

Lamoille Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC)
Thursday, January 25, 2025
9:00 -11:00 AM
Virtual Meeting/Held Via Zoom* (computer/smartphone/tablet etc.)

Meeting video posted at https://youtu.be/x_Tyo36X6Lk

Richard Goff (Q), Kent Henderson (Q), Brad Holden (Q), Peter Danforth (Q), Erin De Vries (Q), Katherine Sonnick (Q), Adelaide Dumm (Q), Jed Feffer (Q), Mel Auffredou, Ken Mink, Meghan Rodier
Q= towards quorum
Staff: Dean Pierce, Sara Gratz
Others present: Karen Bates

1. Welcome and Introductions

Peter Danforth opened the meeting as Chair at 9:02 a.m. Attendees introduced themselves.

2. Meeting protocols

Meeting protocols were reviewed.

3. Conflict of interest declarations, if any

No conflicts of interest were made.

4. Review/adjust and approve agenda

Erin De Vries motioned to approve the agenda. Jed Feffer seconded. Motion carried.

5. Approval of Minutes

Richard Goff motioned to approve the minutes. Kent Henderson seconded. Motion carried.
Brad Holden abstained.

6. Public comment not related to items on agenda

No public comments were made.

7. Seating of any new reps or alternate(s)

No new reps or alternates were seated.

8. Policy on Budget Adjustments

Dean Pierce presented a proposal for the creation of a policy on budget adjustments, which had been discussed at the previous meeting. He offered 3 different options for potential adjustments, and also shared an example of a policy that was recently adopted in Basin 6.

A discussion followed in support of the Alternative 3 option, but with capped amounts doubled, which was seen in the Basin 6 example.

Alternative 3 option was presented as follows:

Project Phase	Adjustment Amount	Approval Method
Assessment/ID/Project Development	<=10%, capped at \$5,000	CWSP staff may approve
	>10% and <=20%, capped at \$10,000	CWSP staff with concurrence of Chair and Vice Chair (or 2 BWQC members) may approve.
	20% +, or any request >\$20,000	Requires vote by BWQC
Design/Implementation project costing less than \$150k	<=10%, capped at \$10,000	CWSP staff may approve
	>10% and <=20%, capped at \$20,000	CWSP staff with concurrence of Chair and Vice Chair (or 2 BWQC members) may approve.
	20% +, or any request >\$20,000	Requires vote by BWQC
Design/Implementation project costing more than \$150k	<=10%, capped at \$15,000	CWSP staff may approve
	>10% and <=20%, capped at \$30,000	CWSP staff with concurrence of Chair and Vice Chair (or 2 BWQC members) may approve.
	20% +, or any request >\$30,000	Requires vote by BWQC

Jed cautioned that projects with a higher cost will have a lower phosphorus reduction ratio and asked if projects ever require a decrease in budget. Dean explained that project costs are reimbursed, not given up front, so any unused money would remain in the available funds.

Richard asked for clarification as to whether CWSP staff will be required to approve budget adjustments under this new policy. Dean responded by stating that CWSP staff will still have the option to decline a request for a budget adjustment because they still have to be mindful of phosphorus reduction ratios.

Brad Holden motioned to adopt the alternative 3 option with the capped amounts doubled and Erin De Vries seconded. Motion carried.

9. Input on Cost effectiveness

Dean initiated a conversation about project cost effectiveness, explaining that in DEC's Guidance document, it is stated that CWSPs and BWQCs were encouraged to adopt minimum

cost effectiveness ratios. He asked the Council whether a cost effectiveness threshold should be put in place.

Jed commented that since the CWSP has a target amount of phosphorus reduction that they aim to achieve, then there should be a minimum amount that each project treats. Dean responded by sharing that in the Lamoille Basin, they should be spending an average of \$15,000 per kilogram of phosphorus reduction, but that can include a combination of projects that have higher and lower cost ratios.

Dean also went on to explain that part of what is driving the question of whether a cost effectiveness threshold is needed, derives from the different funding sources. CWSP projects are funded through Formula Funds, which have a focus on maximizing phosphorus reduction. Enhancement Funds do not have a focus on phosphorus reductions, so projects that have a higher cost and lower phosphorus reduction could be funded through them instead of CWSP. Setting a threshold would help determine the best funding source.

Peter reiterated that CWSPs need to spend funds wisely and commented that it's a subject that can create tensions because some projects have too low of a phosphorus reduction rate. He made a recommendation of projects that are easy to get CWSP funding for, including riparian buffer plantings, strategic woody additions, and wetland restorations.

Ken asked how much phosphorus the CWSP is charged with reducing each year. Dean shared that in the Lamoille Basin, it amounts to 40 kilograms per year for 5 years.

Erin shared that she's heard from other Basin Councils that they are not ready to set a cost effectiveness threshold, and she thinks that they would need to see more projects happen before a threshold could reasonably be determined.

Karen Bates explained that Clean Water Funds are distributed through different funding channels, such as CWSP and Enhancement Grants, to help DEC spend the money more efficiently and effectively. She also shared that the intention behind the CWSP program is for them to be able to find more water quality projects that have a big impact on phosphorus reduction.

Kent Henderson motioned to table the topic for further discussion. Jed seconded. Motion carried.

10. Adoption of completed projects

Dean explained that CWSP funds should be used for project maintenance, and shared that the CWSP can adopt past projects where no one claimed the phosphorus credits.

Peter asked if the process of adopting a project would require submitting an application as if it were a new project. Dean responded by saying that the guidance is still being written, but that

he imagines that it is something that can be approved by the CWSP and BWQC without needing to submit an application.

A discussion followed regarding who would be able to act as the verifier to ensure that projects are still functioning as they should. Erin brought up concerns about landowners potentially not wanting a third-party entity to get involved, stating that the organization that implemented the project should be allowed to verify its maintenance.

Jed asked for clarification that the projects that could be adopted did not have to be initiated by the CWSP. Dean verified that the projects would not have to have been funded by the CWSP and shared the Watershed Project Database could be used to find projects that could be adopted.

Adelaide Dumm asked who would pay for the verification or maintenance of a project if it required an engineering approach. She also asked if maintenance funds could cover replanting of trees that are dying in a riparian buffer planting area. Dean responded by saying that at some point, it would probably make sense to call the project new and start over with a new application.

11. Farm Project refresher

Dean gave a brief overview of the process for determining whether a project on a farm setting can qualify for CWSP funds or if it needs to be funded through the Agency of Agriculture. He recommended to start the process early and that communication is key.

Karen shared that there will be a meeting soon to discuss how to better clarify what is eligible and what isn't.

12. DEC clean water network summit (April 5)

Dean gave an update on the DEC Clean Water Network summit that is happening on April 5th from 9-3 in Waterbury. He expects that there will be an opportunity to hear a quick overview from each Basin.

13. Updates and Conclusion

Dean reminded the Council about the dates for the next rounds of funding. The next round opens on February 7th with a deadline of March 14th. The round after that opens on April 4th and has a deadline of May 9th.

Richard motioned to adjourn the meeting and Jed seconded. Motion carried.