

Natural Resources Committee

DRAFT Minutes

Oct 9, 2019

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

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

Staff: Kevin Behm, Benton Wright (ECO AmeriCorps)

Guests:

Wendy Sue opened the meeting at 6:00.

Wendy Sue asked for a motion on the minutes of the Sept 11th meeting. Arabella motioned approval and Barrie seconded. All Approved except for abstentions from Wendy Sue and Ed.

Discussion of the DRAFT Otter Creek Tactical Basin Plan

Kevin provided revised copies of the Otter Creek Tactical Basin Plan. The previous version was labeled ‘Internal Draft’ from July and the newer version is the official draft plan available for public comment, titled ‘September 2019 – Final Draft’. The new version contains more content so the page numbers are different, but the plan generally follows the same outline.

Kevin and Benton had previously reviewed the plan as had several of the committee members and their comments were provided to the committee to discuss. Barrie noted that the Plan seems to emphasize restoration rather than protection. In her view there needs to be more policies directed at stronger municipal, regional and state efforts to maintain and improve water quality. If protection isn’t in place restoration will ultimately fail. Kevin said the State’s ‘anti-degradation’ policy is mentioned in the Priority Areas for Surface Water Protection chapter, but there is no explanation or discussion of the policy. He also said that the Plan is largely a response to phosphorus impairment of Lake Champlain and the Otter Creek Basin is a major contributor at about 21% of the total load so the emphasis on restoration is justified.

Jim had issues with some of the maps and charts being so dense with data causing interpretation to be difficult. While combining data sets is efficient and relationships may be visible, some of the maps are just too busy. Ed agreed that the information was very dense.

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Barrie noted that the Monitoring Priorities table (table #14) had 'No Data' listed for most of the waterbody Assessment Goals. The text does say the table is an initial list, but its disappointing to see so much data missing.

Wendy Sue did not find any mention of streambank riparian buffers or native revegetation of streams. She was looking for some discussion and support for maintaining a diversity of buffer plantings to encourage habitat and she noted that riparian buffers are very beneficial for water quality. She did acknowledge that monitoring water quality or riparian buffers involves on-the-ground inspections which are expensive. Paul added that many farmers are involved in monitoring discharges from field tiling outlets as a part of LCBP/Agency of Ag study.

Barrie was also concerned about residential construction policies addressing best practices for Low Impact Development. Kevin said these are mostly handled in municipal bylaws but there is a new 3-acre permit which addresses parcels with over 3 acres of impervious surface. These are mostly parcels that were developed prior to stormwater regulations and do not have an existing permit.

Ed stated that the new farming regulations or RAPs, Required Agricultural Practices, even affect small farmers with a couple of animals. Paul has always felt that all farms should be under the same set of rules – to 'keep the playing field level'. Jim stated that even a small impact has a large effect if allowed to occur over a large area.

Kevin and Benton thanked the members for their comments and offered to update the basin plan comment list and send out a final version.

The Committee adjourned at 7:00