Natural Resources Committee
Wednesday, May 23, 2017 at 5:30 pm
In the Windham Regional Career Center
Meeting Minutes

Attendance
Natural Resources Committee present: Bill Dunkel, Kevin Stine, Andy Toepfer, Susan Hammond
Staff present: Emily Davis

The meeting was called to order at 5:40 pm without a quorum present and led by Kevin Stine.

1. Minutes
   - Will approve the minutes at the June meeting. There was some discussion about attendance, and Emily Davis had mentioned that she went through the standing list of NRC members and that there were a couple of inactive members that should no longer count towards having a quorum present.
   - The group had decided that it would be best for Emily to send out all the minutes that require approval ahead of the June 14, 2017 meeting, so committee members could review them without taking up meeting time.

2. Update on current projects:
   - The German Chota property:
     Emily Davis updated the committee on this project in Guilford, where the new landowner has said that they will not consent to having any of the proposed projects done on the property this season. The reasoning behind their decision was unclear.
     Emily did explain that the grant period extended to March 2018. And so there was still some possibility of having work done. She said that she would be in touch with the landowner come the end of the summer to see if the situation has changed.
     Andy Toepfer asked about parcel boundaries and whether or not the landowner had authority in the area. Emily believed that the parcel did extend past the Green River and up the opposite hill slope, but would double check the property boundary data.
   - Adams Brook:
     Emily explained that this project is well in the works and slated for completion this field season.
     John Bennett, Emily Davis, and Marie Caduto have been working with DEC and Evan Fitzgerald to pull the material necessary for this project to complete. She described the new funding mechanism that will support this project.
   - Green River Watershed Alliance & Leahy Summit Update:
     Emily also discussed the GRWA project. The High Meadows Fund grant is due on June 1, 2017, and she has been busy completing the grant application and coordinating with project partners.

3. Clean Water Funding Structures for 2017/2018:
   - Emily began the discussion of the three funding mechanisms moving from DEC, and prompted by the current legislative climate of wanting to push implementation projects and prioritize project completion through construction-ready work.
   - The three mechanisms are:
1) Traditional ERP. Though it will be largely as we know it, there are two important changes. Now, grantees will have the option to apply for “package grants,” where projects in a similar geographic region and/or stage of implementation (scoping, final design, implementation, etc) can be applied for as a group, through a single application. Emily suggested some package grant opportunities in the Saxtons River watershed, including 4 bridge design replacements, buffer plantings, or one that supports AOP through culvert replacements.

2) Clean Water Block Grants: The state DEC has identified a set of projects that are “construction-ready.” Adams Brook happens to be one of these projects. The DEC is currently looking for an RPC to help administer these funds, which are intended to push project completion. The legislature is seeking reporting on these projects by the end of the field season so as to measure progress.

3) Direct Aid for MRGP compliance: Pilot towns are currently being solicited to take a part in this Direct Aid funding, which is aimed at addressing drainage standards compliance as per the Municipal Roads General Permit.

- Finally, Emily emphasized that these structures are new, and there are still many questions to be answered about the logistics and their administration. Additionally, the request for proposals for the ERP funds have not been released, and so there is limited information to work with currently.

4. Tactical Basin Plan Prioritization:
- Emily had presented a prioritization scoring system to the NRC members. The intent of this sheet was to create a consistent state-wide method for CWAC’s and other committees to prioritize project in their respective Tactical Basin Plans.
- The RPC’s who led the steering committee to develop this method are soliciting input from other RPC’s and CWAC’s. Emily suggested that NRC members could “field test” this scoring method with a current or proposed project, to see if there is anything missing.
- Andy Toepfer pointed out that there was no mention of ecological benefit and wildlife habitat improvement. Emily responded that she would receive more clarity on why this was omitted.
- This discussion will be revisited at the next NRC meeting.

5. Other Business:
- Emily had mentioned that the WRC had successfully placed Billy Ernest as the next ECO AmeriCorps member. He will start in September 2017. She mentioned that she felt he was well qualified and would be a great fit.
- Kevin Stine also mentioned that the dam removal project on Cold Brook in Wilmington will likely not happen due to landowner issues. However, the dam removal on the East Putney Brook seemed viable. Andy Toepfer then suggested that AOP package grant funds could go to this stream once the dam is removed, to create a larger benefit for habitat.

- **Next meeting:** Wednesday June 14, 2017 (second Wed. of the month) at 2:00pm, or as determined.

*Meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm.*

*Respectfully submitted, Emily Davis.*