

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

Wednesday, May 1st, 2019 10:00 – 11:30 AM

King Farm Conference Room, 128 King Farm Rd, Woodstock, VT

Attendees:

NAME	AFFILIATION
Jeff Goodrich	Town of Norwich
Danielle Owczarski	VT DEC Basin Planner
Joan Allen	Town of Rochester
Marie Caduto	VT DEC Basin Planner
Peter Gregory	TRORC
Jennifer Byrne	WRNRCD
Pete Fellows	TRORC
Matt Osborn	Town of Hartford
Jess Richter	TRORC

Minutes:

Update on TRORC water quality-related projects

- Plymouth Wetland Restoration Workshop (DEC Train-the-Trainer Grant)
 - TRORC was awarded a Train-the-Trainer Grant from DEC to hold a wetland restoration workshop in Plymouth. This workshop will cover a wide range of wetland restoration topics including evaluation techniques, restoration goals, site considerations and limitations, funding opportunities and permitting. Another focus of the workshop will be analyzing a site called Pingree Flats, located at the confluence of Money Brook and the Black River on a flat plane that abuts RT-100. Floodwaters from TS Irene destroyed buildings located here and deposited nearly 2 feet of sediment. The workshop will include visits to this site as well as discussions on how it could be restored back to a functioning wetland. The workshop will be open to natural resource professionals including VT state agencies, federal partners, conservation districts, RPCs, VRC, The Nature Conservancy, etc. It will be held over 3 sessions beginning in the fall of 2019 with subsequent sessions in winter 2019/2020 and spring of 2020. A small stipend will be available for travel. More information to come as this project develops.
- High Meadows Fund – ‘Our Ottawaquechee’ Project
 - TRORC is wrapping up this 18-month grant project through the High Meadows Fund. The ‘Our Ottawaquechee’ project focused on developing a watershed identity for the Ottawaquechee and promoting flood resiliency efforts throughout. To conclude this project, TRORC will be holding a buffer planting event at Billings Farm in Woodstock on the morning of Friday, May 17th with the help of the Connecticut River Conservancy. We are looking for volunteers

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that are willing to get their hands dirty and plant trees! If interested in helping out, please contact Jessica for more information.

- White River Mainstem ORW Petition (NHCF Upper CT River MEF Grant)
 - TRORC will be forming a petition to designate the White River mainstem as an Outstanding Resource Water (ORW). This designation has been recommended in the last two iterations of the White River Tactical Basin Plan. TRORC will be having a volunteer from VLS, Michelle Davis, assist us on pulling data and organizing the petition. Marie recommended that TRORC keep well documented records of the process as NHCF will be looking for concrete deliverables and it will be useful for other public entities that pursue ORW designation in the future.
- Reclassification of Eshqua Bog to Class 1 Wetland
 - TRORC has met with Rob Anderegg of the Hartland Conservation Commission (HCC) to discuss the progress of this reclassification petition and the HCC is willing to assist TRORC in finishing up this petition. To do this, HCC will be working alongside The Nature Conservancy who is also interested in assisting with this application.

Basin 14 Tactical Basin Plan Timeline Update

Danielle Owczarski gave an overview of the Basin 14 Plan update process. This plan update will be on a shortened timeline compared to other basins and is scheduled to take approximately a year and a half to update. Overall, Basin 14 has good water quality but is still subject to legacy impacts from TS Irene and the July 1st, 2017 flood.

Danielle would like to have feedback from the CWAC as this process begins, especially in regards to public engagement (i.e. the location/timing of the initial kick-off meeting, advice for gaining feedback from the public, as well as advice for tailoring meetings to their specific interests).

Jeff Goodrich also commented on the trouble municipalities are facing in syncing post-disaster assessments and approvals relative to roads/floodplains. The CWAC discussed if there was a way to mention/address this issue within the Tactical Basin Plan or if another agency or program (VTrans, MRGP, etc.) would be better suited. This will be a bigger point of discussion at the next CWAC meeting.

Update on S. 96 – Provision of Water Quality Services

Peter Gregory gave an update on the status of S.96, which has made its way through the Senate and is currently located in the House Committee on Ways and Means. This bill refers to the governance of the non-regulatory aspects of water quality and focuses on assigning pollution load reduction efforts on a basin-scale in order to allocate funding accordingly. Peter explained the role of the ‘clean water service provider’ and ‘basin water quality council’ within this bill as well as how each of these roles allows for decisions to be made on a more local level. He noted that earlier versions of the bill included language that would have allowed the Secretary to initiate enforcement action against the clean water service provider if the provider failed to meet allocated pollution reduction goals. This language has been removed in the most recent version of the bill. Danielle asked if there was concern in regards to funding and not being located in the Lake Champlain basin. While there is some concern, Peter mentioned that it will be important for our region to stress the importance of anti-degradation efforts in relation to funding. Marie also voiced concern in regards to past project

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prioritization efforts at the RPC level and mentioned that this prioritization process should be improved upon if this bill does pass.

Other Business

Jessica let the group know that TRORC would contact towns when the Municipal Roads Grants-in-Aid Equipment Grant becomes available. This year, the grant is set to include the White, Ottauquechee and Otter Creek watersheds.

Jessica also brought up the idea of expanding the membership of the CWAC to include a state or local land conservation representative. She asked for members to think of possible organizations that would be interested and to bring suggestions to the next meeting.

Joan Allen suggested adding the discussion of WISPr onto the agenda for the next meeting as members would still like to hear about the most recent updates to the program.

Meeting adjourned at 11:35 AM.

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