Natural Resources Committee
Wednesday, April 12, 2017 at 2:00 pm
In the WRC Conference Room
Meeting Minutes

Attendance
Natural Resources Committee present: Bill Dunkel, Kevin Stine, Everett Wilson, Liisa Kissel, Andy Toepfer, Susan Hammond, Bob Anderson
Guests present: Eliza Rudegeair
Staff present: Emily Davis

The meeting was called to order at 2:00pm without a quorum present and led by Kevin Stine.

1. Minutes
   • The minutes of the January and February meetings were not approved without quorum present. Will motion an approval during May meeting.

2. Update on current projects:
   • The Gorman Chota property: Emily Davis updated the committee on this project in Guilford, which had been unfortunately stalled due to a sale of the property and unknown landowner consent. The new landowner had been reached out to multiple times via email but there hasn’t heard a response. She said that she’ll continue to reach out to this person, and will emphasize the time-sensitive nature of the response.
   • Adams Brook: Emily mentioned that between the WRC staff and Marie Caduto there is agreement that pursuing landowner consent to access the bed armoring is not viable, and access should be made to the site via Adams Hill Road. John Bennett and Emily Davis are scheduled to discuss this alternative access with Evan Fitzgerald and Marie Caduto, and develop a plan for how the partners can fund this project in the upcoming ERP round.
   • Green River Watershed Alliance & Leahy Summit Update: Emily also discussed the results of the Green River watershed’s team at the Leahy Summit, and passed out a summary of the work done at that conference, and outlining the next steps of the project. Eliza Rudegeair also shared some details of the status of the project, and helped explain how the arts and ecological restoration are going to relate to each other as the project pursues grant funding from the High Meadows Fund. The grant application deadline is June 1, and so the big next step is to get the three towns of Marlboro, Halifax, and Guilford together and develop a detailed project grant proposal.
3. Upcoming 2017/2018 ERP projects:
   - Emily began the discussion of upcoming implementation projects by explaining that the next round of funding RFP’s from the DEC will be released in early May, with the application deadline June 15.
   - She presented a short list of implementation projects to the committee that fit within the prioritized list of projects in Basin 11. The projects were identified from the 2010 Saxtons River Corridor Plan completed by Evan Fitzgerald, plus the 2016 update to that plan for the Town of Grafton along the Saxtons River. These projects were ranked to have the highest priorities in terms of both flood resiliency and habitat restoration. The committee discussed some particular details regarding the sites of these projects.
   - Emily had suggested that she discuss the viability of the projects with Marie Caduto and Evan Fitzgerald, and rely on their best judgment of the river and the sites to see which projects are most likely to be successful and have the highest impact on water quality.
   - The committee will receive updates on these projects as they happen otherwise will return to this discussion during the May NRC meeting.

4. ECO AmeriCorps Service Site:
   - Emily told the committee that the WRC’s application to be a host site for a service member was accepted, and so staff is preparing to take on an ECO AmeriCorps member for September 2017 – August 2018. The title of this position is Water Quality Planning Assistant, and so the member will be involved in various tasks regarding water quality planning in the region.
   - The member will work most closely with Emily Davis in the WRC, but also be working with Eliza Rudegeair and Marie Caduto. They have three major tasks: road erosion inventory field work and data processing, public outreach and education, and water quality program management. They will also have three minor duties, including riparian conservation easement potential inventorying and prioritization, data entry into the ARK water quality project tracking database, and providing program assistance to stream buffer plantings.

5. Update on Energy Planning:
   - Emily also updated the committee on the current status of the energy planning process, and specifically how it affects and relates to the municipalities. She had told the committee that all towns in the Windham Region will be receiving a package of information (specific to those municipalities) that will be used by the towns in their enhanced energy plan under Act 174, should they choose to do so. She hopes to get this information out to the towns by April 24.
   - That data package will include information on the town’s current energy consumption, targets for energy efficiency and fuel conversion, targets for energy generation, renewable energy resource maps, and guidance on developing policy around robust energy planning. Importantly, the package will also include an enhance energy plan template that the towns may use to develop this section of the town plan.
   - The group also discussed that this is a contractual requirement of the WRC, and that towns are not required to take any immediate action with this data (or any action at all). This is just available to towns when/if they choose to pursue their enhanced energy plan.
   - Liisa Kissel had brought up the question of how the town’s process will fit into the regional energy plan and the overall timeline, since towns don’t have much time to give feedback to the WRC and that it won’t be incorporated into the regional plan. Emily agreed that the timeline is aggressive and unfortunate, and added that the May 31st deadline for the regional plan is only
for a draft, and that this will continue to be an ongoing and iterative process between the regions and the towns.

6. Other Business:

- Emily had also added that she would be attending the Watersheds United Vermont’s Spring Meeting the following day (April 13), and that there was a chance that the current status of the clean water funding proposal would be discussed. If that were the case, she would send an update to the committee, since this is an ongoing topic of concern and interest.

- **Next meeting:** Wednesday May 10, 2017 (second Wed. of the month) at 2:00pm , or as determined.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Emily Davis.