

Natural Resources Conservation Council (NRCC)

Meeting Summary

March 13, 2012

UVM Extension Conference Room, Berlin

Present: Dick Stone, Justin Kenney, Tamara Colten-Stevens, Sarah Damsell, Laura DiPietro, Marli Rupe, Kerry O'Brien, Linda Corse, Ted Grembowicz, Jennifer Alexander, Bridget Bowen, Rick Hopkins, Kim Komer, Nanci McGuire, Dave Seward, Ethan Swift, Jill Arace, Vicky Drew, Richard Harvey, Paul Wagner, Mike Domingue, Pamela Stefanek, David Mears, Mike Kline, Carline Alves, Chuck Ross, Kari Dolan, Rebecca Purdom, Jeff Carter

Jeff Carter, Chair of NRCC: Opened meeting; introductions

Panel Speakers:

Mike Kline, DEC Rivers Program:

Caroline Alves:

David Mears, Commissioner of ANR:

Chuck Ross, Secretary of VTAAF&M

Open Discussion, Facilitated by Rebecca Purdom

Discussion Topics

- 1) Phosphorus loading** – its influence on policy, regulations, how we can develop a greater understanding of the science, what are the issues with implementing practices to reduce it
- 2) Interface between state and local government** – Increasing communications and coordination on existing programs/practices, identifying factors in success
- 3) Land use regulations – summary and implementation** – how to increase the understanding among landowners/farmers of the rationale for regulations, technical assistance needs, enforcement, perceptions
- 4) Buffers: scope, regulations and implementation** – rationale, responding to concerns about buffers, variations of sites

1) Phosphorus Loading

- Need to address uncertainty landowners have of phosphorus issues on their own property – unsure if they are contributing
- Address how to increase trust in practices intended to reduce phosphorus – uncertainty if conservation practices will work, be cost effective, maintain yields
- Address how to increase the understanding of the rationale for practices - simplify
- Address the issue of practices not working everywhere – how to integrate site specifics
- Address how to modify the perception of agriculture as the culprit for phosphorus loading

2) Interface between State and Local Governments

- Address improved coordination and roles to promote successful models of partnership and communications – multiple and varying organizations are competing for resources, many were on the sidelines during Irene, not sure how to help
- Address integrating agriculture into town planning, mitigation, mapping – identify agricultural hazards vulnerable to flooding
- Address how to identify and communicate the role of certain aglands that are also critical floodplains – how do we approach land that is privately owned but publically critical
- Address how to frame the discussion of easements, acquisition, zoning – perceptions of control/takings are a hindrance to these tools
- Addressing trust – enforcement of regulations difficult. Would more regulators just increase the number of people that are avoided or would it increase compliance?

3) Land Use Regulations and Implementation

- Address rationale for BMPs – how to improve network of communication, awareness
- Addressing the need for in-stream emergency response training – what you can and cannot do in the event of a flood
- Address how regulations don't fit everywhere – explore ways to make site specific decisions in varying landscapes, one size does not fit all
- Address how tactical basin planning can provide a tool for improving the network of communications
- Address how to generate revenue for incentives rather than regulations – regulations help spread out the expense, offering incentives requires revenue at the state level – how do we approach this.

4) Buffer Programs

- Address variations, site specifics – making buffers works on different sites, may provide an opportunity to rethink buffer programs to make better fit
- Address the need for on-site visitations for landowners to understanding their upstream and downstream roles, identify the type of buffer that would work
- Address how to increase the understanding of the rationale for buffers – why they are important
- Address perceptions that buffers are not good – trees falling into the river, erosion happening anyway
- Address the idea of land swaps as a way to protect floodplains, still support agriculture
- Address how to utilize stream geomorphic assessments better – making the data more accessible and how to improve how it informs buffer programs, implementation
- Address how to disseminate information through Districts – explore more organized farmers groups
- Address how to develop revenue for incentives and compensation for landowners

Identified topics – tabled for following meetings

- 5) Education – identifying outreach needs for landowners and town officials
- 6) Identifying information gaps for farmers
- 7) Upstream and downstream planning and communications
- 8) Floodplain vs. floodway – differences and regulations
- 9) Discussing network of communication post-Irene; concerns with multiple contacts, and how to simplify
- 10) How to generate interest in river processes
- 11) How to integrate watershed data – accessibility, understanding