

Winooski Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC)

Draft Meeting Minutes – 18 December 2025

Winooski Basin Water Quality Council Members: ✓

NRCDs	RPCs
✓ Peter Danforth, Lamoille NRCD	✓ Garret Mott, CCRPC (Chair)
Emily Porter-Goff, Alternate	Lisa Cicchetti, CCRPC alternate
✓ Daniel Koenemann, Winooski NRCD	Royal DeLegge, CVRPC
✓ Lucas Goldfluss, 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	
✓ Sam Puddicombe, Friends of the Winooski River	✓ Alice Peal, Waitsfield (Vice Chair)
✓ Michele Braun, Alternate	✓ David Stapleton, Moretown, Alternate
Taylor Litwin, Alternate	
Ira Shadis, Friends of the Mad River	
✓ Julie Frost, Alternate	
Kinny Perot, Alternate	

CVRPC Staff: Brian Voigt & Lincoln Frasca

Guests: Keith Fritschie (Department of Environmental Conservation)

Call to order & Roll call: G. Mott called the meeting to order at 1:04 PM.

Updates to agenda: None

Public comment: None

Review & approve minutes from 20 November 2025 meeting (action)

S. Puddicombe made a motion to approve the minutes of the 20 November 2025 meeting. R. Turner seconded, E. De Vries abstained, all others were in favor and the motion passed.

Project Proposal Final Review (see slides):

Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District (WNRCD), Cheesefactory Road Riparian Buffer Planting:

B. Voigt gave an overview of this the project proposal which seeks funds to plant a 100' wide riparian buffer at a density of 400 stems per acre on approximately 4-acres across two parcels in the Muddy Brook watershed (Shelburne & South Burlington). The estimated Phosphorus reduction is 3.9 kg / yr. The total project budget being requested is \$30,056. The original application indicated a 10 year design life but under the Clean Water Program guidance buffer plantings are given a 15 year design life. This change was made during CWSP staff review and improved the overall cost-effectiveness score for this project. The staff recommendation to the BWQC is to prioritize this funding request.

E. De Vries made a motion to approve funding for the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District Cheesefactory Road Riparian Buffer Planting project. S. Puddicombe seconded, D. Koenemann abstained, all others were in favor and the motion passed.

Friends of the Winooski River (FWR), Riparian Buffer Planting – Project Development:

B. Voigt introduced this project proposal which seeks funding to scope potential riparian buffer planting projects throughout the Winooski River Basin and develop 3 – 5 projects with cost-efficient phosphorus reduction potential. The project budget request is for \$6,669. The staff recommendation is to fund this proposal.

S. Puddicombe mentioned FWR's previous eight proposals submitted to the CWSP which all used project development funds from other sources. This project will include working with DEC on using the Functioning Floodplains Initiative to identify projects. E. De Vries asked if there is a specific area of the Winooski River Basin that FWR will be focusing on. S. Puddicombe responded that Marshfield and Plainfield are priority headwaters communities that already have FEMA buyouts in process. Other projects are more focused on current partnerships rather than specific location. L. Frasca asked what the strategy for identifying cost efficient projects will be beyond looking for plantings with greater than or equal to .5kg per acre of annual phosphorus reduction S. Puddicombe responded that FWR does not do planting projects on less than half of an acre. E. De Vries asked about the project timeline. S. Puddicombe responded January to October is the proposed timeline with plantings occurring either in the fall of 2027 or spring 2028. B. Voigt mentioned that project development funds can be approved at the first meeting they are reviewed as previously approved by the BWQC.

R. Turner made a motion to approve funding for the Friends of the Winooski River Riparian Buffer Planting Project Development. D. Koenemann seconded, S. Puddicombe abstained, all others were in favor and the motion passed.

Projects in the pipeline (see slides):

B. Voigt presented on completed, funded, and pending projects. The total cost of completed projects is \$303,396 with a 23.47kg phosphorus reduction. The total cost of currently funded, but not yet completed, projects is \$173,680 with the potential to reduce approximately 30kg of phosphorus. Projects in the pipeline include larger phosphorus reduction amounts in the towns of Berlin, Waitsfield, and Waterbury. These projects have the potential to cost \$3.87 million and reduce 181kgs of phosphorus all together. In Waterbury, the Randall Meadows project has the potential to reduce roughly 100 kilograms. Waterbury recently received \$2 million through the Community Development Block Grant to put towards the design and implementation of this project which is likely to exceed \$4 million. This design work will help determine a more finalized phosphorus reduction estimate. E. De Vries asked who the project proponent in Waterbury is. B. Voigt responded that the town is leading the development of this project and is acquiring the land from the state. In Waitsfield, the Lower Fairgrounds Floodplain Restoration has the potential to reduce 50.7 kilograms for \$1,175,000. A second floodplain restoration project on private property could reduce another 5.6 kilograms for \$155,000. CVRPC and Friends of the Mad River still need to confirm with the landowner about the potential of moving forward with design work on private property. E. De Vries asked who the project manager was for the development of this project. B. Voigt explained CVRPC originally applied to develop projects on municipal and identified by the town through the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan in coordination with Friends of the Mad River. An adjacent landowner heard about the project and proposed their property for the site that is now being developed for floodplain restoration. E. De Vries stated that Vermont River Conservancy has an easement on this land and would like to be included in the planning process.

Reconsidering Cost-Efficiency (see slides)

B. Voigt present on the changes to the cost rate methodology which include a reduction by roughly 50% to the Winooski basin phosphorus target. The total four-year (2023 - 2026) phosphorus reduction target is now 114.9 kilograms with a budget of \$4,222,880. These changes from the updated [Final 2025 Cost Rate and Fund Allocation Methodology](#) warrant reconsidering the CWSP cost-efficiency threshold and scoring methods. In the past the phosphorus cap has been \$30,000 per kilogram. It is now possible to move that threshold up to \$40,000 and potentially even closer to \$45,000 per kilogram. This puts the BWQC in a good place to be able to contribute to the higher dollar projects in the pipeline to help reach and or exceed our targets. Given these changes B. Voigt asked the BWQC to consider whether there should be a

maximum award value. D. Koenemann responded that he does not think a maximum would be valuable because the goal of the program is to reduce phosphorus not to fund a lot of projects. S. Puddicombe mentioned the idea of a potential cap on preliminary design phases with no cap on implementation funding requests. B. Voigt mentioned that in the case of floodplain restoration these projects ultimately succeed by failing by filling with sediment during large flood events. This could reduce the amount of phosphorus we are credited unless we spend more money to repair the project, or if DEC were to offer project recovery funds post flooding. If we do fund two large floodplain restoration projects collectively costing more than \$3 million then we need to consider ongoing operations and maintenance (O&M) costs. S. Puddicombe asked if it is true that after a large flood event that fills a floodplain with sediment that the CWSP could lose phosphorus credits associated with that project. K. Fritschie responded that he is working with the Rivers program and accounting team to investigate this scenario further. Projects need to be verified after they are implemented with the appropriate DEC verification checklist. The floodplain restoration verification checklist is being finalized, and this will help reduce the uncertainty when funding larger floodplain projects. For example, during the design phase operating goals could be set that would be part of the verification process such as setting a threshold for sediment that could accumulate while still allowing the project to be considered as operating under the verification checklist. B. Voigt added that these larger floodplain projects have the potential for higher-than-normal costs related to archeological review based on initial comments from the State. E. De Vries asked if it is possible to borrow from future funding years like a loan. B. Voigt can follow up with DEC on this question. He emphasized that even if the BWQC funds all the projects in the pipeline the higher cost projects will not all be implemented next year. Also, DEC will require an easement for the Waitsfield project based on the high project costs.

B. Voigt asked if the BWQC is interested in holding special calls for projects where the cost threshold could be further relaxed, specific sub-watersheds could be prioritized, and or specific project types could be prioritized? This could open funding to different project types that are harder to fund such as stormwater and dam removal projects. D. Koenemann mentioned the Rouleau Pond Dam removal that would benefit from a funding round with a relaxed cost-threshold. He also recommended a call for projects where the co-benefits could be weighted more than phosphorus efficiency. S. Puddicombe mentioned the issue of reporting partners still make co-funding challenging. K. Fritschie responded that the DEC is drafting an updated funding policy with significant changes to co-funding that should make it easier to co-fund with reporting partners. The draft policy should be released this winter with an opportunity for public comment. G. Mott mentioned the importance of having projects in different areas to help protect against the risk of future flood events. B. Voigt asked the BWQC

to think about any other ideas for special calls for proposals to put out in the New Year.

B. Voigt asked how the BWQC would like to incorporate O&M cost into project evaluation. The DEC has indicated that O&M funds will be made available for implemented projects. However, they have also asked how we are considering O&M costs when evaluating project proposals. This is relevant to project types such as buffer plantings that may require higher maintenance costs for invasive species management to ensure the success of the project. He mentioned that guaranteed O&M funding is unique to the formula grant. The question is how much we should weight O&M costs when voting to prioritize funding for projects. At some point we may reach a cap where we can no longer afford to both fund O&M for existing projects and fund new projects. D. Koenemann asked if O&M funds come out of the total budget allocated to the CWSP. B. Voigt confirmed that O&M funds come from the same budget with a specific percent allocated for O&M ($\$10,000 + 2.8\%$ of the value of implemented projects). B. Voigt mentioned the unpredictable nature of O&M costs on larger floodplain restoration projects based on whether flooding occurs. S. Puddicombe proposed implementing a maximum O&M cost that would help protect from unknown risks and guide project managers when estimating total project budgets. G. Mott asked if it is fair to not consider O&M when projects have vastly different O&M costs. B. Voigt mentioned that we have been following DEC's guidance on project evaluation and wanted to bring it to the BWQC to see what makes the most sense for our Basin.

Announcements

- ❖ The [Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District](#) is inviting you to participate in our 2026 Locally Led Conservation Process. Each year the Conservation Districts collaborate with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to identify local natural resource conservation priorities to help direct Federal spending. Please complete the [survey](#) and attend one of two in-person forums (RSVP to Kara@winooskinrcd.org):
 - ❖ January 12 from 10 AM - Noon at the Richmond Town Clerk Office (203 Bridge St, Richmond, VT 05477)
 - ❖ January 14 from 10 AM to Noon at the Marshfield Town Clerk Office (122 School St #1, Marshfield, VT 05658)
- ❖ **CVRPC Clean Water Advisory Committee Meeting: Winter Road Maintenance Strategies for Municipalities**, 8 January 2026 from 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM
 - ❖ Speakers: **UVM Extension & VT Agency of Transportation**
 - ❖ In person: CVRPC Office, 29 Main Street, Suite 4 Montpelier, VT 05602
 - ❖ Online: via Zoom link on [Meeting Agenda](#)

❖ [Registration required](#)

❖ **CWSP Funding** - The deadline for consideration at the November Winooski River Basin Water Quality Council meeting is 8 January 2025. [Schedule a meeting](#) with Brian & Lincoln for proposal development assistance.

E. De Vries asked if there is a calendar with the funding deadlines for proposal.
B. Voigt responded it is the second Thursday of every month is the deadline so there is a week to review before the monthly BWQC meeting.
E. De Vries announced that the Vermont River Conservancy has completed their [Strategic Conservation Plan](#). This included utilizing Stream Geomorphic Assessments, River Corridor Plans, the Functioning Floodplains Initiative, and other data to identify priority stream reaches and associated parcels to scope out for potential conservation easements. This fall they conducted landowner outreach and visited five sites of over a dozen in the two sub-watersheds. The Conservation Plan prioritizes work in the Upper Winooski Basin, specifically the Great Brook and Steven's Branch including the towns of Plainfield, Williamstown and Barre.

Adjourn

D. Koenemann made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:23 PM. S. Puddicombe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Next meeting scheduled 15 January 2026.

Minutes submitted by CVRPC staff member Lincoln Frasca.