Natural Resources Committee  
Wednesday, July 8, 2015 at 2:00 pm  
In the WRC Conference Room  
Meeting Minutes

Attendance  
Natural Resources Committee present: Maggie Bartenhagen, Chair, David Deen, Andy Toepfer, Nick Bartenhagen  
Visitors present: Patti Smith (Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center)  
Staff present: Kim Smith

The meeting was called to order at 2:06pm with a quorum present and led by M. Bartenhagen.

Minutes  
• The minutes of June 10, 2015 Natural Resources Committee were approved unanimously with one abstention. (motion by A. Toepfer, seconded by M. Bartenhagen)

Invasives Summary  
• Continuing discussion from previous meetings, the RPCs have been requested by representatives from the State of Vermont to organize one regional meeting with key informants to address the threats of invasive species. RPCs have also been asked to provide a summary of the status of invasives in the region. The Committee discussed known invasives and current initiatives for inclusion in the summary. Committee members suggested educating towns about best management practices to minimize the spread of invasive species and developing BMP outreach materials.

Update on recent projects/programs  
• Bees, Bats, and Habitats Forum: The Committee briefly discussed the positive response from the public forum.  
• Vermont Watershed Grant: K. Smith informed the Committee that the Adams Brook restoration planning had been awarded to Fitzgerald Environmental Associates.  
• High Meadows Fund Grant: K. Smith informed the Committee that the HMF is considering the Saxtons River Grant proposal. We expect a final announcement in mid-July.  
• Proposed Solar Farm Installations: K. Smith shared that there are at least 9 large solar farms proposed in the Windham Region, raising concerns about the lack of standards around facility siting. It was discussed that larger installations could prohibit individual landowners from installing personal residential-scale arrays due to limited transmission capacity as is currently occurring in the Athens area. The Committee suggested that the WRC could sponsor an event for towns to offer tools and facilitate discussion on landscape-focused solar farm siting.
Other business

- **Vermont Clean Water Act**: D. Deen provided a summary of the Vermont Clean Water Act, which will go into effect incrementally through 2021. The new regulations will require that best management practices for roads, stormwater discharges, and related development that are currently voluntary will become mandatory. Towns not in compliance with the standards will receive reduced funding from VTrans for improvement projects. Additionally, the currently voluntary Acceptable Agricultural Practices Guidelines will become required for agriculturalists, applicable to owners of any number of livestock. The Act creates the Clean Water Trust Fund through an increased transfer tax to fund clean water projects beginning in 2017. The Trust Fund will focus on municipal projects for the first 3 years. The Committee discussed the need for additional outreach to agriculturalists and the implications to towns. It was suggested that a timeline or checklist be developed to guide towns on how to prepare for the new changes.

Flow Device Installation Initiative

- Discussion of Flow Device Installations was moved to the end of the meeting due to the late arrival of visitor, P. Smith. K. Smith provided an update: Bob Anderson contacted Ducks Unlimited and K. Smith explored the New England Grassroots Environmental Fund and Trout Unlimited about funding opportunities. The first two are potential funding sources. It was recommended that K. Smith explore a FEMA Flood Prevention grant and contact Lael Will of the VT F&W Department. The Committee discussed creating a 3-phase beaver initiative to 1. Develop a program manual for towns to design and implement flow device installations. 2. Support a pilot program for a town to implement a flow device using the program manual. 3. Support a larger initiative to assist towns with the installation of flow devices. It was suggested that ongoing education about wetlands and beavers should continue throughout the program period.

Next meeting

- The next Natural Resources Committee meeting will be **Wednesday, August 12, 2015 at 2:00pm** or as otherwise determined.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00pm

Respectfully submitted, Kim Smith