

WATERSHED PLANNING

»»» ACT 76 NEWS «««



A STATE OF VERMONT NEWSLETTER

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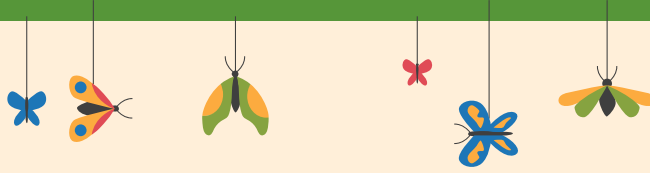
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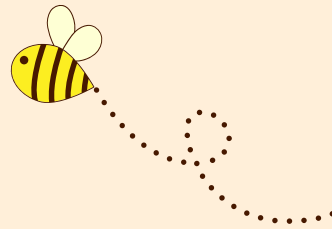
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SPRING HAS SPRUNG!

THIS APRIL...

As the sprouts pop up through the snow, we welcome all of you into this year's field season. While it's getting busy, make sure to take time to smell the flowers.



WETLAND UPDATE

➤➤➤ WETLAND RESTORATION GUIDE

The Program recently published a [Wetland Restoration Manual](#), a how-to manual for designing and implementing voluntary wetland restoration projects in Vermont that contains guidance on:

- Background Assessment and Planning
- Wetland Restoration Practices
- Regulatory Considerations
- Monitoring, Evaluating Success, and Adaptive Management

The manual was written, illustrated, and designed by Arrowwood Environmental with funding from the U.S. EPA. The manual is available on our [restoration website](#) and copies of the guide may be picked up at our Montpelier office (please call ahead to arrange pick-up). Please feel free to get some printed guides to distribute at your next meeting with potential restoration practitioners.

➤➤➤ WETLAND MAPS

We are very close to having updates to the Vermont Significant Wetlands Inventory (VSWI) for Basins 3 and 8 out on public notice, possibly before the end of the month. Hot on its tails will be an update of the CT river basin mapping. The draft updates will be noticed on the ENB.



UPDATES ON DATA TRACKING TOOL PROCESS

➤➤➤ BEFORE AND AFTER PHOTOS

For before and after photos that are required deliverables, generally it is easiest for pictures to be submitted as .png or .jpg files with the file name including the WPD ID and whether the picture is ‘before’ or ‘after’.

➤➤➤ FOREST ROAD IMPLEMENTATION PHASE PROJECTS

For Forest road implementation phase projects, each segment should be reported on in the data tracking tool at this time. The forest road REI should have the information to include in the reporting (slope, length, status pre and post). In the CWSP reporting spreadsheet, the first row for the project would include all the project information and the first segment. Each additional segment would need to be added using the “additional BMP”, which only requires the information to be filled in for the close out of that segment.

➤➤➤ RIPARIAN BUFFER PLANTING PROJECTS

For Riparian Buffer planting projects that have credits for stream stability (more than 50 ft wide) the project type should be changed to “Floodplain/Stream Restoration – Implementation”, at the time of close out. Doing so allows you to fill in the credits for stability along with the riparian buffer benefits. This is a change from previous guidance. Buffer plantings in the database as ‘proposed’ can remain as project type “River-Planting” until implemented and we know the final implemented buffer width.

NOW AVAILABLE!

»»» DEC OPERATION & MAINTENANCE (O&M) MANUAL

This manual provides clear and consistent standards for regular inspection and maintenance of clean water projects in Vermont, including timelines and tasks by project type. This information informs O&M plans, scheduling, and budgeting.

Location of the Manual:

The manual is available on the [DEC Verification and O&M webpage](#).

Contents of the Manual:

- Introduction to O&M
- Overview of the project sectors and practice types
- Inspection and maintenance considerations
- List of common equipment and materials
- Suggested routine maintenance schedules
- And more!

Intended Audience:

This manual is intended for various user groups involved in clean water work across Vermont and is not associated with specific funding programs or regulatory requirements. User groups include, but are not limited to, project managers, designers, agency staff, landowners, funders, and responsible parties. The recommendations outlined in the manual are based on general knowledge of O&M best practices but do not supersede or replace any other requirements specific to a funding program or regulatory program.

Feedback and Future Updates:

This is the first version of the DEC O&M Manual that we hope will be improved over time as more people use it. CWIP's plan is to update the manual on an as-needed basis. Please provide feedback and suggestions for improvements using this form on the [DEC Website](#).



FORESTRY PROJECT TRAININGS

Please join the Department of Forests Parks & Recreation, DEC's CWIP and WPP, for a two-part training series for practitioners and funding program administrators interested in engaging in clean water projects within the Forestry project type.

Please complete the [Forestry Project Type Training registration form](#) to sign up for the training(s). More information can be found in CWIP's April 10th [Clean Water Conversation](#), titled Clean Water Initiative Forestland Practices.

»» VIRTUAL (RECORDED) TRAINING

Purpose: this training will provide an introduction to the Acceptable Management Practices (AMPs) for forestry, the forest road and trail project types eligible for clean water funding, and the tools and resources available to support partners completing forest road and trail projects.

Location: Microsoft Teams (recorded)

Date/Time: Wednesday April 23rd, 1-2:30pm



»»» IN FIELD TRAININGS

Purpose: Dave Wilcox and Silas Rainville of FPR's Watershed Forestry Program will provide instruction on using the Forest Road and Trail Inventory, a Survey 123 application to assess phosphorus reductions and clean water funding eligibility for forest road and trail improvement projects. The training will cover assessment of forest truck roads and skid trails in the field, determining hydrologic connectivity, mapping of road or trail segments, and applying Vermont's Acceptable Management Practices (AMPs) to protect water quality. Attendees should download the Survey 123 app to their mobile devices prior to the field training.

Two field training opportunities covering the same material will be provided in different locations.

Location: Birdseye Wildlife Management Area in Poultney, VT

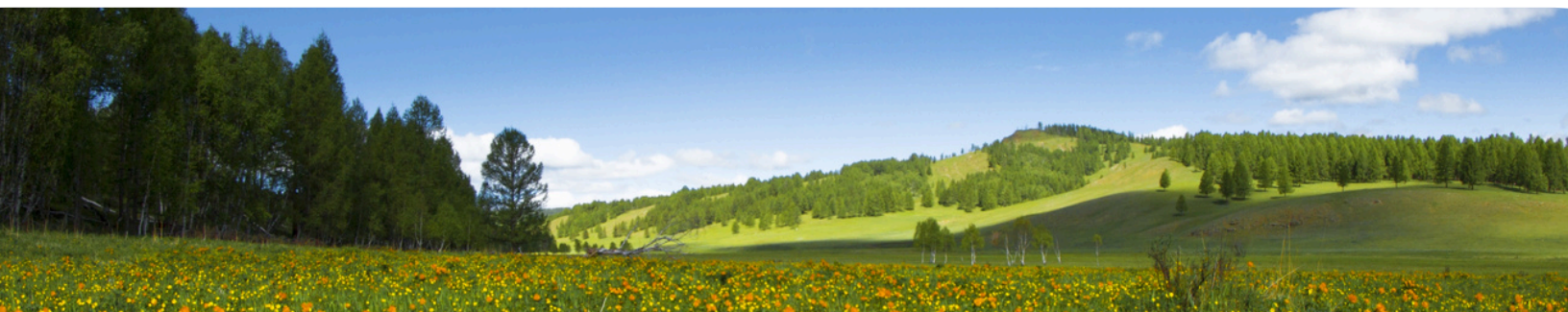
Date/Time: Wednesday May 14th, 9am-2pm

Location: Jay State Forest in Richford/Montgomery, VT

Date/Time: Wednesday May 21st, 9am-2pm

DEC CLEAN WATER ACTION PLAN AND IMPROVEMENT UPDATES

Hey there Vermont clean water stakeholders! Our CWIP and WPP team is excited to be able to present to you our workplan on scheduled improvements related for the most part to the Act 76 Clean Water Service Provider system. The workplan is called the [Clean Water Action Plan](#), and it was created from the comprehensive feedback we have received from Act 76 stakeholders over the past year. We understand there are many requests and needs for improvement, and some of this work is already in progress. We also know that there is a lot of work happening ‘behind the scenes’ that you can’t always see and we understand the value in sharing updates with you on this work. There is also value in showing you what is on the ‘to do’ list, and that we have needed to prioritize certain items over others. Please take a look at the plan at this link to learn more about how we have prioritized various initiatives. Prioritizing our work is part of the reason we created this document, but we also want to share this information with you to facilitate better coordination and communication. Along with this plan, our clean water team at DEC plans to keep you informed with updates on various newsworthy items related to this work in a few different ways. First, we will share relevant updates in this newsletter as well as via the CWIP listserv. Second, our team would like to engage in periodic check-ins with the network, to stay coordinated with this work and to keep the lines of communication open as we move forward.



➤➤➤ CLEAN WATER ACTION PLAN, CONTINUED

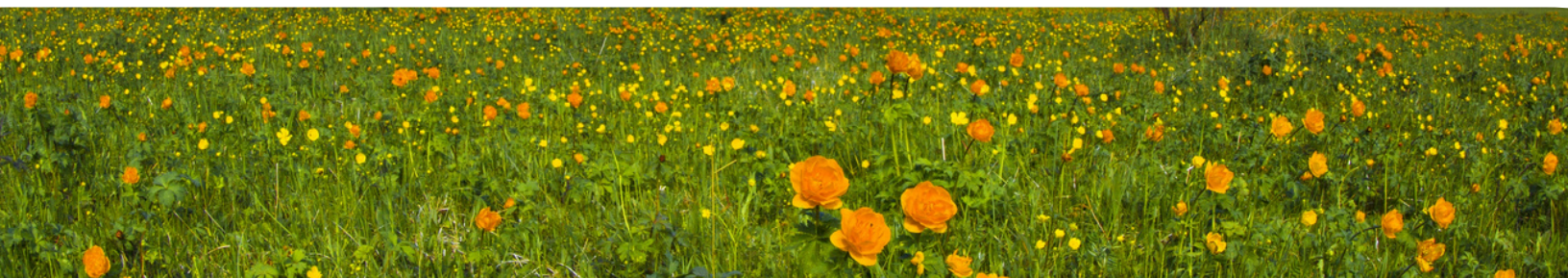
As such, CWIP and WPP plan to schedule a quarterly meeting with representatives from the larger group of clean water stakeholders, to include implementers as well as funders (including enhancement grantees, CWSPs, and BWQCs). We hope that this meeting will serve as a forum that will facilitate better coordination and problem solving, among other benefits. We are looking towards mid-May for our first meeting in this series and will be following up soon to schedule this series.

Thanks to all of you for all the work and support you provide to improving Vermont's environment, including your ideas to help make things better. Progress is being made, with more to come.

Chris R., on behalf of the DEC clean water team.

➤➤➤ RECENTLY POSTED! ADDITIONAL ADOPTION AND DATA GUIDANCE

Three new resources have been posted to the [Clean Water Service Provider Guidance webpage](#) that provides guidance on what projects have a verification checklist and are adoptable, how to adopt a project if a phosphorus reduction hasn't been quantified, and how to adopt older Ecosystem Restoration Projects (ERP). The Adoption and Data Guidance document is the best place to start as it provides an overview of two accompanying resources and additional information that CWSPs may find helpful as they begin to navigate the new world of adoption.



DEC CLEAN WATER ACTION PLAN UPDATE CORNER

Please check this space in future newsletters for updates on what is happening with policy, procedure, and tool development/improvements related for the most part to Formula Grants. Most of the updates we will provide here will connect to tasks in the DEC Clean Water Action Plan, which includes items that are sometimes broader in scope than just Formula Grants (e.g. information on the Funding Policy, etc.)

- 1). **CWIP Funding Policy Updates:** Work on this has been moving forward for the past few months with internal meetings and a public input survey. More information will be forthcoming soon. It is possible that a draft document may be available to the public in late May.
- 2). **Cost Rate Methodology Updates:** Staff are looking to focus more on this work in the coming months, with the goal of having a draft Methodology available for comment in late spring.
- 3). **Phosphorus Accounting for Gullies:** Initial research is being conducted on gullies in Vermont. More research is needed to understand the factors, challenges, and best practices. LCBP has funded a study on bioavailable phosphorus that is investigating gully erosion, some results of which may be available in May; this report may inform the 'next step' in this work. A site visit to an agricultural gully is also being discussed for some time in May.

➤➤➤ UPDATE CORNER, CONTINUED

4). **Forest Truck Road and Skid Trail Assessment Protocol:** Work to establish the Forest Road and Trail Erosion Inventory (REI/TEI) tools is nearly complete and expected to be released in May. Online and field trainings for interested stakeholders are also scheduled for April and May. Please complete this form if you're interested in attending the training(s):

<https://forms.office.com/g/2KQHmdygWV>

5). **Private Road Accounting:** This project type is currently being researched, and DEC has a contract in place to support this effort. The research project is scheduled to be complete in two years, although that can change as information and analysis progress.

6). **Site Access Agreement improvements:** This work was completed last year! DEC made changes to the Site Access license form, simplifying it and making it a little bit more user friendly. Feedback on this improvement has been positive. Find up to date versions on the [Applicant and Recipient Resources webpage](#).

7). **Verification Checklists:** The Lakeshore project type verification checklist is being worked on, with a ballpark release date of June 2025. Also, field verification trainings are being planned for this summer that will cover stormwater, riparian buffer plantings, and lakeshore verification. Training dates and how to attend will be released soon.

➤➤ UPDATE CORNER, CONTINUED

8). **Clean Water Resource Navigation Improvements:** There are many resources available for the work we do to improve water quality in Vermont, and our Watershed Planning Program ECO service member has spent time compiling these resources and their locations. We are considering how best to organize the data we've gathered in a format that is both accessible and easy to use.

9). **Trainings!** DEC held trainings on Strategic Wood Additions, and, noted above, trainings are in the works for Forest Roads/Trails project type and field verification. Additional trainings are being planned for mid-2025 on the Functioning Floodplain Initiative (FFI). A [previous FFI training](#) on updates and crediting guidance is currently available for viewing.

10). **CWSP Financial Structure Simplification:** DEC is looking at adjusting how funding is advanced to CWSPs, to simplify the process while still providing 'liquidity', so that CWSP subawardees can be paid expeditiously.

11.) **Communications Improvements!** DEC is still listening, engaging, and adjusting to help make this process better. We are committed to continuous improvement of this initiative and appreciate your efforts as part of the team to improve our state's waters. We look forward to providing updates on improvements in this space and are also looking to schedule some additional stakeholder meetings to keep the conversation going on a number of important topics. If you have questions related to Formula Grants and are not sure where to turn, please reach out to Chris Rottler (chris.rottler@vermont.gov), or your Watershed Planner!