Members Present: Gabby Ciuffreda, Chair; Bill Dunkel, Lise Fortin, Liisa Kissel, Steve Lembke, Kevin Stine, John Whitman, Everett Wilson, Andrew Toepfer

Absent: Bob Anderson, David Deen, Lynette Hamilton, Susan Hammond

Staff present: Emily Davis

Public: None.

Presenter: None.

Meeting convened at 5:05 p.m.

1. Meeting Minutes:
   - Action: Minutes from the April 26, 2018 meeting were approved on a motion by John Whitman, seconded by Kevin Stine, and with a unanimous vote. Abstentions: Steve Lembke and Liisa Kissel, were not present at meeting.

2. Review Regional Plan Update Schedule:
   Gabby Ciuffreda talked about the general schedule among the entire Windham Regional Commission for updating the Regional Plan. She discussed how each of the committees are reviewing what needs to be addressed or updated in their respective planning areas. WRC staff will then collect these committee notes, and organize internally in October 2018 to develop a plan for writing the update.

   Once that internal organization is complete, the WRC will have a clearer idea of the overall plan update timeline and what to expect in the upcoming months.

3. Review 2014 Windham Regional Plan Natural Resources Policies:

   The Natural Resources Committee Commissioners provided comment on the follow elements of the Natural Resources summary section, on pages 25-34 of the 2014 Regional Plan:

   John Whitman generally agrees with the existing content, though it is missing:
   - Weight limits in VT are different than in other States.
   - Worker compensations rates are very high, and so logging companies can’t hire new employees.
- Issues with the new Emerald Ash borer, moving firewood, etc.
- Act 171 and forest fragmentation planning.
- Vermont Clean Water Act – Act 64

Kevin Stine brought up invasive species considerations, do we really want to “eradicate”? Kevin also mentioned that UVA designation should then open a property up to public use (snowmobiling, skiing, hunting, etc). This occurs in NH, why not in VT?

Steve Lembke added that more targeted approach to invasive species management would be more effective, and include management in a plan that is required by UVA designation? Overall, the group could examine the policies and procedures, and motivations with the Current Use program, and see how relevant it is still in our current context.

Bill Dunkel: How proactive is the WRC with conservation easements? Is anyone actually talking to anyone? Do we broker conversations, or is it just plan language?

Liisa Kissel: We should take a more active approach to protection of these precious areas that are regionally significant, we should include adding information and education of the conservation opportunities that exist for landowners.

Lise Fortin: There is a little mention of education, though there should more of a focus on education of conservation importance and opportunities, since that is a big part of what the WRC does (or could do).

Lissa Kissel: River conservancy, and watershed study, is much required in the Plan, since it is very important to protect our rivers for water quality and flood resilience. This isn’t properly addressed in the existing Plan. Also, stream reclassification should be added. Since the 2014 Plan was developed, VT DEC has new stream designations, which should be included.

John Whitman: As the NRC, we are supposed to be protecting the natural resources. The only way to properly protect those resources is that they can be held by individuals that serve the economy. Natural resources are valued for economics as well as their environmental value.

Bill Dunkel: There are many areas where a policy is not clear in its language... what are we actually saying? Our policies should be more clear in terms of what they actually do.

John Whitman: “Natural Area” and “Fragile Areas” vs. “natural areas” and “resource areas.” We ought to be careful about which terms we are using, and be aware of colloquialisms to be sure that the Plan is precise in language (and therefore policy). Consistency with state standards and state definitions is important.

Bill Dunkel: Road run-off and salts and potentially ecological and budgetary impacts, what about calcium chloride on dirt roads?

Steve Lembke: Could the WRC be more proactive when working with towns to identify well water and groundwater resources, given the problems that were faced in Bennington County? Also, wastewater planning in small villages should be more adequately addressed.

John Whitman: Incorporate more town-specific valuable natural areas, have it be more personalized to the specific areas of the region (without including people’s or a property’s individual information).
Bill Dunkel: Encourage education, at the local level, about air quality. People may not have information about how to heat their homes and use innovative technologies. Maybe there is an educational piece under air quality.

Steve Lembke: Can the policies address use of pesticides? Use on invasive species? How do they impact land management?

4. Other Business:
Emily Davis briefly mentioned that the Vermont DEC, through the Clean Water Fund Board, is identifying clean water funding priorities for the FY20 period, and is currently receiving public comment, Emily encouraged the Commissioners to submit comment, is desired, and asked if the Committee would approve her reiteration of previous committee positions on the clean water funding question.

5. Next Meeting:

- The Natural Resources Committee will skip their August meeting, and instead host a field trip with the Energy Committee to the Searsburg wind turbines. This will be on Thursday, August 23rd, in the afternoon (Emily Davis said that she would confirm the time with the NRC).

- The next meeting will be on Thursday, September 27th, at 5:00 in the WRC Conference Room. The Committee will review the Land Use summary section, or pages 7-14 in the Regional Plan.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 pm.