Friends of the Mad River		
	B. Shupe, Alternate		
	Kinny Perot, Alternate		

CVRPC Staff: Brian Voigt & Lincoln Frasca

Guests: Keith Fritschie (Department of Environmental Conservation - DEC), Lucas Goldfluss (Winooski NRCD)

Call to order & Roll call: B. Voigt called the meeting to order at 1:01 PM.

Updates to agenda:

The Vermont Land Trust Roland Stream Crossing is not ready for a vote. DEC is still working to determine if the project is eligible for Phosphorus crediting. No action should be taken today. This project may be ready for a vote at the December meeting.

Public comment:

L. Goldfluss introduced himself as a new Conservation Specialist with Winooski NRCD.

Review & Approve minutes from 17 October 2024 meeting:

A. Peal moved to approve the minutes of the 17 October 2024 meeting. D. Koenemann seconded. G. Mott abstained. All others were in favor, the motion passed.

Project Proposal Initial Review (see slides):

S. Puddicombe introduced four planting project proposals for this spring. This is the first time Friends of the Winooski has applied for CWSP funds for plantings. Their budget includes the cost of maintenance work. Phosphorus calculations have been estimated in collaboration with the Basin Planner.

Friends of the Winooski River Riparian Buffer Planting – Fecteau

S. Puddicombe introduced the planting project in Huntington. This project was identified through the Friends of the Winooski Landowner Consultation Program. Some of the land is owned by Burnt Rock Farm. The proposed planting is along the main stem of the Huntington River where there was heavy inundated after the July 2024 flood. The landowner has already signed an agreement with Friends of the Winooski to allow the planting.

B. Voigt noted the project budget includes \$3,080 in matching funds with a Phosphorus estimate of 2.73 kg per year.

S. Puddicombe stated the match is from US Fish & Wildlife Service for 50% of the cost of the plantings up to \$3 per stem. They will also help with site prep and maintenance.

P. Danforth asked if this work will be contracted out or completed in house by Friends of the Winooski?

S. Puddicombe responded that that they have budgeted for the Intervale to do most of the planting and maintenance work. If there is interest amongst volunteers that would bring costs down.

E. De Vries asked if there is any need for invasive management?

S. Puddicombe responded yes, that is why they have partnered with the Fish & Wildlife Service who can fund invasive removal. The flood deposited knotweed and bindweed that needs to be managed.

E. De Vries asked where this site is in relation to Mayo Road?

G. Mott informed this site is just upstream of Mayo Rod North of Huntington Village.

Riparian Buffer Planting – Fowler Road

S. Puddicombe introduced the proposed planting in Marshfield. This project is on the same site as the Vermont Land Trust Berm Removal project and is dependent on the successful removal of the berm. Friends of the Winooski has an agreement with Vermont Land Trust stating that Friends of the Winooski will plant the buffer immediately after the berm is removed. The acreage of this planting may increase but at a minimum it would plant 0.75 acres.

B. Voigt noted this will be the conclusion of the first project fully funded through the BWQC/CWSP and is now in Final Design.

S. Puddicombe has worked with the DEC Basin Planner and River Scientist and determined the Phosphorus calculations for the berm removal and planting do not overlap.

A. Peal asked how do riparian buffers slow flood waters? S. Puddicombe responded that plantings add roughness to the landscape and increase surface area to capture phosphorus. K. Fritschie mentioned that the DEC also credits the increased bank stability that buffers provide.

Riparian Buffer Planting – Huntington Acres

S. Puddicombe introduced the planting project in Huntington Acres on three FEMA buyout properties. These houses were buyouts from the 2011 Irene Storm and finally decommissioned this year. Friends of the Winooski was involved in a spring planting in this area with the Huntington Conservation Commission and UVM. They also completed a floodplain project in the fall of 2024 after summer flooding. This is a great floodplain where a lot of sediment has been deposited. The plantings will occur across three properties that are not contiguous.

G. Mott noted this project is about a mile south of the first Huntington Planting project proposed on the Fecteau property.

B. Voigt asked if this project would have one Watershed Project Database ID or three separate ID numbers since the properties are separated?

S. Puddicombe submitted the project as a single Watershed Project Database entry with one ID number.

B. Voigt corrected the stem count for this project, noting that 300 stems per acre at 1.25 acres equals 375. This may change the final budget for this project.

S. Puddicombe explained the first two properties are shown in the locator map submitted in the application. The third property is two properties south of the locator map's latitude and longitude. There is a fourth parcel that is going to be a buyout on the corner of Huntington Acres near the confluence with Texas Hill Brook and Huntington River.

Riparian Buffer Planting – Tyler Place

S. Puddicombe introduced the planting project on land owned by the Jericho Land Trust. A riparian buffer planting was planted immediately downstream of this site by the US Fish & Wildlife Service in the fall of 2023. There have also been a couple [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#) (CREP) planting projects completed in the adjacent agricultural field. This is a low gradient wetland formerly dominated by reed canary grass. A project with the Fish & Wildlife Service earlier this year hopefully took care of the canary grass and prepared the site for planting. The Wetlands program in DEC has given their approval of this project. The planting area is 1.5 acres and an important project for continuity between parcels and rescuing wetlands from canary grass.

B. Voigt asked if there has been a conversation with the Agency of Agriculture about eligibility for CREP?

S. Puddicombe responded this was never in agricultural land, so it is not eligible for CREP. The CREP program will be planting perennial grass on the eastern edge of the drainage area.

K. Perot asked how the reed canary grass was treated? S. Puddicombe responded that a Glyphosate applicator was used.

L. Frasca asked about communication with Chittenden County RPC who has project development funding along the Huntington River.

S. Puddicombe has coordinated with Stone Environmental, who is completing the engineering portion of project development for Chittenden County RPC, and none of these planting projects overlap.

B. Voigt mentioned that they will have to work together to split out the funding for operations and maintenance for all planting projects because that is a separate project phase. DEC has stated that operations and maintenance is assumed if a BWQC approves a project for funding. Funding can be obligated for the operations and maintenance of these projects, but it needs to be in a separate application. There is no reason why all four of these projects shouldn't move forward from a CWSP perspective. Slightly different budget numbers for the implementation phase for all four of these projects should be expected for by the December vote.

E. De Vries asked if Friends of the Winooski could receive approval from the BWQC for plantings and then immediately apply for operations and maintenance funds? It sounds like operations and maintenance money is necessary to plant and maintain the trees, so it is important to have that funding approved soon. Is there a Phosphorus calculation needed for operations and maintenance funding?

B. Voigt informed that the DEC has stated that operations and maintenance is generally not part of the Phosphorus efficiency calculation. Any site prep to prepare for planting should be part of the implementation project. Once the planting is in the ground any work is considered operations and maintenance.

S. Puddicombe offered that the DEC Woody Buffer Grant is different in that the first three years of a planting project is considered project implementation. After which all work is considered operations and maintenance.

B. Voigt noted that it is unlikely any of these plantings will happen in December, so we have time to figure this out. If operations and maintenance is needed shortly after implementation there shouldn't be a problem with the BWQC voting on operations and maintenance pending successful completion of the implementation phase. This is an administrative burden necessary because of how DEC bills the CWSP by project phase. This should not be more work for project implementors.

Project Proposal Final Review (see slides):

Vermont Land Trust Roland Stream Crossing

B. Voigt explained why this project is not ready for a vote and provided a summary of the project status. The CWSP recommends funding is prioritized once an eligibility determination has been made. The eligibility issue pertains to lateral stream connectivity. The DEC needs to assess up and downstream barriers to see how they interact with the proposed project and ensure that clean water benefits are realized not just locally but on the landscape scale. There will be a meeting with DEC and Vermont Land Trust later today to discuss this project further. There may be other proposals to consider that address additional stream impediments related to this project. The Winooski NRCD may be a potential partner to take on the other projects that come from this. There cannot be a vote on this project until it has been deemed eligible.

K. Fritschie highlighted the fact that this is an unmapped culvert on an unmapped stream and the [Functioning Floodplain Initiative](#) crediting tool is not currently set up to be able to automatically assign a Phosphorus value. The DEC Rivers team must credit this project manually and consider up and downstream barriers. There are already plans to address the other barriers. There is still the question of how many barriers need to be addressed before the stream reach realizes water quality benefits and a Phosphorus credit can be assigned.

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission Project Development in Waitsfield

B. Voigt presented CVRPC's Project Development in Waitsfield for final proposal review. Since the proposal was submitted, two adjacent landowners have expressed interest in developing similar types of projects on their properties.

R. Turner made motion to prioritize funding for the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission Floodplain Project Development in Waitsfield, D. Koenemann seconded. All in favor, none opposed. The motion passed unanimously.

Announcements (see slides):

Project Development & Outreach

L. Frasca gave an overview of CVRPC's Great Brook site visit with the Plainfield Conservation Commission. The Riparian Buffer Planting at the Recreation Field is being assessed by the DEC for eligibility. There are approximately twenty-five potential buyout properties in the Village. These buyouts could be an opportunity for CWSP funded floodplain restoration projects. He highlighted the need for an updated River Corridor Plan along the Great Brook. CVRPC will be providing the Conservation

Commission with CWSP talking points to aid in their conversations with landowners with strategic floodplain property. He would like to hear what other partners have been doing to work with Plainfield and knows that the Vermont River Conservancy has been out looking at potential easements with state partners.

E. De Vries inquired about whether the updated Tactical Basin Plan would support this work? She mentioned the DEC Rivers Program conducted a site visit to Plainfield. The Vermont River Conservancy spoke with the Rivers Program about the need for a River Corridor Study.

K. Fritschie noted the Basin Plan has a strategy to update Stream Geomorphic Assessments and River Corridor Plans where they are outdated. The Rivers Program is trying to reevaluate the Stream Geomorphic Assessments process so they can respond quickly to flooding. These methods will begin to be applied as soon as they are available.

E. De Vries met with two landowners and River Program staff to talk about River Corridor Easements and opportunities to restore the landscape. If there is landowner interest priority sites could become River Corridor Easements held by the DEC Rivers Program with Vermont River Conservancy as a co-holder. The Vermont River Conservancy would like to be at the table for further conversations about opportunities for restoration along the Great Brook.

B. Voigt noted the Vermont River Conservancy is a strong partner when it comes to easements. River Corridor Easements are an approved project type for CWSP funding but there is currently no approved method for Phosphorus accounting. The DEC has mentioned the guidance for funding River Corridor Easements through the CWSP program should be coming soon.

K. Fritschie mentioned there is no set timeline for that guidance. However, the Rivers Program is working on this, and it is a complicated process.

S. Puddicombe asked if there is a way to see the projects that are being discussed. Friends of the Winooski has been scoping a project at the Batch Elder Dam and Little Wood Farm.

B. Voigt responded that the CVRPC scoped sites do not include the Batch Elder Dam.

E. De Vries suggested partners working in Plainfield including the DEC, Friends of the Winooski, Vermont River Conservancy, and CVRPC should all have a meeting.

Vermont River Conservancy has a Lake Champlain Basin Program Grant for project development in the Stevens Branch and Great Brook. They are using new scoping methodology that analyzes Stream Geomorphic Assessment and River Corridor Plans to prioritize outreach. They have been in conversation with Friends of the Winooski about Upper Winooski sites.

B. Voigt added that the Winooski NRCD should be included along with Vermont River Conservancy, Friends of the Winooski, CVRPC, the DEC Basing Planner and River Scientist in a future Plainfield meeting.

Clean Water Advisory Committee Meeting: [recording available](#)

FEMA Mapping, Flood Hazard River Corridor Bylaws, and Hazard Mitigation Funding

A. Peal spoke to FEMA / Hazard Mitigation Funding. At the November 21 DEC Floodplain Manager's Drop-in Discussion, the New Federal Rules in Flood Hazard Areas was discussed. Vermont Emergency Management uses an initial intake form for applications. She recommended calling VT Emergency Management staff for assistance with choosing the correct funding source. The conversation focused on FEMA's Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS). This recording may become available on the [Flood Ready Vermont](#) website. FEMA is expanding floodplain areas with its new mapping. It is unknown when the new maps will be made available.

G. Mott will not be able to make the January meeting.

Adjourn

D. Koenemann made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:09 PM. P. Danforth seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Next meeting scheduled 19 December 2024.