



## Environment and Natural Resources Working Group Meeting Oct. 22, 2014 from 4-6pm, CVRPC Office

### ATTENDEES:

- Ed Larson, *Barre Granite Association*
- Laura Hill-Eubanks, *Northfield*
- Jens Hilke, *VT Fish & Wildlife*
- Collin O’Neal, *Wrightsville Beach Rec. Area*
- Dan Currier, *CVRPC Staff*
- Emily Nosse-Leirer, *CVRPC Staff*
- Kim McKee, *CVRPC Staff*

### SUMMARY:

- **Environment & Natural Resources Profile** – Staff gave a quick overview of the most recent changes to the Environment and Natural Resources profile including an expanded discussion on scenic resources, addition of information on riparian areas to the invasive species section and additional statistics in the outdoor recreation section, amongst other changes that are marked by *italics* in the most recent draft circulated.

Additional comments on the profile include:

- Add statement regarding the fact that there are likely many unmapped wetlands in the Region in addition to those mapped by the State.
  - Review the Winooski Basin Plan and add more summary to the Water Quality section.
  - Edit second paragraph in “Forest Ownership and Management” section to note that it’s “important to encourage good forest management practices” – instead of “important that these lands are conserved,” to better respect rights of private property owners.
  - Reword Carbon Sequestration paragraph to better clarify.
  - Add reference to Utility Line Corridors as threat to scenic resources.
- **Addition of habitat layer to Resource Conservation map:** A new version of the map previously referred to as “Development Constraints” was circulated and Dan Currier gave an overview of changes. The map, which will serve as the basis for our future land use map, now displays two tiers of resources – primary and secondary – for two different levels of considerations in planning for future development.

The “primary resources” layer is intended for the highest level of protection and includes slopes greater than 25%; wetlands; special flood hazard areas; rare, threatened

and endangered species; deer wintering areas; wildlife road crossings; and prime agricultural soils.

The “secondary resources” layer includes habitat blocks greater than 1,000 with a priority ranking of 6 or greater as delineated by Vermont Fish & Wildlife. Development can certainly still occur in secondary resource areas, but the large forest blocks are important for habitat and strategies may relate to not wanting long driveways that further fragment, keeping development to the edges of the forest blocks, etc. In a nutshell, “We can develop here, but let’s not go nuts.”

Additional comments were made regarding the need for the map to better address riparian resources, to include a map of Biofinder tiers in the Profile, whether Primary Ag Soils should be included on this map and the need to better explain what is depicted by forest blocks (that that do not pertain to or reflect parcel/political boundaries at all).

- **Key Challenges and Trends narrative:** Staff shared Brian Fitzgerald’s recommendation of adding river/stream barriers, i.e., undersized and poorly designed culverts and bridges, and dams to Key Challenges under Flood Resilience. He noted that barriers also have impacts on water quality and aquatic habitat, however. Inventories of these structures do exist, but more work may be needed. Replacement or removal of barriers is the way to address the problem.

Other comments included:

- The need to cross-reference Wastewater Treatment systems to the land use benefit of investing in infrastructure to allow for more compact development and preventing sprawling development patterns.
- Add statement regarding a need to focus on harnessing our natural resources to maximize our renewable energy production – to be touched on to a greater extent in the Energy element.
- Add more emphasis to Climate Change and Invasives in our forests as a large issue. It was noted that maintaining connectivity and large forest blocks is also an adaptation strategy for climate change – our biggest “insurance policy.” Climate change exacerbates many problems we already have – can better clarify these connections.
- “Conflicting Uses for Public Lands” section: more info as to what types of conflicts are occurring would be beneficial. The next step would be to call for greater involvement in the long-range planning process for these public lands by these user groups concerned. It was noted that hiker/mountain-biker conflict (or impacts on trails) for certain trails has been an issue in Northfield. In some areas of the West, public land management has called for alternating days for particular uses.

- **Policies and Strategies:** The working group started to discuss draft policies and strategies. See notes in attached draft.
- **Next meeting:** will be determined via doodle poll.