2026-10-28 Otter Creek Basin Water Quality Council Agenda

Present: Ellen Cronan (ACRWC), Arabella Holzapfel (ACRPC - Chair), Gioia Kuss (Weybridge), Adam Piper (VLT), Kate Kelly (LCA), Emily Friedman (RRPC), Erica Harris (OCNRCD), Katie Stiles (RNRCD - Vice-Chair)

Absent: Hilda Haines (Danby)

Public: Chris Rottler (VTDEC), Michael Miller, Angie Allen (VTDEC)

Staff: Mike Winslow, Andrew L'Roe

1. Amendments to the Agenda
2. Welcome and introductions
3. Approve Minutes of July meeting. Moved by Ellen. Second by Kate. All in favor. Arabella abstained.
4. Project Adoption Proposal
    a. Trout Unlimited – Baker Brook. Angie reported that since implementation was funded under private funds, the project is not eligible for adoption under current policy.
        i. Gioia sees this as a lost opportunity. The BWQC loses any incentive to fund design projects.
        ii. Katie asked if there is a more effective way to fund design or find other ways to incentivize the CWSPs. Moving design funding outside the CWSP could help.
        iii. Kate asked if there was work that still needed to be done on the site to allow us to count it. Mike was unaware of such opportunity, but can check with TU.
        iv. Kate noted there is always a concern that it's easier to get funding for plantings by buying plants than it is for applying for grants and following reporting. Are there ways to incentivize project proposers to stay with the CWSP for funding? Katie noted projects that looked worthwhile at design stage look less worthwhile because P calculation methodology changed.
        v. Arabella asked if we should make an action pending future changes in policy. Katie suggested it would be too complicated for the CWSP to track

with no gain. Gioira suggested a statement that might offer input to DEC. Chris noted anything the BWQC can do to share real life complications of policy decisions it would be helpful.

1. **Kate moved to authorize Arabella to sign off on a letter to DEC outlining the BWQC's concerns Katie seconded. All in favor.**

5. Report from the BWQC chairs meeting
    a. The chairs and vice chairs meet quarterly. Arabella attended the most recent meeting and Katie reviewed Arabella's notes. Topics that came up included staffing and capacity for contractors and grantees. Expenditure targets can't be met because there isn't capacity to do the work.
        i. Chris acknowledged challenges, in part driven by the complexity of the system. Hard to take on staff without base funding but need staff to bring in projects. Existing staff and organizations are maxed out already. Funded projects are 80-85% in rivers sector. Leaves space for forestry and agriculture, but those projects have been more challenging than DEC anticipated. As a result of the chair meeting, DEC staff are exploring opportunities in the agricultural space. Chris believes capacity funding in the current clean water funding proposal may be decreasing and suggested if that raises a concern people should comment on the proposed FY28 Clean Water Budget.
        ii. Katie identified overlap between project development and capacity funding. Development should be the seed money to help with staffing. Clear predictable project development language in a work plan is helpful.
        iii. Kate has also done some project development work in Basin 5 with part-time summer staff. Development funding allows boosting staff time of those summer hires. Reporting requirements of development funds don't match what actually needs to be done to get to a project.
        iv. Katie expressed confusion about the delineation between development and identification. Chris noted the vision is a linear process from identification to development to design but acknowledged that doesn't always work in the real word.
        v. Mike noted lack of watershed groups in Rutland County portion of the basin.
    b. State Historic Preservation (SHiPO) challenges were also a topic of discussion. Those questions don't come up in the BWQC because the often arise after

funding. Katie suggested more projects should be omitted from SHiPO requirements. Gioia noted the BWQC should begin adding contingencies for SHiPO review for projects reviewed.

c. Gioia asked about the hydrology on-line workshop from September. Katie will share a link to the recording through Mike. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IROUwNQlVe8)

6. Project development opportunities – BWQC discussion
    a. Mike noted that a new RFP would be released soon and suggested the BWQC could provide guidance to the CWSP about any project development opportunities they would like pursued.
    b. Gioia has an idea for a project in Weybridge on the Lemon Fair.
7. Funded Projects Status update
    a. One final reports received in the last quarter
        i. Trout Unlimited Baker Brook design
    b. Eleven open projects including two funded at July meeting. Quarterly reports received for all eleven projects. Anticipating five of them to close out this quarter: Smokey House forest roads, Sheldon planting, Youngs Brook Dam, Municipal Forest Road IDDE and Silver Lake Trail.
    c. Have completed 18 projects since the start of the CWSP, but only 13 are listed as closed out in the DEC database.
8. Adjourn – 14:57
9. Next Meeting - January 27, 2027 at 2PM