

Natural Resources Committee

DRAFT Minutes

Jan 10, 2018

Committee Members: Barrie Bailey, Colin Davis, Peter Grant, Stan Grzyb, Wendy Sue Harper (Chair), Arabella Holzpfel, Ed Payne, Ron Payne, Jim Pulver, Paul Wagner, Kent Wright

Present: Barrie Bailey, Peter Grant, Stan Grzyb, Wendy Sue Harper (Chair), Arabella Holzpfel, Ed Payne, Ron Payne, Jim Pulver, Paul Wagner

Staff: Kevin Behm

Guests:

Wendy Sue opened the meeting at 6:00. The Dec 13th minutes were moved for approval. (Stan motion, Ron 2nd). Wendy Sue abstained, minutes accepted.

DRAFT South Lake Champlain Tactical Basin Plan –

Barrie mentioned that the plan is really focused on remediation efforts to meet the TMDL and satisfy the EPA. She acknowledged that clean-up needed to happen, but as watershed plan she see didn't very much emphasis on maintaining the excellent and good water quality that we currently have. Future land use changes may continue to degrade water quality. She was looking for opportunities or incentives to change the way the landscape is used. Kevin added that there was a small chapter on the recently revised water quality standards that address maintaining 'outstanding resource water' where it exists and the value of following the DEC's ant-degradation policies as it pertains to existing uses. Barrie felt that water quality protection should play a more prominent role.

Paul stated that the Otter Creek Natural Resource Conservation District was going to receive some state funds to work with farmers on water quality issues. This funding would include some money that is currently going to the RPC. Kevin explained that the statute designates both the conservation districts and the rpc's as eligible to receive funding. The first 2 rounds of funding went solely to the rpcs and the conservation districts felt slighted. Kevin stated that this may have been the result of an emphasis on public infrastructure impacts on water quality and the rpcs work closely with municipalities whereas the districts work more closely with landowners. However, both user groups are being required to improve their water quality practices. Paul stated that since agricultural land use covers the largest area, those users clearly need funding. This new round of funding will be directed to both entities to a varying degree depending on each's proposals. This has become an awkward process since it will result in some duplication of effort. The state could have held watershed rpc/district meetings prior to requesting proposals. We will have to do it afterwards, but the budgets will already be set by contract.

Natural Resources Committee

DRAFT Minutes

Jan 10, 2018

One problem for the RPC was that under the previous contracts the RPC was able to pass some funding to the Addison County River Watch Collaborative for sampling and municipal outreach. This activity was not eligible under the new RPC contract.

Arabella noted that the basin plan contained a lot of projects and new requirements, but there wasn't much of a fiscal analysis. There was only a single chart highlighting the relative cost of phosphorus removal by different land uses. The chart showed the relative cost of phosphorus removal for developed land was far in excess of the cost for agricultural land use. She felt all plans proposing implementation should include a capital plan outlining the estimated cost.

Since Ethan Swift, DEC, was going to present the South Lake Champlain TBP to the Commission after this meeting, Wendy Sue asked members to think of any questions they may have for him. Barrie was wondering the South Lake was generally 'better' or 'worse' than the Otter Creek. Peter was curious why Makenzie Brook is referenced since it is in New York and Hospital Creek and Whitney Creek are in Vermont. Ed wanted to know if this plan was in conformance with the Regional Plan.

Wendy Sue mentioned that she had watched a good webinar on forest planning that was developed by VT Fish & Wildlife to address a new planning element under Act 171. Kevin noted that forest planning will be addressed at the next meeting.

The Committee adjourned at 7:00