



South Lake Champlain Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC)

March 6, 2025, 3:15 pm

Online and in-person at the Rutland Regional Planning Commission offices.

MEETING MINUTES

Council Members present: Erin Rodgers, chair (TU); Adam Piper (VLT); Mike Winslow (ACRPC); Katy Crumley (PMNRCD); Sarah Pelkey (RRPC); Paul Donaldson (Town of Poultney); Shayne Jacquith (TNC)

Staff present: Hilary Solomon (PMNRCD/CWSP); Vicki Pattison-Willits and Sadie Brown (PMNRCD); Devon Neary and Barbara Noyes Pulling (RRPC/CWSP), Maggie O'Brien (RRPC)

VTDEC present: Angie Allen, Basin Planner; Zapata Courage, Wetlands Biologist, and Chris Rottler, DEC Water Investment Coordinator

Public present: None

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 3:18 pm by Erin Rodgers.

APPROVE AGENDA

Mike Winslow made a motion to approve the agenda with an amended order of project presentation (Fair Haven Village Implementation, South Lake Strategic Wood Addition Project Development, Flower Brook Riparian Planting, Wells Brook Tributary Planting, Castleton Headwaters SWMP Efficiency Numbers, Pawlet SWMP Efficiency Numbers). Seconded by Erin Rodgers. The motion was approved unanimously.

APPROVE MINUTES

Mike Winslow made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from December 20, 2024. Seconded by Katy Crumley. The motion was approved unanimously.

REVIEW OF SIX RFP PROJECTS

Fair Haven Village Implementation

This project addresses stormwater from a neighborhood in Fair Haven that currently drains to the Castleton River. The project includes underground R-tanks that will treat 17,200 CF of water (of 36,400 of generated WQv). The drainage area is 25.37 acres with 9.73 impervious acres. The total budget is estimated at \$236,000, with a high-cost scenario of \$256,100 (which includes a 20% contingency, 100% of the potential project management costs, and adds in the past design costs). The cost efficiency is \$20,595/kg of phosphorus remediated (at the high cost scenario).

Katy Crumley noted the CWSP had checked “no” for the leverage funds eligibility item and asked if that disqualifies the project; Hilary Solomon clarified that there are no leverage funds involved. Chris Rottler asked what kind of O&M would be involved; Hilary explained the project includes a swirl separator, which will need to be cleaned annually, when the town cleans the other drop inlets in the area. The project will allegedly last 30-50 years without maintenance to the underground R-tanks.

There’s no clear answer at this time on what happens when the R-Tanks fail. Katy additionally asked why the water quality volume treated was not 100%; Hilary stated this was due to the space available and the depth of groundwater.

Mike Winslow questioned whether the BWQC should receive the co-benefits matrix materials for review, as had been done in the past. This no longer happens during meetings as it would take up a huge amount of time, though Hilary offered sending the matrix out for review beforehand, and Mike confirmed that would be useful.

Katy Crumley made a motion to move the project forward with funding for \$236,000. Seconded by Shayne Jacquith. The motion was approved unanimously.

South Lake Strategic Wood Addition Project Development

The Nature Conservancy will conduct general project scoping of 10-15 miles of river and develop a list of projects for which specific project development will be carried out. This will involve gathering the landowner commitments needed to determine the expected phosphorus load reductions, project feasibility, and readiness to proceed. Shayne Jacquith noted that, if approved, this would be the first CWSP-funded project supporting project development for a strategic wood addition project. The total budget is estimated at \$38,527.04.

While previously determined by the BWQC to be unnecessary, Hilary Solomon indicated willingness to develop a scoring template for project development, if that was helpful. Zapata Courage asked if the strategic wood would be located exclusively within the stream area or if it would also involve strategic wetlands; Shayne explained the work would align with the specifications in the strategic wood addition manual, so would be limited to instream. Zapata further expressed concern for higher gradient, higher elevation streams, which have a lot of associated wetlands, and how the woody additions would be brought onto the site. She would need to approve the method as an allowed use, which requires her having the coordinates of the reaches and details around access and materials transport. Shayne

acknowledged these details would be part of the implementation proposal, and that 98% of the time it's boots on the ground and cutting and dropping trees from the banks. Mike Winslow asked what unit constitutes a project; Shayne replied it would be based on stream miles, as that's how the contractors would do the calculations, though Hilary said there needs to be coordination with DEC on their preferences.

Mike Winslow made a motion to move the project forward with \$38,527 in funding. Seconded by Katy Crumley. Shayne Jacquith abstained. The motion was approved unanimously.

Flower Brook Riparian Planting

This project aims to establish a 1.5-acre forested buffer along Flower Brook in Pawlet, Vermont. The project site is located on a piece of property that runs along the main stem of Flower Brook (running bridge to bridge) along Route 133. The site consists primarily of lightly used hay fields with mixed forest and residential areas, providing an ideal location for habitat restoration and flood resilience.

Implementation of the project consists of planting approximately 550 native trees and shrubs to enhance water quality, stabilize streambanks, and improve wildlife habitat. Species selection will be based on suitability to prevailing soil and environmental conditions and natural community composition and/or associations. The estimated phosphorus reduction is 3.34 kg/year. The total budget is estimated at \$9,758.44. The cost efficiency is \$2,921.56/kg of phosphorus.

Zapata Courage posed several questions: will any type of wetland delineation be done to inform the selection of plants? ANR Atlas shows the project area as floodplain, but the new mapping coming out indicates it as wetlands, and it's important the plants align with the wetness regime. Is there a timeline for when the plants will be put into the ground? What is the O&M for when they will be watered and monitored? Sadie Brown answered the monitoring is 3 years with a 75% survival rate, they will be sourcing to match soil conditions, and planting will occur in early May 2025. Hilary added that after 3 years, the O&M would come back to the CWSP to oversee future maintenance. Zapata stated she would ask these questions of any enhancement or restoration project to ensure its success, and that planting plans with no ground disturbance or hydrologic changes do not need to go through the wetland program to be approved. She added it would also be beneficial to quantify the buffer enhancement as this metric is being tracked and would go into the legislative report for overall net gains and corresponding functions and values. It would also provide a similar sense of how projects are doing success wise.

Mike Winslow posed three more questions: when the narrative says it used the stormwater treatment calculator, did it mean to say the Interim P calculator? (Hilary said yes and this will be corrected.) Has AAFM signed off on the conversion of cropland? (Hilary said the property does not meet the jurisdictional requirements to go through AAFM review and therefore doesn't require its sign-off, though the applications were shared with Nina Gage at VAAFM anyway.) Is the narrative saying CWSP staff and PMNRCD staff are the same? (Hilary said PMNRCD cannot have projects that are not CWSP-related, though guidance from DEC may be needed when projects are so clearly PMNRCD projects, part of a long history or our ongoing work.

Shayne Jacquith made a motion to move the project forward with \$9,758.44 in funding. Seconded by Adam Piper. Katy Crumley abstained. The motion was approved unanimously.

Wells Brook Tributary Planting

This project aims to establish a 4.25-acre riparian buffer along an unnamed upper tributary to Wells Brook. The project site consists of several different land types including agricultural (hay fields and perennial vineyard), wetland, two small intermittent streams, two man-made ponds, a residential area and an open meadow. Implementation of the project consists of planting approximately 1,485 native trees and shrubs with species selection to be based on suitability to prevailing soil and environmental conditions and natural community composition and/or associations. Sadie Brown added that the landowner is working to expand and establish a small vineyard upland and wants the land productive for wildlife and water quality purposes. Planting would occur in May 2025, and wetlands are currently mapped just west of the project site, though the new mapping will likely include wetlands in the middle of the planting area. The estimated phosphorus reduction is 9.17 kg/year. The total budget is estimated at \$25,127.50. The cost efficiency is \$2,740.18/kg of phosphorus.

The BWQC had no further discussion. Shayne Jacquith made a motion to move the project forward with \$25,127.50 in funding. Seconded by Adam Piper. Katy Crumley abstained. The motion was approved unanimously.

Castleton Headwaters SWMP Efficiency Numbers

This project consists of estimating the potential phosphorus reduction and the cost of project implementation for previously identified SWMP projects. The Castleton Headwaters Stormwater Master Plan (SWMP), which was completed in 2016 by Fitzgerald Environmental Associates (FEA) and PMNRCD staff, has roughly 50 projects identified, which do not have the phosphorus reduction numbers. According to staff at FEA, it would not be difficult to calculate these numbers with the older data collected during the original assessment. In addition, the older recommended project types may not meet current standards. This information will also be updated. The total budget is estimated at \$8,000.

Mike Winslow asked how this project would classify differently from those utilizing (early stage) engineering funds; Hilary acknowledged it might not be entirely different, but updating data in big excel tables to make calculations with a potential for a very quick set of site visits feels slightly different from that exact type of work. Mike advised the BWQC acts very carefully moving forward, as a lot of the SWMP projects include addressing road discharges related to the MRGP and the list of eligible projects is likely smaller. Hilary agreed, stating those projects will be weeded out from the list as part of the update process. The budget is currently a cap guess and will likely come in below \$8k. Shayne Jacquith asked if the engineering funding is not being used when it could be, is that taking away the overall funding from projects that cannot utilize it? Mike clarified he wants to make it as easy to do these projects as possible and that if it's already been approved to use the engineering funding, then it shouldn't come to the BWQC. Sarah Pelkey asked when the calculations would take place, as MRGP inventories will need to be updated and there should be awareness about the nature of this intersection. Hilary answered there

shouldn't be overlap, as the Town of Castleton will take on whatever projects fall under MRGP and update the road-related information as required.

Shayne Jacquith made a motion to move the project forward with \$8,000 in funding. Seconded by Adam Piper. The motion was approved unanimously.

Pawlet SWMP Efficiency Numbers

This project consists of estimating the potential phosphorus reduction and the cost of previously identified projects. The Pawlet Stormwater Master Plan (SWMP), which was completed in 2012-2013, has roughly 15 projects identified which do not have the phosphorus reduction numbers. The updated information will be used to prioritize these projects for future implementation. There are three road-related projects included in this list. The total budget is estimated at \$5,750.

Mike Winslow noted that when he reviewed the project list, it seemed that nine were related to roads, though it's possible this list may be smaller if the associated roads are not hydrologically connected.

Hilary Solomon further explained these projects involve draining through constructed areas, and it would be ideal to redirect the water off the roads and into raingardens.

Katy Crumley made a motion to move the project forward with \$5,750 in funding. Seconded by Shane Jacquith. The motion was approved unanimously.

PROGRAM UPDATE

Input from DEC has been received at multiple meetings in relation to project types and methodology. Hilary Solomon invited DEC to look at our gullies if that's helpful in understanding the nuances and how to stabilize. Claire Madden has responded and would like to come down and visit. Chris Rottler stated he would like to be involved in this site visit, as well as several of his colleagues. Zapata added that depending on what is proposed, especially if it involves wetlands, it may be helpful for her to join to educate on how these resources interact with jurisdictions and approvals. Hilary concluded that everyone being involved would be a benefit, as the situations are complex, and all parties should be present to help inform the next steps. DEC responded to Devon Neary's letter that a methodology be developed, saying it would take them some time to do so.

Barbara Noyes Pulling commented that with the actions from today's meeting, minus the gullies for now and the East Poultney project not going forward, this translates to \$662,882 scheduled to be spent out of the first allotment of \$831,000. The CWSP is short on phosphorus reduction numbers due to a lack of completed projects; only one project is completed and it only has a reduction of 0.5 kg/yr. After today, we added an estimated 25 kg/yr for a projected maximum of 203 kg/yr for previously approved projects. Our target is roughly 78 kg per year. Construction must happen for projects like the Fair Haven Village so the BWQC can report these numbers. Hilary noted that there are 3-4 projects adopted now, and the BWQC will work with DEC to determine how and when credits are received. Chris added that, while there's some stress in the system, things have improved compared to a year ago and will continue to look better a year from now. Additional opportunities for P credits may be found in the Forest Roads project sites and landowners managing for beaver occupancy (a no-cost way to achieve massive P reductions).

Additional comments: Hilary said the CWSP will soon roll out another reminder email to keep applications coming in and to give DEC as much time as possible for review, with the deadline for the next round being a month from now. Shayne offered the possibility of applicants submitting their own eligibility forms if it becomes too burdensome for the CWSP to handle them all. Zapata reiterated she needs span numbers or GPS coordinates of project locations, a project description, and a basic understanding of what is going to be done to quickly and easily do reviews as they relate to wetland concerns and design details. The email communications can get overwhelming, and she is not always sure what she needs to look at as the instructions can be vague.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

NEXT MEETING

TBD in June. A poll will be sent out to schedule the date and time. Shayne requested the BWQC avoid the week of the 23rd. Zapata requested the invitation be sent out as soon as possible.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn by Erin Rodgers. The meeting adjourned at 4:27 pm.