CVRPC Clean Water Advisory Committee (CWAC)
Meeting Minutes – 12 March 2026

CWAC Members: ☑

Commissioner Representatives	
☑	John Brabant
☑	Mitch Osiecki
	Ron Krauth
☑	Rich Turner

Municipal Representatives	
☑	Clark Amadon
☑	Joyce Manchester
	Emily Ruff
☑	Alice Peal (Chair)
☑	Chris Owen
☑	Warren Coleman (Vice Chair & interested stakeholder)

CVRPC Staff: Brian Voigt, Lincoln Frasca

Other Attendees: Sean Beckett (North Branch Nature Center), Michele Braun (Friends of the Winooski River), Julie Frost (Friends of the Mad River), Lauren Jenness Kneen (Lake Champlain Basin Program), Dan Koenemann, Andrea Henderson (Fayston Conservation Commission), Gail O'Keefe (Waitsfield Conservation Commission), Michael (public).

Call to Order, Introductions
A. Peal called the meeting to order at 4:02 PM.

Updates to agenda: N/A

Public Comment: N/A

Approval of 8 January minutes:
M. Osiecki made the motion to table approval of the 8 January 2026 minutes until the May meeting, J. Brabant seconded. No discussion, all were in favor, and the motion passed.

Watershed Partner Updates: (see slides)

North Branch Nature Center (NBNC):

S. Beckett, Program Director at North Branch Nature Center, presented on their work connecting people to nature through education and conservation, highlighting their floodplain restoration efforts and community engagement initiatives. He described three key observations that emerged following the 2023 flooding events. First, he noted a widespread lack of community understanding about watersheds, river systems, and river-management concepts such as dredging, armoring, dam removal, and channelization. Community forums revealed both strong ideas and significant misunderstandings about flood causes and river behavior. Second, he highlighted that many residents have limited awareness of the broad network of watershed resilience groups operating in Vermont, ranging from clean water service providers to regional planning commissions and conservation organizations. Third, he emphasized the important role North Branch Nature Center which is located on a 30-acre upstream floodplain in helping to absorb floodwaters and contributes directly to Montpelier's flood resilience. S. Beckett outlined how the Center is responding through ecological restoration, community education, and partnerships. Their property serves as a "teaching landscape," including a conservation nursery that grows floodplain trees and shrubs used both onsite and across the watershed. Volunteer programs, school groups, and community members participate in seed collection, planting, and stewardship. S. Beckett also described a multi-month public event series developed with partners to build river literacy, featuring paddles, walks, workshops, and floodplain ecology programs. Additional outreach includes community festivals and a semester-long Montpelier High School course on rivers, geomorphology, ecology, and stewardship. Finally, he invited further partnership with organizations seeking to reach broader audiences or collaborate on stewardship events such as tree plantings. He emphasized the Center's role as a community connector and resource, offering support for public engagement, volunteer coordination, and education around watershed resilience.

Friends of the Winooski River (FWR):

M. Braun, Executive Director of Friends of the Winooski River, provided an overview of the organization's mission and work within the Winooski River watershed. She explained that Friends of the Winooski River is a longtime community-based nonprofit focused on protecting and restoring the watershed through three core program areas: *Learn, Restore, and Enjoy.* Their educational work includes free residential property consultations, water-quality sampling, and public talks aimed at improving understanding of watershed science. Restoration efforts range from volunteer-based tree planting, invasive species management, and river cleanups to larger staff-led projects such as culvert replacements, dam removals, strategic wood additions, and floodplain restoration. She emphasized the organization's unique role as a non-regulatory, community-driven group that provides accessible, hands-on opportunities for residents to support river health.

M. Braun also reviewed current priorities and upcoming projects for 2026. These include public programs such as watershed talks, snowshoe walks, flood safety presentations, community paddling events, and ongoing water-quality monitorin. Planned restoration projects include multiple dam removals, a culvert replacement in Williamstown, strategic wood placement, wetland restoration design work, and expanded tree planting initiatives. She highlighted the Winooski Flood Resilience Collaborative, co-led with CVRPC, which will engage communities in developing long-term flood-resilience strategies supported by river modeling and UVM research. M. Braun closed by encouraging municipalities and local groups to reach out, noting that despite being a small staff serving a large watershed, supporting local conservation and planning efforts remains central to the organization's mission.

Friends of the Mad River (FMR):
J. Frost, Watershed Project Coordinator at Friends of the Mad River, provided an overview of the organization's mission, history, and recent growth. She noted that the organization is celebrating its 35th year and is reaffirming its mission to *learn, conserve, and celebrate*, aligning closely with the work of partner watershed groups. J. Frost highlighted several longstanding initiatives, including the post–Tropical Storm Irene "Ridge to River" action framework, extensive culvert replacement and stormwater-mitigation work, and the group's long-running all-volunteer water-quality monitoring program, which tracks 23 sites across the watershed. She also described significant recent organizational expansion including a 200% increase in staff capacity over the past two years—which now allows the group to strengthen partnerships, take on larger watershed restoration projects, and offer broader community services. J. Frost outlined core program areas and several major current projects. These include advancing aquatic organism passage and stormwater infrastructure work with municipalities; supporting private landowners through programs such as StormSmart; and launching a new native plant nursery to produce locally adapted, climate-resilient species for restoration projects. She also highlighted development of a new geospatial project database, created with Stone Environmental, to support project tracking, watershed-scale planning, and community storytelling. Beyond project work, J. Frost emphasized expanded education and outreach efforts, including 24 community events in the past year, a hands-on expert series, a climate and ecology book club, work with 19 teachers and more than 600 students, and recreation-oriented programs such as Climb It for Climate and a New Year's Day cold plunge. She concluded by inviting further engagement and encouraging attendees to explore upcoming events and reach out with questions

Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP):
L. Jenness, Environmental Analyst with the Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP), provided an overview of the organization's mission, structure, and funding. She explained that LCBP was established by Congress in the early 1990s to manage Lake Champlain as a nationally significant resource and is guided by its management plan, *Opportunities for Action*, which emphasizes clean water, healthy ecosystems, public

engagement, and thriving communities. The program receives annual federal appropriations, primarily from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and distributes much of its funding through grants supporting water-quality, ecological, and cultural-heritage initiatives. Jenness noted that community members can influence LCBP's work through the Vermont Citizens Advisory Committee, which develops an annual action plan for the state legislature. She also highlighted the program's long-term monitoring partnerships, including public access to lake data and historical monitoring records. L. Jenness described several major LCBP programs and partnerships. The organization staffs the Lake Champlain Resource Room at the ECHO Center in Burlington and operates a large seasonal Boat Launch Steward Program to limit the spread of aquatic invasive species. Recent efforts have focused on managing water chestnut populations and preventing the introduction of invasive Round Goby through canal systems. She highlighted the *State of the Lake* report, published every three years (next report due 17 June 2027), and collaborative education programs such as *Watershed Matters* and *Watershed for Every Classroom*. Additional partnerships include the Lawn to Lake initiative promoting pollution-reducing lawn care practices and the StreamWise program supporting streamside landowners. L. Jenness concluded by noting LCBP's significant grant investments in the Winooski watershed, totaling nearly $6.5 million in recent years, and emphasized the program's continued commitment to regional water quality, community engagement, and cultural heritage.

Question and Answer:
J. Brabant inquired about wastewater discharges as they impact water quality and how watershed organizations are involved with this work. L. Jenness responded that LCBP is a non-regulatory, non-profit and is not involved in wastewater discharge. They do fund water sampling efforts. J. Frost mentioned the FMR is also nonregulatory but has an extensive water quality program. Waitsfield is looking at a Wastewater project in the Mad River Valley. B. Voigt discussed the Town of Waitsfield's upcoming wastewater system implementation, noting that required hookups in the village center and Irasville would be beneficial for water quality. A. Peal mentioned a past E. coli contamination incident traced to a malfunctioning wastewater system at a trailer park, highlighting the need for continued monitoring of wastewater discharges in the area. C. Amadon mentioned Moretown's exploration of village wastewater. He discussed the challenges of siting in-ground wastewater systems in Vermont, highlighting the need for more systems while ensuring water quality is not compromised.
B. Voigt mentioned the 27 March 2025 Wastewater Workshop in Waitsfield hosted by CVRPC and DEC focusing on alternative residential systems. This year CVRPC is working with the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District and DEC to host a wastewater workshop in Woodbury on 10 June 2026.

J. Brabant mentioned that Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) is testing fish tissue in the Winooski Basin and finding PFAS. The Environmental Protection Agency published a draft set of advisories for drinking water and concluded there is no safe level of

PFAS for human consumption. He encouraged watershed groups to engage with ANR to initiate public hearings to influence permit requirements for wastewater treatment facilities. C. Owen discussed how the Montpelier wastewater facility accepts PFAS leachate and processes the pollutant for other communities. However, the city discharges waste from this processing near the confluence of the Dog River and Winooski River.

C Owen asked about the state of the riparian buffer root stock in Vermont. M. Braun explained that FWR is possibly the largest tree planting entity in the state and works with the Intervale Conservation Nursery to obtain tree stock. She described a process where organizations submit their tree needs in the fall, and the nursery releases an availability list. While there was initially a perceived shortage of trees, she noted that the nursery had excess stock, suggesting a supply and demand mismatch. The group discussed efforts to address this issue, including new nurseries being created through grants and increased seed collection for local genetics. The Watershed Forestry Partnership is investigating the supply and demand issue and possible solutions. Different areas in the watershed, such as the headwaters and valley areas, require trees with different and more localized genetics. M. Braun mentioned volunteer seed collection efforts are important to the long-term success of planting projects. There are several new nurseries developing. B. Voigt asked J. Frost what the vision is for the FMR nursery, including what species and how much they plan to produce. J. Frost explained the local tree nursery will focus on hyperlocal ecotype-specific plantings and volunteer engagement opportunities such as workshops. FMR initially needs to produce 400 stems to satisfy their grant award. They are hoping to expand that by 4 or 5-fold in the next five years. Having local stock to offer landowners they are already working with is the goal. For larger projects they will likely still need to purchase stems elsewhere. FWR and FMR tree planting staff are working together to share resources and knowledge on priority projects. L. Jenness provided a link to a recent LCBP report on, Growing Native Tree Nursery Capacity to Meet Rising Demand, Protect Clean Water - Lake Champlain Basin Program.

C. Owen asked about culvert replacements and Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP). He asked what river advocacy groups can do to educate municipal road crews in getting rid of perched culverts. M. Braun clarified that the law requires new culverts to be passable. Temporary culverts such as those installed post flooding may be perched but will ultimately be replaced with passable structures. J. Frost mentioned training with the Winooski Aquatic Organism Passage Team consisting of representatives from the US Fish & Wildlife Service, VT Fish & Wildlife, Department of Environmental Conservation, Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District, Friends of the Winooski River, and Friends of the Mad River. This group works to identify priority projects and update the VT Culvert Database. A. Peal mentioned culvert inventories completed annually by CVRPC that happen annually in the summer. M. Braun expressed the desire for everyone assessing culverts to use the same protocols. She noted there is a gap in data for private crossings. The Winooski AOP is working to

compile all assessments in the Winooski Watershed to create a master dataset. The challenge now is prioritizing projects and aligning them with funding. A. Peal mentioned the importance of habitat crossing both aquatic and terrestrial when considering culvert projects. B. Voigt mentioned CVRPC culvert inventories are constrained by funding from VT Agency of Transportation and their focus is not AOP. A unified survey approach would be ideal and compiling existing data is a great next step.

Winooski River Basin Clean Water Service Provider – Project Updates: (see slides)

Due to time constraints, this agenda item was moved to the May CWAC meeting.

Announcements:

- Upcoming CWAC Meetings: 14 May 2026.
  - Meeting Topic: Natural Resources Planning Program Areas, Regional Plan Natural Systems Chapter Review, and FY27 Meeting Topics Discussion.
  - CWAC members are encouraged to bring ideas for future meetings relevant to the Tactical Basin Plan.
- Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District – 43rd Annual Tree Sale
  - Proceeds from the sale are used to support WNRCD's work developing and implementing on-the-ground projects that protect natural resources. Contact info@winooskinrcd.org with any questions.
  - Order Deadline: April 30th, 2026 at 11:59pm
    Pick-up Date: May 9th, 2026 from 9am-noon
- Clean Water Workforce Capacity Development Block Grant: Watersheds United Vermont (WUV) is pleased to announce the release of a new round of funded through DEC to support and invest in the capacity of clean water partners. Applications due April 10, 2026. For more information contact:
  - Lyn Munno, WUV Director: lyn@watershedsunitedvt.org
  - Christian Pelletier, WUV Grants Manager: christian@watershedsunitedvt.org
- **CWSP Funding** - The deadline for consideration at the 16 April 2026 Winooski River Basin Water Quality Council meeting is 9 April 2026. Schedule a meeting with Brian & Lincoln for project reviews & proposal development assistance.
- **FEMA Flood Bylaw CVRPC Assistance** - Book a meeting here or email frasca@cvregion.com and voigt@cvregion.com
- **Flood Safety Act Winooski Regional Webinar**
  - Past meeting facilitated by Lake Champlain Sea Grant and the Nature Conservancy with regional partners.
  - View 11 March 2026 Webinar

- See 13 November 2025 CWAC meeting materials for additional Flood Safety Act presentation materials

Adjourn: *M. Osiecki moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:52 PM. R. Turner seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

The next meeting is scheduled for 14 May 2026.

Minutes submitted by CVRPC staff member Lincoln Frasca