



Connecticut River Joint Commissions

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<http://www.crjc.org>

August 5, 2016

Stephen C. Landry, Supervisor
Watershed Assistance Section
NH Department of Environmental Services
29 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH 03302

Re: Letter of Intent - 2017-2018 Water Quality Planning 604(b) Funding

Dear Mr. Landry:

Connecticut River Joint Commissions desires to apply for funding for **Connecticut River Water Quality Education Toolkit**. Specifically, funding is needed to update and modernize the key elements of the excellent material developed by earlier CRJC staff.

State funding enabled the reactivation and facilitation of the Commission, its five Local River Subcommittees which serve as LACs under the NH RMPP, and more recently, several subcommittees of the Commission itself. Through these bodies, hundreds of hours of in-kind labor are volunteered for the benefit of the water quality in the Connecticut River. What has become apparent however is that the tools we have for outreach to and education of the public have become outdated. Material is needed for volunteers to take to their town offices, to bring to events, to share with other organizations, and to provide content on the CRJC website. Our current material, although excellent on substance, has begun to look stale, with out of date contact information and not smoothly web accessible. As shown here, <http://www.crjc.org/pubs/>, the Publications and Resources page of the website appears more like an archive than like the most public-facing element of the vibrant entity that it is.

Updates of publications for landowners, a PowerPoint presentation that volunteers can use for meetings and presentations, a display that can be easily taken to fairs and other events, and an updated website resources page have been identified as the highest priorities needed by the Local River Subcommittees. Maintaining a high level of quality education material is an essential component of implementation of the five Water Resources Plans, as well as to lay the groundwork on meaningful public engagement in the next update.

CRJC desires to continue to partner with UVLSRPC to perform the work on this initiative. UVLSRPC provides staff support to the Commission and its five Local River Subcommittees. UVLSRPC staff also provides maintenance of the CRJC website. The main staff **contact** for the Commission is Patricia Crocker pcrocker@uvlsrpc.org or 603-448-1680. The Subcommittee Coordinator is Tara Bamford at tara.bamford@crjc.org.

The **water quality** problem to be addressed by bringing CRJC's educational material back to its previous baseline of excellence is the lack of knowledge by river corridor community residents and landowners of the importance that their everyday, seemingly small decisions have in determining the health of the river and its resources. Two of the focus areas for past CRJC initiatives were riparian buffers and septic system maintenance. The New Hampshire Water Resources Primer cited CRJC in noting the importance of buffers:

Natural vegetated riparian buffers - the undisturbed land bordering rivers, streams and other water bodies - are the most effective protection for New Hampshire's surface waters. They reduce runoff, filter pollutants, and provide transitional zones between aquatic habitat and human land use. Depending on the width and the vegetation in place, 50 to 100 percent of the sediments and nutrients from runoff can settle out or be absorbed by the buffer (Connecticut River Joint Commissions, 2000).

Septic system maintenance is also cited in the New Hampshire Water Resources Primer as an essential ingredient in order for septic systems to protect water quality. However few homeowners are aware of this need and fewer still have this task performed on the recommended schedule. The excellent homeowners handbook that Adair Mulligan produced for CRJC several years ago would be one of the publications to be updated/modernized and distributed.

The **water quality status** varies greatly throughout the watershed. Several tributaries have been identified as having High Protection Potential (2014 NH Nonpoint Source Management Program Plan Appendix). Several sections of the main stem are shown in the NHDES 2014 Draft 303d list with a slight impairment requiring a TMDL.

The primary **partners** in this work providing in-kind match will be the CRJC Communications Subcommittee and the five Local River Subcommittees. Input from the Local River Subcommittee members will be an essential element in this project as material will need to be "ground truthed" with these local volunteers for effectiveness, user-friendliness, and acceptability with a local audience. Other important partners will include technical experts at NH DES and VT ANR, and others working on water quality issues in the Connecticut River Watershed with whom we share educational material such as Trout Unlimited and the Connecticut River Watershed Council.

The **relevance** to the Section 604(b) goals listed in the Request for Letters of Intent is primarily in implementation of #1. For many or even most cases, the most cost effective **and** locally acceptable approach to addressing water quality issues identified in the Connecticut River

Watershed has been increased outreach and public education. The response to the years of outreach and public education activities of CRJC staff has been outstanding! CRJC is recognized up and down the river as the source of knowledge on the importance of shoreline buffers, septic tank maintenance, and other stewardship activities by landowners and volunteers. Without full-time staff, it is even more important now that effective, up-to-date, attractive education material is available to CRJC's network of volunteers to keep these messages loud and strong.

The **specific deliverables** would include:

- Updated web content.
- Updates of several key publications suitable for a wide range of use cases, in print and web-based, focusing on stewardship.
- A simple user-friendly PowerPoint presentation that volunteers could bring to local meetings.
- Elements needed for two displays for use at fairs and other events including folding tables and chairs, tablecloths, tri-fold displays with carrying cases.

The **environmental outcomes** anticipated would be reduced nonpoint pollution through improved landowner behaviors.

The **estimated cost** is \$36,000 broken down as follows:

\$29,000	UVLSRPC labor (400 hours at \$72.50/hour)
\$5,000	printing
\$2,000	materials for 2 displays

We look forward to hearing if we will have the opportunity to submit a full proposal for this important work. Connecticut River Joint Commissions along with its five Local River Subcommittees represents over one hundred volunteers providing many hours of in-kind service each year. We hope that you will agree that providing them with an up-to-date user-friendly education "toolkit" is essential in order for the Connecticut River watershed to continue to benefit from these champions for water quality protection and good stewardship.

Sincerely,



Richard Walling
President