



## **2023-1-25 Otter Creek Basin Water Quality Council Minutes**

**Present:** Ellen Cronin, Barbara Pulling, Arabella Holzapfel, Kate Kelly, Nanci McGuire, Hilda Haines, Erin De Vries, Pam Stefanik

**Absent:** Gioia Kuss

**Public:** Angie Allen (VTDEC), Shannon Pytlik (VTDEC), Chris Robbins (Alt.), Hillary Solomon (PMNRCD)

**Staff:** Mike Winslow, Adam Lougee, Zach Roberts

1. Amendments to the Agenda – Chris Rottler cannot attend, but BWQC members will convey the information from a meeting earlier today
2. Approve Minutes of December meeting – Kate has a spelling correction on last meeting’s minutes. “Consulate” should be “consult”. Kate moved to approve, Barbara seconded. All in favor.
3. Formal introduction of new Land Conservation Organization representative - Erin DeVries. Erin replaces Steve Libby. Other land conservation organizations were consulted on a replacement. There were no objections and some enthusiastic agreements to Erin filling the role.
4. Summary of meeting earlier in the day with Chris Rottler - VTDEC
  - a. Kate: Chris says we’re doing a fine job and should keep working with CWSP to figure out details and process
  - b. Barbara: Chris favors progress over perfection. Keep going, work things out
  - c. Mike apologizes that Chris can’t attend this meeting, last minute change yesterday, but presence was requested by a couple of BWQC members. If you have questions, you can reach out to him or us
  - d. Ellen expected guidance more than a pat on the back
    - i. Mike: if the BWQC wants guidance, we can go to him and say what we want. It will be slow in coming.
5. Discussion to finalize Project Scoring breakdown/Co-benefits policy
  - a. Mike and Kate sent out separate versions
    - i. Kate’s is pulled from Basin 5’s draft, but she has edited it and changed some numbers. Wanted something on the table to be worked with
    - ii. Mike reminds BWQC that co-benefit evaluation is up to them, even if CWSP has some influence on weighting



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b. Kate's draft

- i. Ellen: good that the document looks at specifics, but the weighting and ratio multiplication is unnecessarily complicated and confusing. Weighting can be thrown out. Make basic scoring straightforward and simple.
  1. Arabella: need to define weighting somehow then. Points just within co-benefit scoring could be out of 100
  2. Kate agrees with Ellen, as long as there is a way to define which co-benefits are more important than others
  3. Barbara: Weighting serves a purpose; some co-benefits have more natural resource purposes than others. Ratio calculation will have to be done somewhere to make it fit with the overall scoring sheet.
  4. Ellen: weight can be put directly into score
- ii. Ecosystem Improvement (water supply, carbon sequestration, reduced runoff/erosion)
  1. Arabella: Could also be a place where climate resilience is considered
  2. Barbara asked Kate to explain why ecosystem improvement is separated from habitat improvement
    - a. Kate did not separate it; she changed some stuff that just didn't make sense (e.g., recreation was listed as an ecosystem improvement), but she thinks they could be combined
    - b. Arabella noted that habitat improvement is not required by Act 76 which may be why they're separate.
    - c. Barbara still thinks they could be combined
      - i. Ellen: if so, weighting for ecosystem improvement needs to be adjusted
  3. Erin suggested rearranging ecosystem improvement parentheses items into a bulleted list
- iii. Habitat Improvement
  1. Kate: Typo- range should be 1-5 points, not 1-4
- iv. Environmental Justice
  1. Chris: standardize verbs in list for consistency
  2. Barbara: How do we determine the impacts listed? No definition for that. There are some indices out there that quantify these things; the state has one.



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- a. Kate: Important in future RFPs for specifics to be laid out for applicants as well so they know what info to supply. Standard for other grants. Erin agrees.
  - b. Arabella: put more language to define environmental justice
  - c. Angie linked to indices in the chat
  - d. Erin thinks it could be included as a hyperlink in the criteria scoring table
- c. Arabella wonders if scoring can be decided through email
  - i. Mike says the discussion cannot be held over email due to violation of Open Meeting Law. You could delegate a subcommittee to do it, but we should have something ready for when BWQC scores in February. It can be changed for future rounds.
    - 1. Arabella: need to let applicants know what scoring will be
      - a. Mike doesn't know they will get much more than the minimal amount they have now. We will not be overwhelmed with applications
  - ii. Arabella asks if everyone can be here until 3:30 talking about this. No objections.
  - iii. Erin asks if we sent out an RFQ. Mike says we did not.
  - iv. Erin: How do applicants address co-benefit scoring criteria if the RFP is out before we have decided it?
    - 1. Mike: the RFP has a scoring outline with likely co-benefits delineated with a stipulation that specific scoring will be decided by 1/25
    - 2. Arabella: there will be future refinement. This is brand new and it's okay if not everything is not nailed down. The state has left decision-making to the local level, lots of details to still work out.
    - 3. Adam: applicants will know that there are co-benefits with general descriptions, they know they can get points toward them and have general descriptions of them. We wrote it as open as possible so we can get as many applicants in the door, and work with them to get good information. The process is open to refinement and further detail. What does the BWQC want for a system? CWSP can adapt to what BWQC wants.
  - v. Ellen: anywhere in criteria where support of landowner is scored?
    - 1. Mike: part of scoring is cost-benefit analysis, another part is likelihood of success where landowner support is considered. 10% is allotted for likelihood of success.



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- a. Ellen does not think that is very much. Requests rough poll of 70-20-10 scoring breakdown.
    - i. Barbara: moves to accept 70-20-10. Kate seconds. Erin, Nanci, Barbara, Kate, Arabella aye. Hilda nay, no vote from Pam
  - vi. Barbara suggests BWQC accepts Kate's scoring matrix as-is.
    - a. Erin agrees if the bullets are accepted.
      - i. Barbara: discussion should happen before vote but will amend motion to include that.
    - b. Barbara moves to accept Kate's scoring matrix AMEND: with bullets, AMEND: combine ecosystem and habitat improvement criteria. Erin seconds.
      - i. Ellen: details are important, but the most important thing is how the elements are ranked (required vs additional). We don't even have equal ranking for required benefits, but they should probably be equal if they're required. Focus on overall percentage as it's going into our ranking.
        - 1. Kate: ecosystem improvement + habitat improvement combined would rank the combined criterion significantly higher. Nothing saying they have to be ranked equally.
          - a. Barbara will amend motion again to combine those two criteria. Erin agrees to this amendment.
          - b. Barbara says to leave this combination up to the CWSP.
        - ii. VOTE: Aye: Erin, Barbara, Kate, Nanci, Arabella Nay: Ellen, Hilda Abstention: Pam. Motion passes.
- 6. Announcements
  - a. Mike: training that started at 3, but not sure any of us will make that
  - b. Nanci asked to discuss Kate's document of concerns with the RFP. Kate is okay with where things stand—get projects in the door so we can look at them. Wanted to make sure everyone had seen those and that they are addressed and documented.
    - i. Wanted to make sure applicants know what is required of them and what they need to provide.



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1. Other details important to understand: co-benefits, eligibility because it is buried in PDF documents and across Appendices. Specific issues with some wording- clarify project identification. Details missing from application, especially Google Form. What level of landowner cooperation, barriers to completion, cost of O&M in future, design life, certainty of cost estimates. Need to be laid out in RFP.
2. Other minor things: invoicing, deliverables, timeline, match, indirect. As we go forward and have a clearer idea, next version of RFP should address these things.
3. Nanci agrees that it's really important to lay these things out, because time is money. When conservation districts put together applications, that time is not covered. Ellen suggested a guidance document is included with the RFP; Kate's document could be the start of our guidance document that helps applicants move forward. Erin and Barbara supported Kate and Nanci's concerns.

c. Erin: Clean Water conversation tomorrow at noon about CWSP SFY 23 Funding Policy

7. Next meeting - February 22, 2023 at 2PM

Motion to adjourn 3:30 PM. Ellen moves to adjourn, Barbara seconds. All ayes.