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Pat Crocker
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Via email

RE: Comments on Proposal Draft re: Mobile Educational Exhibit

I have read over the [undated] proposal draft for consideration by the CRJC concerning a mobile educational exhibit. This letter to convey my comments.

While there is much to be said and gained when the general public and students become more aware of problems, concerns and on-going projects within the NH / VT portion of the Connecticut River watershed, a mobile educational exhibit is unlikely to deliver a useful product over a long period when compared to other means. A well designed web site, intended for a general audience and structured along the lines of self-discovery with fact sheets and or videos, is likely to be more useful when delivering a valuable suite of educational materials at a fraction of the cost when compared to a staffed mobile exhibit. Maintaining and updating a web site is far less costly than maintaining, operating and updating a mobile exhibit.

A mobile exhibit that was also intended to function as a laboratory used for general education or riparian projects is very different from something that also simultaneously operates along the lines of helping with compliance and enforcement. The former appears to be very general and not particularly sophisticated while the latter, to be done effectively, would need specialized equipment, a quality assurance/quality control plan(s) and some attention to 'chain of custody' concerns.

Given the challenges associated with a mobile exhibit, as an alternative I would suggest considering how or whether CRJC could partner with the Montshire Museum centrally located in Norwich, VT to play a greater role in providing up-to-date educational materials about problems, concerns and on-going efforts affecting the upper CT River and its watershed. If such an arrangement between CRJC and Montshire could be put into place, then perhaps there is merit in having CRWC work with the CT Science Center (located Harford CT) to house similar information for the CT and MA portions of the CT River watershed.

There is also the Great Falls Discovery Center in the village of Turners Falls (Town of Montague, MA) which serves as the flagship visitor center for the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. Staff with the Refuge also operate and maintain its mobile exhibit known as "Watershed On Wheels." In addition to attending local fairs and festivals throughout the CT River watershed, this mobile exhibit has a free environmental education program tied to state and national science standards for elementary grades (3rd-5th) that focuses on watersheds, rivers, adaptations and habitats. In light of this exhibit, something similar to the proposed exhibit for CRJC is unnecessary.

Sincerely,

Rick Hopkins
Environmental Analyst