

**Connecticut River Joint Commissions Planning for the Future**  
*Strategic Plan Retreat Report*  
prepared by naturesource communications | www.naturesource.net  
March 1, 2015

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## **Background and summary of the process and outcome**

The Connecticut River Joint Commissions reviewed the outputs and outcome to date in their 2013-2015 Strategic Plan as the first step in updating its plan for 2016-2020. The 2013-2015 strategic plan period reflects the CRJC's operations during a changed financial and staff environment. The outputs and outcomes are very impressive with progress reported in all five goals and nearly every objective within them.

The CRJC elected to engage naturesource communications, Boscawen, New Hampshire, to facilitate their retreat, which was convened on February 20, 2015 at The Wilder Center in Wilder, Vermont.

In preparation for the retreat, the Commissioners and Local River Subcommittee co-chairs reviewed the 2013-2015 Strategic Plan goals and objectives as well as progress reports on outputs and outcomes from July 2012 to date. They were asked to consider what 2013-2015 goals and objectives should be maintained, revised, or removed from the 2016-2020 plan as well as what new goals and objectives should be considered.

During their five hours together, the participants reviewed each goal and objective focusing on what has been done, what needs to continue, and what new activities are required. Participants identified additional issues to be discussed through other governance including New Hampshire and Vermont legislation, CRJC bylaws, and organizational policy documents. Those issues are listed in the "**Other discussions for consideration**" section of this document.

The delivered product by naturesource communications to the CRJC is this report and the 2016-2020 plan document, which includes the goals and objectives as agreed upon during the February 20 retreat. The lettered objectives are prioritized as "High," "Medium," or "Low" in importance with additional space to indicate if they are "required or urgent" and come with an "Immediate opportunity for implementation." For instance, there may be a current grant or other funding source or Commissioner commitment to complete a particular objective. The nexus of a priority importance in combination with the other two rating schema might indicate that there are sufficient resources or urgency to raise the priority. The document can also be used for plan implementation and tracking with the inclusion of columns to complete with

- Progress reporting with outputs July 2015 to date;
- Progress reporting with outcomes July 2015 to date;
- Assignment of responsible parties, leads, champions;
- Tracking aids including ongoing [activities], time line, due date of activities; and
- Resources required [including financial, staff, and in-kind to implement the activities].

These columns are deliberately left blank with the intent that the document will be an evergreen tool to track and report on progress and to set the stage for the next Strategic Plan process.

It may be useful for the Connecticut River Joint Commissions in collaboration with the Local River Subcommittees, to review the Strategic Plan on an annual basis in conjunction with the

Connecticut River Management Plan and yearly annual work plans while reviewing the previous year or years of outputs and outcomes.

### **Other discussions for consideration**

There were several important and thoughtful concerns, questions, and suggestions raised during the retreat, that may have not fit specifically within the plan framework or were specific activities for an annual work plan. They are listed below.

- Convene cross-discipline, cabinet level (appropriate agency leadership from New Hampshire and Vermont) summit to meet annually or semi-annually to discuss issues and policy as they may relate to the Connecticut River.
- Review RSA 483 and other statute and discuss possible changes to elevate the five subcommittees to the status of other Local River Management Advisory Committees vs. subcommittees of the NH Commission.
- Review RSA 483 and CRJC bylaws and discuss including the co-chairs of the five subcommittees as non-voting or voting Commissioners on the CRJC.
- Discuss possible Vermont statute, rules, or other policy to create a notification and comment system for permit application review, using the New Hampshire model in RSA 483.
- Review the bylaws to discuss possible changes including term limits for officers, consistent language relating to Commission, Commissions, subcommittees, committees, and other groups
- Explore the relative benefits and detractions for conducting five-year vs. annual organizational and financial audits. The threshold for full organizational or A-133 audits is now \$500,000 or more when expended within a single fiscal year.
- Explore the possibility of a single staff to assist the CRJC and the five river subcommittees for overall organizational consistency and continuity.
- Encourage recipients of CRJC electronic newsletter email messages to use the Constant Contact forwarding feature, included at the bottom of each message, so that recipients receive their own messages with an invitation to subscribe. A note could be added to the top of each email to explain the value of using the forwarding tool to expand the subscriber list.
- Include in each Constant Contact message a note to encourage recipients to share their news for inclusion in the next issue by a date certain, e.g., the tenth of the month.
- Explore options to act on permit applications and other issues in a more timely way through subcommittees, staff, or other designees.
- Explore the bylaws and discuss creation of a communications committee or ad-hoc group to assist with newsletters, BMP implementation, municipal and landowner education, and other outreach.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A: *Strategic Plan Revision Retreat Agenda*

Appendix B: *Strategic Plan Revision Retreat Registrants*

Appendix C: *Matrix – Planning for the Future*

## Appendix A

### Connecticut River Joint Commissions Planning for the Future

#### Strategic Plan Revision Retreat Agenda

Friday, February 20, 2015 | 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM | The Wilder Center, Wilder, VT

[www.WilderCenter.com](http://www.WilderCenter.com) | driving directions attached

Please call the Center at 802.698.8369 from the road if you get turned around

#### Retreat format and objectives

The CRJC's current strategic plan outlines five priority goals and recommended actions from FY 2013 through 2015. It is now time to review the plan and the CRJC's accomplishments. Commissioners and subcommittee leadership will arrive with a familiarity of the current plan content and an outline of accomplishments to date. Participants will have an opportunity to share their perspectives on the current Plan's goals and recommended actions with responsible parties, funding requirements, and time frames, and agree on a path for the CRJC's FY 2016 – 2021 Plan.

9:30 AM	<b>Arrival and refreshments</b>
10:00 AM	<b>Welcome - Rick Walling and Tara Bamford</b>
10:05 AM	<b>Introductions – Michele L. Tremblay, naturesource communications, facilitator</b>
10:20 AM	<b>Discussion and agreement on retreat format, objectives, and priority schema – Michele</b>
10:30 AM	<b>Review Goal 1, action items, and progress and set priorities for 2016 -2021: How should the CRJC focus on maintaining these levels of membership and organizational capacity? – Everyone</b>
11:00 AM	<b>Review Goal 2, action items, and progress and set priorities for 2016 – 2021: How can the CRJC strengthen subcommittee membership and empower them with plan implementation? – Everyone</b>
11:30 AM	<b>Review Goal 3, action items, and progress and set priorities for 2016 -2021: What are the ways in which the CRJC's strategic plan and management plan can be implemented? – Everyone</b>
12:30 PM	<b>Break for working lunch</b>
1:00 PM	<b>Review Goal 4, action items, and progress and set priorities for 2016 -2021: What effective outreach methods to learn about Best Management Practices and provide watershed messages and tools to all residents can the CRJC create and implement? – Everyone</b>
1:45 PM	<b>Review Goal 5 action items and progress and set priorities for 2016 -2021: What are the emerging issues that the CRJC wants to addressed?– Everyone</b>
2:30 PM	<b>Summarize decisions and actions – Michele</b>
2:45 PM	<b>Outline next steps – Michele</b>
3:00 PM	<b>Adjourn</b>

*The Connecticut River Joint Commission's mission is to preserve and protect the visual and ecological integrity and sustainable working landscape of the Connecticut River Valley, and to guide its growth and development through grassroots leadership.*

**Appendix B**  
**Connecticut River Joint Commissions Planning for the Future**  
*Strategic Plan Revision Retreat Registrants*

**Mary Sloat**  
NH Commissioner  
CRJC Treasurer

**Jim Doig**  
VT Commissioner

**Pat Crocker**  
Staff

**Jason Rasmussen**  
VT Commissioner

**Donna Drouin**  
NH Commissioner

**Jim McClammer**  
NH Commissioner

**Tara Bamford**  
Vice President, VT, CRJC

**Edwin Mellet**  
Chair, Headwaters Subcommittee

**Michele L Tremblay**  
naturesource communications

**Rick Walling**  
President, NH, CRJC

**Brendan Prusik**  
NH Commissioner

**Chris Campany**  
VT Commissioner

**Chris Thayer**  
NH Commissioner

**Samantha Holcomb**  
Secretary, VT, CRJC

**Rebecca Brown**  
NH Commissioner

**Jennifer Griffin**  
TransCanada

**Dick Sanders**  
NH Commissioner

**Rick Hopkins**  
VT Agency of Natural Resources

**Jim Kennedy**  
Chair, Upper Valley Subcommittee

**Appendix C**  
**Connecticut River Joint Commissions Planning for the Future**  
*Strategic Plan Revision Retreat*

## Connecticut River Joint Commissions Strategic Plan: Planning for the Future 2016-2020

Goal 1. Develop a strong, engaged, and active membership for the Connecticut River Joint Commissions to strengthen its reputation, guide its programs, and provide financial stability.								
						Priority		
	Outputs July 2015 to date	Outcomes July 2015 to date	Responsible parties, leads, champions	Ongoing, time line, due date	Resources required	Importance	Required or urgent	Immediate opportunity for implementation
A.	Maintain and enhance diversity of Commissions and Local River Subcommittees memberships, compatible with the respective statutes in New Hampshire and Vermont, and representing diverse interests and geographic areas along the river. In particular, representation by members not affiliated with state or regional agencies should be recruited.			Ongoing		Medium		
B.	Provide monthly updates on river-related news and events to Commissioners, Local River Subcommittees (LRSs), and other interested parties at meetings. Solicit news items from Commissioners, LRSs, and partners for the agenda and for e-newsletter.		Staff and Communications Committee			High		
C.	Work with Commissioners to identify and secure sources of financial and in-kind support for the CRJC's operations and for the implementation of its flagship projects.					High	X	
D.	Continue annual state and federal filings while exploring cost effective options including financial review and full organizational audits.		Finance Committee			High	X	

Goal 2. Develop a strong, engaged, and active membership of Local River Subcommittees.								
						Priority		
	Outputs July 2015 to date	Outcomes July 2015 to date	Responsible parties, leads, champions	Ongoing, time line, due date	Resources required	Importance	Required or urgent	Immediate opportunity for implementation
A.	Provide local river subcommittees with reasonable staff support for meetings and project work and post their accomplishments on the website and include updates with CRJC meeting agendas. A priority should be placed on the importance of continuity of staff for all five of the local river subcommittees.					High		
B.	Refine a unified role for the Local River Subcommittees as it relates to the implementation of CRJC plans within municipalities, recognizing that the majority of the decisions that can implement the plan are made at the local level. Defining this role will result in deeper engagement by the Local River Subcommittees in the update of CRJC's river management plan.					High		

Goal 2. Develop a strong, engaged, and active membership of Local River Subcommittees.								
						Priority		
	Outputs July 2015 to date	Outcomes July 2015 to date	Responsible parties, leads, champions	Ongoing, time line, due date	Resources required	Importance	Required or urgent	Immediate opportunity for implementation
C.	Work with local officials to recruit new members representing diverse interests to maintain vibrant Local River Subcommittees.					Medium		
D.	Review and provide comment on state and federal permit applications that would alter the resource values or unique characteristics of the river.					High		
E.	Collaborate with NH and VT planning commissions, state agencies, nonprofits, and other organizations to keep members informed on river issues through CRJC fora, e-newsletters, and other events.					Medium		
F.	Encourage Commissioners to participate in Local River Subcommittees by providing to them CRJC updates bringing news of the LRSs to the CRJC at its meetings.					High		

Goal 3. Promote implementation of the Connecticut River Management Plan								
						Priority		
	Outputs July 2015 to date	Outcomes July 2015 to date	Responsible parties, leads, champions	Ongoing, time line, due date	Resources required	Importance	Required or urgent	Immediate opportunity for implementation
A. Work with state and regional stakeholders to implement the Plan.						High		
B. Through the Local River Subcommittees, present the Recreation and Water Resources Plans to municipal boards and other stakeholders for adoption and implementation.						High		
C. Track progress on implementation of the Connecticut River Management Plan on a yearly basis.			Goals and Plans Committee			Medium		
D. Identify next chapter of the 1997 Connecticut River Management Plan to update.			Goals and Plans Committee			Medium		

Goal 4. Provide outreach to communities on river issues and best practices for riverfront land management.								
						Priority		
	Outputs July 2015 to date	Outcomes July 2015 to date	Responsible parties, leads, champions	Ongoing, time line, due date	Resources required	Importance	Required or urgent	Immediate opportunity for implementation
A.	Partner with state agencies, local organizations and other expert presenters to provide public educational workshops on river issues with the objective being to influence both individual and municipal decisions and actions with the health of the Connecticut River in mind.					Medium		
B.	Advocate for best practices and educate local and regional planning commissioners who designate land uses along the river, in order to improve water quality and lessen vulnerability to flooding and fluvial erosion hazards.					Medium		

Goal 4. Provide outreach to communities on river issues and best practices for riverfront land management.								
						Priority		
	Outputs July 2015 to date	Outcomes July 2015 to date	Responsible parties, leads, champions	Ongoing, time line, due date	Resources required	Importance	Required or urgent	Immediate opportunity for implementation
C.	Through the Local River Subcommittees and partners, distribute existing educational materials published by CRJC, state agencies, or other organizations (e.g. local conservation districts, regional planning commissions) to relevant stakeholders.		(proposed) Communications Committee			Medium		
D.	Provide current information on Connecticut River boating on CRJC's website. Develop a robust and accessible website to reflect current science, knowledge, and best practices, and cultivate links with other partners' websites.		Tara Bamford for website migration  (proposed) Communications Committee			High		
E.	Advocate use of current BMPs and work with technical organizations on standards on which municipalities may rely for regulatory support.		(proposed) Communications Committee			High		X

Goal 5. Articulate and anticipate up-and-coming issues that affect the Connecticut River and its watershed.								
						Priority		
	Outputs July 2015 to date	Outcomes July 2015 to date	Responsible parties, leads, champions	Ongoing, time line, due date	Resources required	Importance	Required or urgent	Immediate opportunity for implementation
A.	Convene educational workshops or working groups on up-and-coming issues in order to develop and disseminate best practices for watershed protection.					Medium		
B.	Advise legislators on impacts of state laws and programs on the Connecticut River and its watershed.					Medium		
C.	Schedule a series of presenters at CRJC meetings to keep Commissioners and the public informed on watershed-related issues. Presentations will focus on issues that are critical to the implementation of the Connecticut River Management Plan.					Low		