Natural Resources Committee  
Monday, March 14, 2016 at 12:00 pm  
In the WRC Conference Room  
Meeting Minutes

Attendance  
*Natural Resources Committee present:* Maggie Bartenhagen, Chair, David Deen, Lynette Hamilton, Liisa Kissel, Jim Olivier, Andy Toepfer, John Whitman  
*Public Policy and Legislative Committee present:* (Departed after discussion with Representative David Deen) Tom Consolino, Chair, Elizabeth McLoughlin, Maggie Bartenhagen (also on Natural Resources)  
*Staff present:* Chris Campany, Kim Smith, Andrew Nguyen (AmeriCorp)

The meeting was called to order at 12:05pm with a quorum present and led by M. Bartenhagen. The first hour was a special joint meeting with the Public Policy and Legislative Committee. The Natural Resources Committee continued with committee-specific business afterward.

1. **Attend Public Policy and Legislative Committee meeting with Representative David Deen**  
   - Representative David Deen addressed the joint committees by providing an update on Act 64, the 2015 Vermont Clean Water Act (VT CWA). In regard to the Required Agricultural Practices (RAP), he explained that the small farm definition is still being developed and an interim report has been issued for subtile drainage of agricultural fields. The VT CWA also includes changes to anti-degradation rules involving waterway reclassification and stormwater discharges from state and local roads as well as developed lands. Representative D. Deen also described a $10 million Clean Water Fund that will, in the short-term, be funded through an increased property transfer tax. Future funding for clean water may come from state income/sales tax and/or entities that cause water quality impairments. The Clean Water Fund will be used to assist towns and farmers in meeting the new standards. The State is also implementing a significant outreach campaign about the new requirements. In response to questions, it was explained that the cost to individual towns will vary greatly depending on a number of factors, that an estimated $156 million per year will be needed for 10 years to adequately address the State’s clean water needs, and that the municipal roads general permit fees were set by the administration and will be reviewed every 3 years. There was discussion about efforts of adjacent states to curb nutrient loading as well as concerns about the definition of farming in the draft RAP.  
   - It was shared that there are concerns about the designated role of the WRC to engage in energy siting issues without funding to support the work.

2. **Minutes**  
   - The minutes of January 13, 2016 Natural Resources Committee were approved (motion by A. Toepfer, seconded by J. Whitman)
3. **Act 64 and Water Quality Outreach Initiative**
   - C. Campany explained how the WRC can support the VT CWA in the future: the Windham Regional Plan contains strong language in support of water quality and the WRC will continue to stand behind its clean water values. The WRC will assist towns with road assessment and documentation starting with a pilot inventory assessment in Weston this summer and will continue to respond to State-issued plan and rule changes within its means. The Commission will also continue to seek opportunities to use synergies with related work within the Commission and reach out to towns about best management practices for roads. C. Campany noted that in the future he would like WRC to engage the Natural Resources Committee earlier in the process to seek member input.
   - It was shared that WRC will be organizing two water quality outreach events, the first of which will be at the March Full Commission meeting on March 29. It was suggested that the second meeting be located to reach towns where it is most needed and that a “carrot (funding) and stick (mandate)” approach be used.

4. **Beavers and Flow Device Initiative**
   - It was shared that A. Nguyen is willing to organize a public event on beavers, wetlands, and/or land management in upland areas. Committee members suggested that the event be held in Grafton where there are several beaver flow devices that could be used for a site visit and that it be designed for a wide audience.
   - It was shared that B. Anderson is planning a walkabout; a walk throughout the region to raise awareness about beavers. It was shared that he would need to be careful about his associations with WRC, receiving Executive Board approval before going as a representative of WRC.

5. **Required Agricultural Practices, Second Draft**
   - The Required Agricultural Practices were discussed during the conversation with Representative D. Deen. This item was not further discussed.

6. **Update on recent projects/programs**
   - **Ecosystem Restoration Grants**: Adams Brook and North River: This item was tabled due to limited time.
   - **Saxtons River Watershed Collaborative**: This item was tabled due to limited time.
   - **Deerfield River Watershed Collaborative**: This item was tabled due to limited time.
   - **Wind Tour**: Several committee members indicated that they had an interest in participating in a wind tour of the Lempster site and suggested that all commissioners be invited to attend.

7. **Other business**
   - **There are several upcoming events:**
     - Small Farm Discussion Group: Thursday, Mar 17 at The Putney School, Putney
     - Wind vs Water talk: Friday, Mar 18 at the Grafton Elementary School, Grafton
     - Citizen Science Fair: Saturday, Apr 9 the River Garden, Brattleboro

   **Next meeting**: Wednesday, April 13, 2016 (second Wed. of the month) or as determined.

Meeting adjourned at 2:09pm

Respectfully submitted, Kim Smith