

Two Rivers – Ottawaquechee Regional Commission Clean Water Advisory Committee (CWAC)

Wednesday, October 3rd, 2018 8:00 – 9:00 PM

Randolph Town Hall - Conference Room B, 7 Summer Street, Randolph, VT

Attendees:

NAME	AFFILIATION
Steve Libby	Vermont River Conservancy
Danielle Owczarski	Vermont DEC
Matt Osborn	Town of Hartford
Jessica Richter	TRORC
Kevin Geiger	TRORC
Jeff Masterson	Town of Braintree
Paul Doton	CT River Watershed Farmers Alliance

Minutes:

Act 185 & the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)

Steve Libby made the group aware of a new opportunity for funding through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. Changes made to Act 185 in the spring of 2018 expanded the project eligibility definition from “water pollution abatement and control facilities” to a more inclusive “clean water project” definition. Steve stated that a draft of the changes was released on October 2nd and that there will be a comment period in early November. This broadening of eligibility opens the door for more Clean Water projects to be funded in the form of low interest loans through a municipality. It was discussed whether or not having a project being included in the White River Tactical Basin Plan would give it a better chance of being selected. More research was encouraged to determine if this Revolving Fund may be a good fit for municipalities and non-profit organizations within the CWAC.

Reclassification of Surface Waters

Danielle Owczarski gave an overview of the surface water reclassification process. TRORC expressed uncertainty in how to proceed with reclassification efforts now that the Plan has identified specific waters for reclassification. Currently, the only avenue that has been used to push reclassification of surface waters has been to include the proposed waters in the next update of the Vermont Water Quality Standards. It was suggested that pushing forward multiple reclassifications at a time would be the most efficient use of the process as a whole.

Danielle also mentioned that the plan for the data driven reclassifications that are listed in the White River Tactical Basin Plan (TBP), is to move those candidates forward for reclassification during the next update of the Vermont Water Quality Standards (sometime in the next 2-3 years or earlier). DEC developed a draft flow chart for the process and are at the point of finalizing the White River TBP, so there would still be public outreach and the timeline for that will probably be extended.

What DEC does not have completely developed, in terms of process, is creating a clear path for the public to submit their recommendations for rulemaking separate from DEC. The vision is to have a form for the public to fill out and submit. These would still need to go through the public vetting process. Danielle expressed that she is ready to help anyone who is willing to push reclassification efforts forward.

Project Prioritization

Jessica Richter brought up the issue of project prioritization and its relationship to the Watershed Projects Database. TRORC has been concerned with how to prioritize the ever-growing list of projects that are being added to the Database. She mentioned that the 33-point matrix that was given to RPCs to aid in prioritizing projects has been tedious and did not always accurately assess certain project types. The group then added that having a willing landowner is what makes the biggest difference in whether or not a project is implemented, despite whether or not the project is a high priority.

Opportunistic Projects

The group also addressed how to go about prioritizing opportunistic projects - those that are not sought out by a particular organization but are instead brought to their attention by an outside source. These projects normally have water quality benefits but have exceptional benefits in other areas as well (i.e. willing landowner, willing municipality, etc.). It was recommended that the best place to start is to put the project into the Watershed Projects Database and then move towards prioritization efforts.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05pm.

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