

# Natural Resources Committee

## DRAFT Minutes

*Sep 13, 2017*

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<b>Committee Members:</b>	Barrie Bailey, Colin Davis, Peter Grant, Stan Grzyb, Wendy Sue Harper (Chair), Arabella Holzpfel, Ed Payne, Ron Payne, Paul Wagner, Kent Wright
<b>Present:</b>	Barrie Bailey, Wendy Sue Harper, Arabella Holzpfel, Ed Payne, Ron Payne
<b>Staff:</b>	Kevin Behm
<b>Guests:</b>	Ethan Swift, Watershed Coordinator, VT DEC Matt Witten, Managing Director, Addison County River Watch Collaborative (ACRWC) Kristen Underwood, South Mountain Research and Consulting Chris Robbins, ACRWC

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Wendy Sue opened the meeting at 6:00. The Jun 14th minutes were moved for approval. (Barrie motion, Arabella 2<sup>nd</sup>). All were in favor.

### **Water quality efforts in Addison County –**

Wendy Sue and Kevin introduced Ethan, Matt and Kristen to provide an update on recent water quality efforts by State and local partners. Ethan described the initiatives of the Vermont Clean Water Act (VCWA) which apply to the entire state but also have a special focus on Lake Champlain. The VCWA applies new requirements on the various sectors that impact water quality in the state. Specifically, the Developed Lands (including roads), Agriculture, Forestland, River Channels and wastewater plants. New Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) are implemented for small farmers, municipalities must obtain a Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) to improve roadway/watercourse erosion impacts and a Developed Lands Permit is under development for areas of impervious surface 3 acres and larger. These new regulations are all designed to reduce nutrient loading, pollution sources and stressors at the local level through an ‘All-In’ approach in which everyone participates, not just the largest offenders which for the most part are already regulated. Ethan stated that water quality implementation is primarily being driven from projects identified in the Tactical Basin Plans (TBP). He has just finished a draft of the South Lake Champlain TBP which primarily includes land which directly discharges into Lake Champlain from Addison and Rutland County as well as the Poultney and Mettowee Watersheds. The Otter Creek Basin Plan will be revised over the following year and Ethan will be working the ACRPC and the NRC to produce a good plan and project list.

Matt from the Addison County River Watch Collaborative (ACRWC) gave some background on their history and current sampling efforts. The Collaborative started in 1997 as a result of earlier sampling efforts (1989) in the Otter Creek and Middlebury River and in Lewis Creek (1992). The Collaborative is a mainly volunteer organization

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with Matt as a part-time contracted Managing Director and Kristen Underwood as a contracted QA/QC Officer. The ACRPC has provided meeting space and staff assistance since the mid 1990's. Currently around 30 stations are sampled about 6 times every spring and summer on the first Wednesday of each month by over 40 volunteers. Sampled parameters include: Total and Dissolved Phosphorus, Total Nitrogen, E. coli, Total Suspended Solids and Turbidity. This last season was primarily a wet season with high flows occurring near sample dates. In contrast, 2016 was a relatively dry season. Detailed watershed reports with sample site information are available on the ACRWC's website at <http://acrpc.org/acrwc>. As part of a rotational sampling design, next year the Lewis Creek and Lemon Fair will have an increased number of sample sites for 2 years. As a part of the VCWA, Matt and Ethan have met several times with Ripton representatives and citizens to discuss reclassification of portions of the Middlebury River in an effort to acknowledge the high quality of the watershed. This effort will likely continue next year.

Kristen Underwood described the results of a recent ACRWC grant with DEC/LaRosa Lab I implementation funding. The proposal looked at the historic E. coli data from sites that bracketed 4 farms participating in livestock exclusion from the river. These were sampling sites upstream and downstream of the farms. Furthermore, the study was funded to add additional sites on Lewis Creek in 2017 that bracketed one farm that practiced livestock exclusion and another that did not use the practice. The results of the historic study showed significantly reduced E. coli at one downstream site and uncertain reductions at another site downstream from a farm practicing exclusion. The other 2 farm locations had substantial change in management with the farms downsizing and the livestock removed. The provisional 2017 results showed elevated E. coli downstream of the farm not using livestock exclusion from Lewis Creek and a reduction in E.coli at the site downstream of the farm excluding livestock. Ethan also presented some similar work demonstrating the effectiveness of several agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) including cover-cropping by Ben Copans (VT DEC) in the Lake Memphremagog Watershed.

The Committee adjourned at 7:00