

CHITTENDEN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
CLEAN WATER ADVISORY COMMITTEE – APPROVED MINUTES

DATE: **Tuesday, April 4, 2023**
 SCHEDULED TIME: 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
 PLACE: In-person @ CCRPC office and online via Zoom
 DOCUMENTS: Minutes, documents, and presentations discussed accessible at:
<http://www.ccrpcvt.org/meetings/clean-water-advisory-committee/>

Committee Members in Attendance (all online unless otherwise noted)		
Bolton: Joss Besse	Hinesburg: Merrily Lovell	St. George:
Buels Gore: Brendan O’Brien	Huntington: Darlene Palola	Underhill:
Burlington:	Jericho: Tom Joslin	Westford:
Charlotte: Alex Dobbs	Milton: Lisa Schaeffler, Mariia Hatseliuk (11:28)	Williston: Christine Dougherty
Colchester: Karen Adams, Brett McCreary	Richmond:	Winooski: Ryan Lambert
Essex: Annie Costandi, Chair	Shelburne: Chris Robinson	VAOT: Jennifer Callahan (11:40)
Essex Junction:	South Burlington: Dave Wheeler, Marisa Rorabaugh	VANR:
BTV Airport: Catie Calabrese	University of VT: Lani Ravin	CCRPC Board:
Friends of the Winooski River:	Lewis Creek Assoc:	Winooski NRCD:
Other Attendees: Dean Pierce (Basin 7 CWSP), Brian Voigt (Basin 8 CWSP); Ethan Tapper, FPR; DEC/LC Sea Grant: Jill Sarazen, Karen Bates, DEC		
CCRPC Staff: Dan Albrecht (at CCRPC office), Darren Schibler		

1. **Call to Order.** Chair, Annie Costandi called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m.
2. **Changes to the Agenda and public comments on items not on the agenda** No changes.
3. **Review and action on draft minutes of February 7, 2023.** After a brief recap by Albrecht, *Wheeler made a motion, seconded by Adams to approve the minutes as drafted. All in favor (Ravin abstained). MOTION PASSED.*
4. **Forest Management in Chittenden County & Water Quality, Ethan Tapper, FPR**
 Tapper provided a presentation on how forest management impacts water quality. VT’s county foresters are primarily responsible for supporting forest management on private land through direct service as well as overseeing the Use Value Appraisal (“UVA” or “Current Use”) program, a tax abatement. County foresters also help manage municipal forests within their jurisdiction, depending on capacity and need. Finally, county foresters conduct education and outreach on responsible forest management and the values of forests to society.

 Tapper noted that Vermont is about 74% forested, about 78% of which is privately owned, and a large majority is actively managed. However, VT’s forest land is slowly being converted to non-forest uses. Most forestry work in the state is done by private consulting foresters, who develop management plans and supervise loggers in which trees get cut.

 Tapper described the value that forests provide to water quality. This is done by living trees, which attenuate rainfall and physically protect soils from erosion. Forests also store water as part of organic carbon (in standing / dead wood and soil), which is important to mitigating climate change. Tapper also noted the parallels of current understanding of stream and forest management: both have been heavily altered by humans. Both also require some amount of dynamic change (meander erosion and forest succession, respectively) for long-term resilience. Finally, managing for long-term resilience in both streams and forests will provide the most stable patterns of water, sediment, and carbon cycling.

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2 Tapper then described forests' contributions to sedimentation in our watershed. While some discharges
3 are natural processes, some are caused by access infrastructure in actively managed forests (roads, skid
4 trails, and stream crossings). These are mitigated in Vermont through the Acceptable Management
5 Practices (AMPs). AMPs address elements such as water bars and road drainage, grading of roads and
6 skid trails, and design of log landings. AMPs are only mandatory on parcels enrolled in Current Use;
7 however, fines can be issued for sediment discharges in forests where AMPs have not been followed
8 properly. Vermont's forest management regulations are relatively limited: AMPs, the heavy cutting
9 law, and rules / restrictions on parcels enrolled in Current Use. Per statute, municipalities are not
10 allowed to regulate forest management (only the state is).

11
12 Tapper drew a distinction between logging (unrestricted, unsupervised cutting of trees) vs. forest
13 management (logging carefully supervised by a professional forester). Loggers can still do a good job,
14 but sometimes have different goals (primarily resource extraction) and may not pay attention to certain
15 issues. He also described his approach to forest management: ecological forestry or managing forests
16 like they manage themselves. This involves using forest management and logging as a tool to achieve
17 similar outcomes to natural forest processes, such as through simulated natural disturbance events;
18 creating spatial diversity (multi-generational forests); leaving lots of dead wood behind; retaining
19 some larger, older "legacy" trees forever; and creating pockets of early successional habitat. Tapper
20 highlighted that ecological forest management achieves many of the same outcomes that meet water
21 quality goals.

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23 Tapper noted that the current concern for water quality in forests is erosion from legacy infrastructure
24 (poorly planned roads and undersized crossings). The general solution is "overbuilding" trails and
25 crossings to protect against more extreme precipitation events.

26
27 Finally, Tapper highlighted the importance of "multi-solving" in forest management – trying to
28 achieve multiple cross-sector goals at once.

29 Questions

30 Costandi asked for clarification that municipalities that own their forests can still manage it like a
31 private landowner, but they can't regulate private lands. Tapper agreed and also noted that towns are
32 generally going to manage their forests with the county forester and should follow AMPs.

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34 Albrecht asked Tapper to send along the relevant statutes, and to share any work Tapper has done with
35 the municipal water quality sector. Tapper described his work with the LaPlatte Headwaters Town
36 Forest in Shelburne, which covers 301 acres, 130 of which are an old, ditched floodplain that is
37 covered in the invasive reed canary grass. The goal is to reforest the area with native vegetation to
38 reduce erosion and improve ecological health. He also discussed his work stabilizing and upgrading
39 old road infrastructure in the Andrews Community Forest in Richmond.

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41 Wheeler asked about how the state manages sediment discharges where AMPs were ineffective.
42 Tapper said this is rare but could happen when there is a catastrophic rain event, and the solution is to
43 reinstall the AMP elements. At Wheeler's question, Tapper said that there is no active inspection of
44 these sites, it is only through community reporting or if a county forester notices them in person. He
45 noted that New Hampshire has a logging noticing requirement which doesn't exist in Vermont. At
46 Schibler's question, Tapper clarified that AMP violations are fairly rare and are usually addressed
47 quickly and easily by landowners. Palola asked how people should report these violations and asked if
48 there is an easier way for this to be done. Tapper agreed, but also noted that most of the reports that
49 county foresters receive are actually inconsequential because forestry "looks worse" than it actually is.

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51 Voigt asked whether municipalities get notices of heavy cut permits. Tapper wasn't sure but noted that
52 there is a separate forester who manages these as well as AMPs. Voigt wondered if there is a role for
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1 conservation commissions to play in this space. Tapper also noted that there is a lot of concern about
2 the climate and carbon impacts of active forest management and suggestions that all forest
3 management should be stopped. However, active forest management can have positive outcomes and
4 is better than conversion of forest land to non-forest. Tapper suggested that a good use of trained
5 volunteers could be used to help monitor water quality concerns in forests. Bates suggested that this
6 could include having volunteers look for old logging roads to be retired and stabilized, possibly with
7 funding from Clean Water Service Providers.

8
9 Besse asked Tapper to clarify that in the chart he showed about phosphorus contributions of forest,
10 most of that was from “background” natural processes. Tapper agreed; Bates noted that another
11 significant contributor could be forested gullies, which may be caused by streams attempting to meet
12 equilibrium due to impacts from human interventions (roads, clearing, impervious surfaces, etc.).

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14 Palola asked whether any CWSP funding is available to identify clean water projects in forests, and
15 Albrecht noted that in general, yes, and he will add more later in the agenda.

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17 [Editor’s Note: Ethan Tapper provided the following contact information in the Chat:
18 ethan.tapper@vermont.gov / <https://linktr.ee/ChittendenCountyForester>
19 <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCG5pCDPHUyOiA2vW117L6oA>]

20 21 **5. Update on operations of Clean Water Service Providers for Basins 5, 7 and 8**

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23 Pierce (Basin 7) said that their Basin Water Quality Council met twice in March and is still working on
24 developing a prioritization system. The CWSP has received 5 applications. The Council endorsed the
25 funding requests and the CWSP is finalizing agreements with the requesting organizations. Future
26 requests will be done roughly quarterly. Pierce noted that one of the projects is a stream reconnection
27 project in Elmore and was the best performing project. Pierce also shared a link to their application
28 status web app: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/publish?EQBCT=876fab910b384dfb93045414dae127c2>.

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30 Voigt (Basin 8) noted that they are meeting regularly and are still hoping to get more responses to their
31 RFQ. Project Solicitation (Round 1) will go out later today or tomorrow. They are encouraging
32 municipalities to consider submitting qualifications and anticipate 2 more solicitation rounds this year.
33 He noted that there their formula grants are restricted to non-regulated projects as other CWSPs, but
34 this could include work in identifying water quality projects on forest properties.

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36 Albrecht (Basin 5) stated that the Basin 5 council met on 2/23 to review four projects and agreed to
37 fund three. He displayed how they ranked/scored projects, see this memo:
38 https://www.ccrpcvt.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/SubgrantProposals_Memo_and_Scoring.pdf The
39 highest ranked one was an old legal trail in Georgia that has some severe gully runoff. Another good
40 project was a process-based stream restoration of a portion of McCabe’s Brook in Shelburne. A second
41 call for applications was just released with pre-proposals due April 17, full proposals due May 10th.
42 [Editor’s Note: see call for applications [here](#):
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44 **6. Updates by Staff**

45 Albrecht noted that CCRPC’s UPWP process included one water quality project for the coming year;
46 there weren’t as many applications as compared to prior years.
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48 **7. Items for May 2nd meeting agenda**

49 Costandi asked for ideas from the committee to be sent to her and Albrecht. Albrecht suggested we
50 could have municipalities do a show-and-tell of any recently completed water quality projects.
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52 **10. Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 12:13 p.m.

53 *Respectfully submitted, Darren Schibler and Dan Albrecht*