

WPP NEWSLETTER

February 2024



THE WATERSHED PLANNING PROGRAM

Greetings from the [Watershed Planning Program](#) team! At WPP, we support clean water project implementation in the State in a variety of ways. One of the main tools we use to organize clean water project prioritization is through watershed management plans, called Tactical Basin Plans. These plans summarize current water quality conditions and prioritize surface water protection and restoration. This newsletter issue is shorter, but has important updates, trainings, and more. Enjoy!



SAVE THE DATE: CLEAN WATER SERVICE NETWORK SUMMIT RSVP

The [RSVP form](#) for the Clean Water Service Network Summit is open! You can also see the current agenda below the form. The summit will take place on Friday, 5 April 2024 at St. Leo's Hall (109 Main Street, Waterbury, VT 05676), from 8:30 AM to around 3:00 PM. A lunch of sandwiches and chips will be free for the first 100 registrants. We hope to see you there!



BASIN 3 (OTTER CREEK, LITTLE OTTER CREEK, AND LEWIS CREEK) UPDATE

The [Addison County Regional Planning Commission](#) serves as the Clean Water Service Provider (CWSP) for Basin 3. The Otter Creek watershed alone encompasses 936 square miles and drains portions of Bennington, Rutland, and Addison counties. The CWSP has been assigned a target phosphorus reduction allocation of 83 kg per Formula Grant.

The CWSP has released three funding calls for proposals, and received 19 applications. Of these applications ten were for implementation projects, four were for design, three were for project identification and assessment, and two were for project development.

The Otter Creek Basin Water Quality Council has approved funding for 17 of the 19 projects. Successful applications came from the Vermont Land Trust (3), the Lake Dunmore/Fern Lake Association (3), the Rutland Natural Resources Conservation District (2), the Town of West Rutland (2), and one each from the Addison County River Watch Collaborative, Trout Unlimited, Vermont Family Forests, Middlebury College, the Town of Shoreham, and the City of Vergennes. We also received one project with no sponsor, that the CWSP intends to manage internally. One of the two projects not funded withdrew their application after finding funding from another source and the other project was shifted to a Project Development Block Grant for funding.

The Otter Creek CWSP is on track to meet the phosphorus reduction targets set forth in the initial Formula Grant. Implementation projects include five riparian plantings, a forestry project, a lakeshore restoration project, erosion control on a private road, and a dam removal. Collectively, these projects are anticipated to yield over 100 kg/yr of phosphorus removal, with just two projects accounting for more than 70% of that total.

The design projects will assist in meeting targets for subsequent Formula Grants. Preliminary estimates for the design projects predict an additional nearly 150 kg/yr of potential reductions in development. Two of the design projects have the potential to achieve over 60 kg/yr of reduction each.

After three rounds of funding we are developing a clearer picture of the world of potential projects, potential partners, and the scale of benefits possible.

WEBINAR: WETLAND PROJECT REVIEW

In this webinar, Laura Lapierre will provide an overview of the DEC Wetlands Program's review process for projects associated with wetlands. Content will include best practices to streamline site visits, preapplication, and permit review. Categorical Classification information will also be provided. This webinar will take place on 4 April 2024 (10:00-11:00 AM). To attend, please register [here](#).



WISPR UPDATE

Interested in learning more about the Water Infrastructure Sponsorship Program? The WISPr [webpage](#) has updated versions of the WISPr Policy, Fact Sheet, FAQs, and Application Form.

CHAPTER 7 GUIDANCE

Act 76 Guidance Chapter 7 on Operation and Maintenance has been released for public comment. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the process and requirements for Verification and Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of clean water projects funded by Water Quality Restoration Formula Grants within the context of Vermont's Act 76 of 2019. Public comments regarding Chapter 7 will be accepted from February 07, 2024, through March 08, 2024. The draft guidance chapter and comment process are available on the [Act 76 webpage](#).



ON COST-EFFECTIVENESS THRESHOLDS

As most of you reading this newsletter know, Act 76 of 2019 created both the formula grant program (funding CWSPs) and the enhancement grant program. Where Act 76 established Clean Water Service Providers and formula grants to meet pollutant reduction requirements, enhancement grants have a broader purpose, and are the main DEC granting program for addressing water quality challenges outside of the CWSP basins (i.e. currently the Connecticut River and the Batten Kill, Walloomsac and Hoosic basins).

Enhancement grants can provide funding in the CWSP basins, so creating clear delineation between the different funding sources where there is a potential for overlap is an important concern. With this in mind, DEC recently asked CWSPs (January 2024) to work with their BWOCs to come up with an initial cost-effectiveness threshold for sending projects in their basins to enhancement grants, with an understanding that this threshold may shift over time. The concept of a cost-effectiveness threshold can be found in Chapter 6 of the formula grant guidance. The main value of establishing a threshold is to create an efficient system for CWSPs, BWOCs, AND implementers in basins where both enhancement and formula grants are available. In basins with a CWSP, if low-pollutant value projects can be directed to enhancement grants, it will save everyone an extra step (and most importantly time) of reviewing a project that has a low likelihood of approval through formula grants. Conversely, enhancement block grant holders will use a CWSPs threshold to send projects they receive to a CWSP, when the project is at or below a CWSPs' threshold.

Setting a cost-effectiveness threshold has value in other ways. A threshold limits the risk that a BWOC would approve a project that is so costly that it makes it unlikely that a CWSP will be able to achieve their assigned target reductions over the CWSP term. Creating this delineation will also help enhancement grant funding flow to areas where there are gaps. It is worth noting that setting a threshold does not mean that every project that does go to a CWSP will necessarily be approved.

DEC will continue to support CWSPs and BWOCs in developing a cost-effectiveness threshold and we appreciate CWSPs and BWOCs working to communicate your approach to implementers working in your basins. As questions may arise on this topic, please be in touch with your CWSP or DEC as may be appropriate!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Mike Winslow, Laura Lapierre, Katherine King, and Chris Rottler for their contribution to this month's newsletter. If you have any information or materials that you would like to present in a future newsletter, reach out to Jack at Jack.Reed@Vermont.gov.

LANGUAGE SERVICES

If you speak a language other than English or need reasonable accommodation for effective communication, [ANR offers free language assistance](#) for its programs and materials. You may also upload this document into [Google Translate](#) for a translation.