

Missisquoi Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC)

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

11:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Meeting video posted at https://youtu.be/c0H_i1GTtW4

**A VIDEO RECORDING OF THE MEETING IS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE NRPC
YOUTUBE CHANNEL (Link above).**

**THE WRITTEN MINUTES ARE A SYNOPSIS OF THE DISCUSSION AT THE MEETING.
MOTIONS ARE AS STATED. MINUTES WILL BE SUBJECT TO CORRECTION BY THE
COUNCIL. CHANGES, IF ANY, WILL BE RECORDED IN THE MINUTES OF THE NEXT
MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

Council Members: Chair Lindsey Wight (Q), Vice Chair Kent Henderson (Q), Dorothy Kinney-Landis (Q), Ted Sedell (Q), Heidi Britch-Valenta (Q), Allaire Diamond (Q), Beth Torpey (Q), Dan Seeley (Q), Sarah Downes (Q),

Q= towards quorum q= towards quorum when representative has recused

NRPC Staff: Dean Pierce, Emily Adams

Others present: Alt Bridget Butler (FNLC), Karen Bates (DEC), Chris Rottler (DEC), Silas Rainville (FPR), Jim Pease, Pete Benevento, Ava Walsh, Lincoln Frasca, Brian Voigt, Jim's AI Notetaker, Dan's AI Notetaker

1. Welcome and introductions

Lindsey Wight opened the meeting shortly after 11:03. A round of introductions was made.

2. Meeting protocols

Lindsey Wight reviewed norms for meeting on Zoom.

3. Conflict of interest declarations, if any

Lindsey Wight noted that this was a standing item and since there were no applications in the meeting packet, no conflicts of interest were anticipated. No conflicts were declared.

4. Review/adjust agenda

Dean Pierce clarified that Silas Rainville would be the specific Forest Parks and Recreation staff member making the presentation closer to 12 o'clock. Heidi Britch-Valenta asked if the Council could receive more information on the Lake Carmi alum treatment project at a future meeting. Peter Benevento responded that he could provide a more formal update at the next meeting. He reported that eyewitness accounts suggest the water is the cleanest it has ever been. Ava Walsh has been taking post-treatment samples, and the results seen so far are within the permit requirements.

5. Approval of minutes

Dean Pierce noted some mis-spellings and typos. Heidi Valenta moved to approve. Ted Sedell seconded. Minutes were approved.

6. Public comment not related to items on agenda

None.

7. Report on budget adjustments (if any)

Dean Pierce briefly reported that budget requests are in process: one related to the Trout Brook dam removal and another related to the Sleeper Pond dam removal. These adjustments, which have not been finalized, would not materially affect cost effectiveness.

8. Seating of new RPC Representative (if any)

There were no new representatives to recognize.

9. Cost Rate Methodology

Chris Rottler discussed the updates to the cost-rate methodology. He clarified that the official finalization is imminent but not yet in effect, pending department leadership approval of the responsiveness summary addressing public comments.

The methodology is in effect the formula used to translate grant dollars into phosphorus reduction targets. The original methodology was developed around 2020. Due to inflation and increased project cost data, it has been revised. The draft proposed methodology has resulted in a 48% reduction in the Basin's target.

Chris Rottler noted that even with increased costs shown by the methodology, the CWSP system is performing efficiently across the entire system, with an average cost of \$8,000 per kilogram reduced. The new methodology should allow BWQCs to consider more expensive projects, such as stormwater projects, more readily.

Mel Auffredou asked how this change would affect the evaluation of projects by the BWQC.

Chris Rottler responded that lower targets mean that projects with higher cost efficiencies are more achievable, effectively raising the threshold of what the BIC might consider funding. Dean Pierce and Mel Auffredou discussed whether the change in the methodology might result in a change to the current Basin thresholds (\$30,000 for natural resource projects and up to \$50,000 for stormwater). Dean hypothesized that they likely would not change much, as the initial thresholds were somewhat forward-looking. Chris Rottler encouraged the BWQC not to be too conservative, noting that half of all projects are mathematically expected to be "above average" cost, and suggested being open to projects up to \$100,000.

10. Tactical Basin Plan

Karen Bates provided an overview of the Tactical Basin Plan (TBP) process, encouraging input from the BWQC. Dean Pierce later noted that as a result of changes in statute, the BWQCs have a distinct role in the development of the TBPs.

In this iteration of TBP work, updates to the Missisquoi Bay and Lamoille Basin Plans are occurring simultaneously. Key deadlines include developing strategies through July, incorporating feedback in August/September, public meetings in October/November, and seeing the plan signed in December.

The TBP focuses on areas needing remediation or protection. Priorities include phosphorus reduction (to meet Lake Champlain TMDL via the Act 76 framework), and promoting flood resilience through natural resource restoration and protection (Act 121). Most phosphorus reduction tracked since 2016 has come from agriculture, followed by developed lands (mostly roads), with lesser amounts from natural resource restoration.

Karen Bates suggested Forest Road Skid Trail Improvements as a potential focus area for the Missisquoi Basin due to the basin being 66% forested and the presence of significant use value appraisal (UVA) parcels. Forest project cost rates are relatively low (\$18,000/kg) compared to other sectors.

Dean Pierce provided final comments before leaving the meeting early, wishing everyone happy holidays. Emily Adams took over Dean's staff duties.

11. Forest Project Type

Silas Rainville (Watershed Forestry Specialist, FPR) joined the discussion. He explained that the Acceptable Management Practices (AMPs) are 26 practices used before, during, and after forestry operations to minimize erosion, protect water quality, and maintain natural stream

flow. The funding available through the CWSPs is targeting legacy erosion issues (beyond the 3-year post-harvest regulatory window).

Key project definitions:

- Forest Truck Roads: Designed for vehicular traffic (log trucks/passenger vehicles) running from a public road to a log landing. They are not private residential roads providing access to permanent dwellings.
- Skid Trails: Designed for logging equipment (skidders/forwarders) to transport products to a landing site. They are not recreational trails.
- Eligibility: UVA-enrolled properties are generally eligible for CWSP funding if the issue is a legacy water quality concern, but not an AMP violation. Maple sugaring access infrastructure (haul roads/access trails) are currently eligible, as sugaring is not regulated under the AMPs.

Improvement practices include installing diversion structures (water bars), grading and shaping the trail surface, and removing stream crossings (converting to Fords) on skid trails. Allaire Diamond confirmed that removing a poorly functioning culvert and building a nice ford would be eligible for funding when appropriate.

Mel Auffredou noted that it is difficult to find properties that fit the specific project type because of the tension surrounding regulatory and UVA compliance issues, which may intimidate landowners.

Lincoln Frasca (Winooski CWSP) provided an update on their basin's outreach efforts, including pre-qualifying forestry consultants and developing outreach materials with UVM. Karen Bates suggested holding an additional, higher-level discussion meeting for those interested in Forest Road projects to identify issues and trainings needed. Lindsey Wight supported this idea, suggesting the notice be sent out by Dean/Emily Adams for opt-in attendance.

12. Future Meeting topics/Conclusion

Lindsey Wight asked for suggestions for future agenda topics. The discussion confirmed that a more in-depth presentation about the Lake Carmi project would be beneficial.

The meeting was adjourned by Lindsey Wight at 12:54.