

**CRJC Wantastiquet Subcommittee
Minutes**

Thursday, November 2, 2023 at 6:00PM
Hybrid Meeting – Windham Regional Commission, 139 Main St, Brattleboro, VT

Attendees

Walpole	Samantha Loch	P	Westminster		
Walpole			Westminster	Jim Calchera	P
Westmoreland	Perry Sawyer	P	Putney	Heidi Henkel	P
Westmoreland			Putney		
Chesterfield	Roland Volbehr	X	Dummerston		
Chesterfield			Dummerston		
Hinsdale	Mike Darcy	P	Brattleboro	Kathy Urffer	X*
Hinsdale			Brattleboro	Michael Fairchild	P
Vernon	Andy White	P			
Vernon					

Note: P = present in person; V = present over remote virtual platform; X = not present

Attending In Person: Kate Buckman (CRC); Majestic Terhune (UVLSRPC Staff)

** Urffer joined the meeting at 7:00 PM and co-presented on the status of and actions for FERC Relicensing. Urffer did not vote for this session.*

Minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Sawyer called the meeting to order at 6:02PM. Members introduced themselves.

2. Meeting Minutes from July for approval

Sawyer opened the July minutes for review. Darcy motioned to approve the July minutes with no changes. White seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Permit Updates

a. New England Power, Permit by Notification, Hinsdale, NH

Sawyer and White commented on similar past permits from NEP in Hinsdale. Terhune spoke briefly on Permits by Notification.

b. RFMI from NHDES to New England Power, Standard Dredge and Fill Wetlands Permit (#2023-01097), Hinsdale and Winchester, NH

White, Fairchild, and Sawyer clarified the impacted location. White and Fairchild described NEP's previous response to the committee's comments, noting that the landscape at the impacted location is limited.

c. Vermont Agency of Transportation, Individual Construction Stormwater Permit, ID # 9690-INDC, Brattleboro, VT

Sawyer explained that the permit is part of a greater stormwater project. Calchera described several of the proposed changes within the application, highlighting the creation of four roundabouts. Henkel asked after the involvement of conservation and ecological experts in the plans. Calchera detailed the Vermont Agency of Transportation's engineering process. Calchera, Sawyer, Fairchild, and Darcy further described the transportation project's relation to stormwater runoff into the Connecticut River.

The group assessed the locations of where runoff drops off into the Connecticut River and the locations of proposed major changes (particularly the roundabouts). Sawyer and Henkel expressed concern over truck usage on the roundabouts.

The group agreed that frequent and localized flooding has increasingly become an issue in the watershed. Terhune suggested that the group consider stormwater protection measures when looking at future permits and plans.

4. Updates & Other Business

a. Legislative Update — House Bill 308; Went into Effect 10/3/2023

Terhune described NH HB308 and its impact on the committee, noting the reduced in-person attendees to achieve a quorum.

b. Basin 12 Tactical Basin Plan Survey

Terhune stated that VT Watershed Planner Marie Caduto will be sharing a survey to collect feedback on the TBP.

c. NHDES Land Resources Management Update

Perry provided an overview of NHDES' updated rules for Alteration of Terrain and Wetland. Terhune to send the press release to the committee.

d. Town/Member Updates

Calchera shared that phase four construction project in Westminster that the committee previously reviewed is now underway.

Darcy left the meeting at 6:38PM.

Terhune shared concerns from other LRS/LAC groups on attracting and retaining members. Loch and White confirmed that they have witnessed membership issues and have acted as sole members on other committees.

White suggested that those looking to increase membership visit town offices and speak at town meetings. Calchera, Sawyer, and Henkel added that flyers can be helpful at local events/relevant locations (such as town offices and boat launches).

Terhune provided an overview of the Connecticut River Northern Convening and shared thoughts and takeaways from attendees.

Sawyer shared his experience with the CRJC Social and described discussions on the proposed Route 5 Bicycle Corridor and nitrogen reduction. Regarding the bicycle corridor, the group discussed potential ways the trail networks along the Connecticut River could connect along the corridor and the potential challenges to address as the project further develops.

5. Update on Final License Application for the Wilder, Bellows Falls, and Vernon Dams

Urffer and Buckman provided an introduction to the FERC Relicensing process for the Wilder, Bellows Falls, and Vernon Dams.

Henkel inquired after the topics for the settlement discussions, and Urffer gave an overview of the settlement process and content of the settlement discussions. Loch asked whether studies need to be conducted when the companies are sold, and Urffer explained that studies are not required during the transitions. Fairchild asked how differences amongst the dams impact the application, and Buckman and Urffer stated that plans address specific conditions and activities for each dam under consideration.

Urffer said that areas of concern on the final application are plans for erosion, recreation, and cultural resources. She added that CRC also had concerns for fish passage plans, including 1) the prolonged timeline of ladder changes and 2) lack of funding to remove the salmon dam.

White commented on accounting for walleye spawning in March, and Urffer and Buckman elaborated on greater specifics of the plan and the research process for the proposed operational changes.

Loch and Henkel noted recent extreme weather events and the likelihood that more will occur over the next forty years. Urffer stated that accounting for climate change was not required in the application, and Buckman encouraged those interested to make comments on local experiences with extreme weather and the need to consider future impacts in the application.

Fairchild asked whether the license terms could be reduced. Urffer explained that that feedback could be given, although FERC follows a specific set of criteria when setting terms.

Henkel described conditions she and others have experienced on the Connecticut River, emphasizing that large amounts of water are often released suddenly and without notice, which has created dangerous situations for her as a kayaker and especially for others with children, those who are unfamiliar with the area, and those that are less experienced recreating on the River. Henkel, Urffer, and Buckman also discussed the proposed changes to inflow-to-outflow management.

Buckman advocated for community members to submit comments, even if they have thoughts on items not addressed in the application.

Buckman and Urffer stated that they will continue to give this presentation to impacted communities and encouraged those that would like them to come speak to their group (be it a selectboard, conservation commission, or other body), they would be willing to.

6. Adjourn

The meeting is adjourned by motion of Calchera. Henkel seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:23PM.

Next Meeting

January 18, 2023

Minutes respectfully submitted by Majestic Terhune.

DRAFT