

# Natural Resources Committee

## DRAFT Minutes

*Sept 14, 2016*

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<b>Committee Members:</b>	Barrie Bailey, Nick Causton, Colin Davis, Peter Grant, Stan Grzyb, Wendy Sue Harper (Chair), Arabella Holzpfel, Ed Payne, Ron Payne, Paul Wagner, Kent Wright
<b>Present:</b>	Nick Causton, Wendy Sue Harper, Arabella Holzpfel, Ed Payne, Ron Payne, Paul Wagner, Kent Wright
<b>Staff:</b>	Kevin Behm
<b>Guest:</b>	Marli Rupe, Asstant Program Manager, VT Clean Water Initiative and Ryan Patch, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets  Also present, members of the Addison County River Watch Collaborative – Doug Zehner, Kristen Underwood, Heidi Willis and Matt Witten

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Wendy Sue opened the meeting at 6:05. The June 8th minutes were moved for approval. (Arabella motion, Nick 2<sup>nd</sup>). All were in favor.

Marli Rupe introduced herself and provided an overview of the Vermont Clean Water Act (Act 64; 2015). She mentioned the role of the Act was partially to implement the State's plan to satisfy the phosphorous reductions required under the EPA's Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements for cleaning up Lake Champlain. New water quality requirements are being addressed in agriculture, forestlands, river instability, developed lands (including state and municipal roads), as well wastewater treatment.

The Act established the Clean Water Fund which is designed to provide direct financial support for actions that will reduce pollution washing into Vermont's waterways. The Clean Water Fund Board, which administers the Fund, includes representatives from the agencies of Administration, Agriculture, Farm and Markets, Commerce and Community Development, Natural Resources and Transportation. After reviewing the 2016 project funding, she noted that the governing Board is accepting public comments on the FY17 funding priorities.

Ryan Patch focused on the draft Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) requirements under Act 64. The RAPs are required farm and land management practices that will control and reduce agricultural non-point source pollution and subsequent nutrient losses from farm fields and production areas to surface and ground water. Ryan reviewed the numerous meetings with farm operators to discuss the new requirements for small farms. He noted that Accepted Agricultural Practices have been established for all farms since 1995, but medium and large scale farms are required to obtain operating permits whereas small farms had previously voluntarily self-certified.

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Doug Zehner asked about the relationship of the RAPs to the EPA's TMDL. Ryan responded that over 40% of the phosphorus entering Lake Champlain is attributable to agricultural land use and the RAPs are the mechanism farmers will use to reduce the run-off. Reductions will not be immediate and performance evaluations will be undertaken to review the results. Matt Witten asked whether water quality sampling will be increased to help ascertain poor water quality stream reaches and is there money to help fund sampling? Marli mentioned that the state is developing models to help identify project locations and there would be some funding available for water quality sampling. She was aware of the sampling work that has been undertaken by the River Watch Collaborative and noted that the resulting data is being used by various agencies. Paul was skeptical of the \$100 million dollars he claimed had already been spent on lake cleanup with very little, if any, actual improvement in water quality. Marli reiterated that results have not been observed quickly but this revised effort has a 20-year planning horizon and all land use sectors across the State are obligated to focus on water quality. Doing nothing could be far worse.

The group had a wide-ranging discussion of phosphorous transport on soil particles due to erosion and the relative availability of dissolved phosphorus for in-lake vegetative growth. While there was disagreement on the impact of the mechanisms involved due to different agricultural and road management practices, those present agreed that the new all-sector approach was probably fairer and had a better chance of success due to the widespread emphasis across the state on improving water quality.

Marli wrapped-up the discussion by thanking the Natural Resource Committee and the Addison River Watch Collaborative for their concern for improving water quality and encouraged everyone to continue the discussions in their communities and with their neighbors.

The Committee adjourned at 7:20.