Connecticut River Joint Commissions
Wantastiquet Local River Subcommittee

August 30, 2017
Gov. Hunt House, Vermont Yankee, Vernon

Meeting Minutes

Present:
Lynn Dewald, Walpole
Perry Sawyer, Westmoreland
John Lukin, Westmoreland
Roland Vollbehr, Chesterfield
Jim Calchera, Westminster
Michael Fairchild, Brattleboro
Stephen Skibniowsky, Vernon
Marie Caduto, ANR
Kathy Urffer, CRC, guest
Tara Bamford, CRJC, staff

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:35 and introductions made.

2. The minutes of April 11, 2017 were approved as presented by motion of Perry/Calchera.

3. Marie Caduto gave an update on Vermont's Clean Water Initiative Program. Last week was Vermont's first Clean Water Week. There were over 70 events and over 90 sponsors. ANR just completed a round of ecosystem restoration grants. The program will now have a continuous application process, reviewed every 3 months. Marie can assist applicants. Part of her job is writing the 3 tactical basin plans for the Ottauquechee to Mass. line. The plan includes a table of projects IDed by town and organization. She can add them as they come up if they meet water quality and habitat criteria. The program is now part of the state capital budget. There is money in various state department budgets, e.g., for ag, roads and forestry. Block grants are going through the RPCs and Conservation Districts to spread out the admin burden. S. Windsor is the lead RPC. There is $1.3 million available for shovel ready projects. They have to be performance-based, meaning the reduction in nutrients has to be tracked. The Clean Water Fund Board is putting together the FY19 budget now. Eligible types of projects are education and outreach, river and floodplain restoration, hazard mitigation, shoreland, wetland restoration, stormwater and technical assistance, and some planning and assessments. Several local projects were funded recently.

4. Permit Reviews

-NH 12 update - The background of this project to upgrade and make safer the segment of highway from S. Charlestown to N. Walpole. Various options had been looked at over the years. The railroad track and ledges are on one side the and the river on the other. All agreed the bank needs to be made stable. It was noted that the plans show pulloffs for fishing continuing. The consensus was that permitting agencies will adequately cover any concerns of the Subcommittee regarding protection of the river, and that the 5 ft shoulders can in part make up for the 11 ft vs 12 ft lanes when needed. Some raised concerns about the letter from Jim McClammer that noted his role as liaison for the project but then gave the opinions of two individual members. It was agreed that John Bruno's questions were good, but the sense was that the isn't additional money and the design is not going to change.

-FERC relicensing update – Kathy and Tara reported that additional work on the erosion studies was requested and no new timetable has come out yet. There has been confusion about deadlines b/c a "final" application was submitted prior to the revised studies. Kathy is CRC's new person on this project. She is collecting information on what enhancements are needed for access in anticipation of the settlement process.

5. Updates

-CRC Source to Sea Clean-up 9/22 and 9/23 – Kathy explained that you can register a group or sign on with another one. Either way members should suggest sites they are aware of that need cleaning. It was noted that the homeless camps are associated with a lot of trash under bridges but not considered safe for volunteer clean-ups. Other trashy sites tend to be at car accesses. Clean-up sites can be up tributaries as well.

-Staffing – Tara reported that this will be her last meeting as she is leaving North Country Council and they have declined her offer to continue as a contractor. Members expressed disappointment to have yet another staffing change.

6. Next meeting – will be in about 3 months, unless a more urgent need arises, with the date and time chosen via Doodle Poll. It was agreed that this location worked well.

7. Membership needs were reviewed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:27.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Tara Bamford.