Natural Resources Committee  
Wednesday, April 13, 2016 at 2:00 pm  
In the WRC Conference Room  
Meeting Minutes

Attendance

*Natural Resources Committee present:* Maggie Bartenhagen, Chair, Bob Anderson, Nick Bartenhagen, Munson Hicks, Liisa Kissel, Andy Toepfer, John Whitman  
*Staff present:* Kim Smith

The meeting was called to order at 2:03pm with a quorum present and led by M. Bartenhagen.

1. Minutes
   - The minutes of March 14, 2016 Natural Resources Committee were approved (motion by J. Whitman, seconded by A. Toepfer)

2. Act 64 and Water Quality Outreach Initiative
   - K. Smith shared that WRC had presented on Act 64 and the Clean Water Initiative during the Full Commission meeting and invited feedback from those present at the meeting before the presentation is given again to municipal officials.
   - K. Smith shared a draft agenda for a second meeting for municipalities that would cover Act 64 as well as river corridor zoning, shoreland protections, and other recent state legislation to protect water resources and infrastructure. The Committee supported the draft agenda and offered the following recommendations: hold at least 3 meetings throughout the region to support greater attendance, don’t assume that board members are familiar with water related issues, have the event filmed by BCTV and link to WRC website, offer a pre-meeting stream table demonstration (with video), provide literature and factsheets about the programs and regulations, convey urgency and mandates in messaging, advertise through town newsletters, open the event to anyone interested and include Conservation Commissions, VTrans, students (especially for the stream table) in outreach.
   - K. Smith shared that WRC is partnering with the Vermont Performance Lab to initiate a multidisciplinary program with local water resource based organizations and schools that explores opportunities to engage citizens in water research, the arts, and education. It was suggested that toxic pollutants in water supplies is an important topic that could be highlighted through this outreach work.

3. Beavers and Flow Device Initiative
   - B. Anderson shared that he plans to walk to each of the 27 towns in the region to raise awareness about beavers and wetland habitats starting May 15. He would like to engage Commissioners in each town in hosting meetings, inviting guests and speakers, and engaging in dialogue. As part of this 6-month walkabout, B. Anderson would like to set up a fund to purchase conservation easements on beaver-inhabited wetlands, purchase land, and/or defray
the cost of installing flow devices and write about his experiences afterward. K. Smith agreed to look into his request to talk at an upcoming Full Commission meeting.

- Andrew Nguyen, AmeriCorp member, is developing an uplands management workshop that will include education about beaver contributions to wetland creation and its associated benefits of stormwater retention.

4. TransCanada Proposed Sale of Dams
   - The Committee discussed the recent announcement that TransCanada plans to sell their dams on the Connecticut and Deerfield Rivers. The State of Vermont has expressed interest in purchasing the dams, but that there is significant discussion and research needed to determine the implications of such a decision. The WRC has asked the State to engage the 12 towns in our region that would be affected by the State’s purchase of the dams.

5. Update on recent projects/programs
   - Ecosystem Restoration Grants: Winhall and Green Rivers: K. Smith shared that WRC submitted an application for the 3 restoration/conservation projects on a key 6-acre floodplain in Guilford and that WRC had provided assistance to the Town of Winhall with the development of an application for mitigating bank encroachment on the Winhall River.
   - Saxtons River Watershed Collaborative: The SRWC has scheduled 3 buffer plantings in May and has engaged multiple local schools, non-profits, and community groups to implement the plantings. The Committee suggested that WCNRD seek out a hole digger on a tractor, perhaps through Vermont Academy or the Windham Foundation, to pre-dig the holes prior to the planting days in order to reduce the workload for the volunteers and ensure adequate depth. It was suggested that SRWC reach out to Main Street Arts, The Nature Museum at Grafton, BFUHS, Compass School, and Vermont Academy for additional volunteer participation.
   - Citizen Science Fair: The Citizen Science Fair on April 9 was reportedly a success with good turnout and community engagement.

6. Other business
   - M. Bartenhagen announced that she and N. Bartenhagen were resigning as Halifax Town Commissioners effective May 1 because they will be moving out of the area to be closer to their daughter. In discussing a chair replacement (if an Executive Board member does not step forward to fill the position), A. Toepfer agreed to serve as chair under the condition that attendance at additional meetings not be required.

Next meeting: Wednesday, May 11, 2016 (second Wed. of the month) or as determined.

Meeting adjourned at 3:49pm

Respectfully submitted, Kim Smith