



## **South Lake Champlain Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC)**

**September 18, 2025, 3:15 pm**

Online and in-person at the Rutland Regional Planning Commission offices.

### **MEETING MINUTES**

Council Members present: Erin Rodgers, chair (TU); Katy Crumley (PMNRCD); Sarah Pelkey (RRPC); Paul Donaldson (Town of Poultney); Shayne Jaquith (TNC); Dan Redondo (Town of Orwell); Rob Terry (BCRC).

Staff present: Hilary Solomon (PMNRCD/CWSP); Barbara Noyes Pulling (RRPC/CWSP); Sadie Brown (PMNRCD)

VTDEC present: Angie Allen, Basin Planner; Chris Rottler, Water Investment Coordinator

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 3:17 pm by Erin.

### **APPROVE AGENDA**

Sarah made a motion to approve the agenda. Seconded by Dan. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **APPROVE MINUTES**

Sarah made a motion to approve the minutes from June 20, 2025. Seconded by Shayne. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **REVIEW OF NEW PROJECTS**

#### **POULTNEY RIVER TRIBUTARY STREAM AND WETLAND RESTORATION**

Hilary described the project as a second attempt at getting a hard-to-fund, complicated drainage with multiple streams, a wetland, and a large, quickly eroding gully to a 60% design, which would give us

more information about both project types that we can use and potential phosphorus reduction. She indicated that the CWSP will work closely with VT DEC staff to create a fundable project to mitigate conditions at the site. She explained that there was a site visit with multiple DEC staff several months ago to view conditions at the site. The requested amount is the same as the earlier proposal for a 30% design that the BWQC passed but DEC deemed not permissible. This project would fund a 60% design and alternatives analysis.

Shayne asked several questions about why gullies are not permissible by the Clean Water Funding Policy.

Angie explained the earlier project was too focused on the gully and didn't address the larger scale drainage issue. The hope is to have an alternative analysis to inform our decision-making about the next stage of design and implementation.

There was some discussion about the adjacent farm field; the gully has expanded to the property line. A solar energy development is planned for that farm field. Sarah indicated that the Rutland Regional Planning Commission has asked the developer to address the fact that prime agriculture soils are involved and to be aware that there is a pending CWSP project on the other side of the property line. Dan asked about the potential for leaking drain tiles on the farm field (a question which the farmer who used to farm it wondered about as well in a communication with Hilary).

Chris reiterated that only gullies in developed lands can be funded with Clean Water Funds making this gully project not fundable. He mentioned that Hilary had persevered and encouraged DEC to look at this site a different way – to deal with the water flow. He explained that gullies are a symptom, not a cause of a problem. The problem is (often) upstream water issues. The idea is to look at the source of the water and perhaps keep it on site, by developing a wetland or floodplain. He said from a non-scientist's perspective, DEC doesn't deal with gullies because sometimes you can't stop water from going where it wants to go.

Shayne asked that in the future the date of the Minutes when the project was first discussed be included in the information for members.

Hilary and Barbara reviewed other DEC comments about the project and the staff's scoring; there are a number of unknowns regarding phosphorus reduction, cost benefit, operations and maintenance, and project longevity. The staff offered a co-benefits score to members: 6 out of 20. The staff recommend funding this project, mainly because this is one gully project that DEC has allowed to move forward, and it would be educational and beneficial to other CWSPs, DEC staff, and other partners who wish to remediate flow to gullies in rural areas.

It was decided that in the future, the co-benefits scoring matrix and procedure be made more explicit.

Dan moved to approve the project. Erin seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

## NORTH BRETON BROOK RIPARIAN PLANTING

Hilary and Sadie explained that this is a tree planting in an area that's currently pasture. The landowner is very interested in the project which would essentially retire 2.63 acres and be a true land conversion from pasture to potentially wetland. If approved, the planting would happen this fall and the land won't be used as pasture again.

Erin asked if the budget includes operations & Maintenance funding. Hilary said no, but that it was something that CWSPs were discussing. She also mentioned that PMNRCD has some funding for maintenance.

Regarding DEC comments, Barbara explained that none were received. The Agency of Agriculture (VAAF) approved the project for CWSP funding, as it is on a farm, but considered a natural resource project. Staff scoring for the project was relatively high, 79 points out of 100. Seventy points for phosphorus reduction, cost benefit, maintenance, local support, and/or being listed in a formal report. Suggested co-benefits scores were 9 out of 20. CWSP staff indicated that they support this project because it is cost effective and comes with funds from the PUR Project to help offset initial maintenance costs.

Katy indicated that since she sits on the PMNRCD board, she would abstain from voting on this project.

Shayne asked if this was like an in-perpetuity protection of the land. Hilary said she thought so. Shayne indicated it could be better than a 15-year operations & maintenance agreement. Shayne also suggested that there may be additional opportunities for stream restoration work at the site and perhaps enhancing the floodplain.

Shayne moved to approve the project as presented. Erin seconded the motion. The motion passed with Katy abstaining.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

None

## NEXT MEETING

In December. A poll will be sent out by Barbara to schedule the date and time.

Hilary mentioned that Dan had a project idea and asked if a site visit could be arranged.

Chris explained the new cost rate methodology for CWSP projects. For South Lake, the original phosphorus reduction target for the past three years was 216 kg; the new number is now 124 kg, a 43% decrease. With the upcoming contract, the target will be 154.2 kg, well below the original 216 kg. The overall funding for South Lake will be lower as well to \$780,000 but the developed lands sector is getting more emphasis. The new numbers are in a DEC public comment period currently.

Hilary made another reference to the gully project: That the site, former farmland, isn't actively being farmed anymore, so it doesn't qualify for other funding such as NRCS.

Erin encouraged members to bring more projects to the table.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:13 PM.

#### ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:13 pm by Erin.

Respectively submitted,  
Hilary Solomon and Barbara Noyes Pulling