

Watershed Planning Project Steering Committee Meeting

November 17th

10am-12pm

- Cory welcomes
- Introductions
 - Carl Majewski: UNH extension based in Cheshire County. Works with dairy livestock and others.
 - Tom Akin: USDA NRCS Colchester, agronomist state office, Nutrient management
 - Marie Caduto : Vermont DEC, watershed planner
 - Abby Augarten: Agronomist UVM extension
 - Naomi Detenbeck : US Environmental Protection Agency works out of Putney, VT. Tools for watershed management.
 - Isabel Bowman : Conservation specialist, Windham County NRCD
 - Kathy Urffer : River steward in Vermont for the Connecticut River Conservancy

Zoom Attendees below

- Amanda Littleton : Cheshire County Conservation District
- Geof Dolman : Board member of Windham County NRCD
- Guy Crosby : beef farmer, Hartland VT on board of CRWFA
- Judson Peck : Agricultural data analyst with VAAF water quality division
- Nikki Kolb : NOFA NH operations director North East Dairy Farmer
- Olivia Uyizeye : Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission
- Overview of Projects and Goals
 - This project was brought to Cory by Marie as work that needed to be done in the CT River.
 - Want to assemble a bi-state team of professionals to try and evaluate Nitrogen and how it makes its way to Connecticut River and which Agricultural BMP are best and what is feasible for farmers. Wants TMDL (Total maximum daily load) to be easier and better than what it was out West
 - TMDL is coming, try to incorporate this into our watershed plans.
 - 3 Year project. Very flexible. Gave us money to fix this problem.
 - Phase 1: Farmer Survey, build this survey. Want to find out which practices would work
 - Phase two: Take results and do field trials with willing farmers
 - QUESTION: Will this work actually going to affect how TMDL is done?
 - Part of our intent. How do we inform the EPA, can we have some good data and information from on ground. Not interpreted. To inform that process. How do we work locally to provide information.
 - How does TMDL Process happen? Generally things allocated for different sources. A public comment section.

- Vermont DEC has RCPP for 10mill. Take years before rolled out. Marlie wants to use these results to help with that RCPP.
- Define participants roles
 - Form steering Committee and sub groups.
 - Folks can tailor their time and commitment
 - Share what brought you here?
 - Carl: This is the area he works in with farms. Encourages farms to follow practices for better soil Health
 - Tom: NRCS has lots of money coming from Farm Bill and IRA. Most of this money is to help farmers implement BMPs. Anything that affects water quality. NRCS is not a partner in this project. But farmers can use funds to access
 - Marie: Address Nitrogen in tributaries
 - Abby: One main interest is to connect with the CT river of VT. Looking to connect with farmers and see how to collaborate on projects. Did lots of edge of field water quality studies and she is interested in water quality impacts as well as agronomic practices
 - Naomi: Water management, cost effective practices on paper but this is a way to get more input as to what is easier and accepted by folks.
 - Isabel: Wants to find ways to actually implement practices
 - Kathy: Tries to have hands in everything, network, coordinate efforts, getting fed money into region, figure out where gaps are. Interfaces with their work 100 different ways
 - Amanda: As a CD already doing work with ag producers, soil health and water quality. How can equipment rental programs help, how can this help inform.
 - Geof: Background in Ag research. Primarily here to learn.
 - Guy: With hope of learning about data, what type of nitrogen leachent comes from spreading manure etc. Is there a base line that we are working from now? Any baseline data right now about what N levels are?
 - We have some data. We do test, we do monitor for Nitrogen. USDA monitoring gauge on Mass border. They have defunded that gauge, Trying to reinstate that gauge and continue data gathering.
 - Judson: Data analyst. Manage data for development of cost share program Uses modeling software for Phos. Part of Ag BMP Working Group that comes up with practice efficiencies. TMDL is they come up with a baseline and targets. They also come up with practice efficiencies. However Judson comes up with how effective these new practices are. Apply reduction efficiencies to Baselines. Reduction credit towards TMDL. He is very familiar with how it works in Champlain for PH. Does not anticipate new practices. Believes that same practices for PH will be for N. Interested in providing feedback. Manages partnerdata base.

- Nikki:NOFA NH , Mission aligned.
 - Olivia: CRJC, bi state coordination. Points of alignment between departments and legislators. What role and how can we support this project, getting farmer participation, and communication flow. Watershed plans, land use level. LISFF Is looking for more proposals within watershed, and interested to see what lessons learned and models we form here to give advice to other people.
 - Who should be here that is not currently?
 - AFT Con planners
 - Private sector
 - Might depend on Working groups
 - Any people working in state gov be included to leverage this work for funds, research
 - State employees, who knows
 - Financial conversation might be separate, but it is important. CT River basin does not get as much funding. AGENCY of Ag does not rank practices based on watershed, NRCS might. State and Fed agencies have to be cost effective with money. Might have other people when financial discussion comes into play.
 - Erica Hiller and Alana Redden are both good contacts on the Vital Communities Farm & Food team

● Timeline

- Process of creating a QAPP (Quality Assurance Protection Plan) threw the original timeline out the window.
- QAPP covers phase one, another one will be submitted for phase two. We will have to plan strategically to make sure that we do not hit a delay like we did last time.

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Activity	Time Period	
Phase 1	January 2023-November 2024	
Expand partnership participation: outreach to additional organizations and institutions with skills and knowledge and	January 20203-September 2023	
Convene informal steering committee meeting to discuss additional steering committee members, participation, roles and reonsponsibilities, determine project component timelines	September 2023	
Steering committee meetings and project development. This will include the creation of subcommittees focused on various project aspects such as secondary source assessment, survey development and agricultural producer outreach.	September 2023-April 2024	Phase 2
Farmer survey: review of previous farmer outreach efforts on BMP preferences; survey development; farmer outreach survey	November 2023-May 2024	Report on survey results and BMP list
Survey data analysis and report	June 2024-August 2024	N reduction tracking methodology development
Convene a full steering committee meeting: updates on progress, survey results, determine list of fo cus BMPs for N reduction tracking methodology and development	August 2024-November 2024	N reduction tracking methodology preliminary field visits and testing at participating farms
		Final Report

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- We need to create at least two Subcommittees now

- Getting Info from farmers, not just what they do but what do they want to do and what are they not getting support on right now?
 - Farmers need to apply, and often they do not want to do record keeping, they do not take the next step of USDA paper work with their record keeping.
 - We want to see how this large group can help assist farmers
 - Not enough service providers, they don't see anyone from extension regularly. Comes down to 1 on 1 contact. It takes commitment, it takes a trusted relationship with farmers.
 - In survey try to identify perceived obstacles. Is it money or is it having someone manage the project for them. If there are practices who you know farmers have done these then that is easier. Understanding where the obstacles actually lie, what will be the most beneficial incentives.
 - Community connections. Understanding that most organizations are limited in capacity, who can provide more 1 on 1. Organizations that people might not think about. Planning boards, conservation commissions.
 - Once you get data behind how effective practices are. Farmers are more willing to reduce N because you pay to apply those, where as P is free (manure). Barriers to adoption. Cost rates, cost share, applications, paperwork. Will be interesting to see what baseline for TMDL will be because that might determine farmers' willingness is.
 - Practice implementation the only thing tracked is cost share practices. What producers are doing without any help and no cost share. You need to have someone verify that they are doing this work to then report to TMDL. Conservation Practice Surveys are the rare exception
 - Producers are asked to participate a lot. Can we be in connection with something else then that might be able to help.
- Can we form a working group to create a survey, give survey and gather info before May?
 - How much time is needed to do outreach?
 - Maybe provide a 1 or 2 month window for producers to fill out these surveys - this creates a structured amount of time to ensure farmers don't push it off
 - Need to provide survey where farmers are
 - A survey was done that may be of relevance from PES Working group, item 3C: <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/pes/finaldocuments>
 - SFOs are regulated by the RAPs

- NOFA-NH's Winter Conference is on February 10th. If the survey is ready by then we will share it. We have a number of other meetings/events for farmers coming up in person and online in the New Year. Happy to share the survey when it is ready.
 - Is there a master list of all the farms in both state so you know who you hit and who you haven't
 - NH farm map: <https://unhcoopext.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=c78f08fba0d5431ab2c8d64d8b2d9b30>
 - NOFA farm map: <https://www.nofavt.org/farms-producers/map>
 - Very easy to have survey bias. If you provide survey at CRWFA then they are conservation minded. SO this might mean more 1 on 1 time.
 - Think about how you are going to process this data. Level of error, how questions are structured
 - 2-3 months might be enough time.
 - Can you do two rounds of survey?
 - How fast can we build committee and build survey?
 - It is tight but we can do it!
 - How many years of field testing?
 - One year to start. These are preliminary. We will use this data to get another grant.
 - Could easily argue another year or two for more of these projects. They won't fund research so will have to word it a way. Doing field trials, to them implementation.
- Project Budget
 - It was our best guess without knowing. We know we will need a budget amendment.
 - Budget can be viewed here: [Budget and Tracking](#)
 - \$150 for producer stipend. Must be called mileage stipend. So we can use this as match
 - Over the next few weeks we want to nail down numbers.
 - Match is required
 - Time can be used as match
 - Cost of room can be used as match
 - Budget is timeline for 3 years
 - As of now it is 2 years if we get everything done
 - Anyone with grant agreements will need to submit sub agreements
 - Would love to know how to track match. Google spreadsheet, sign in sheet, or reporting form that you fill out and send back to Cory. What works best?
 - Quarterly seems easily to do
 - Good to have a place where all docs are housed.
 - Monthly or bi monthly

- Quarterly is too long
 - Maybe have the match report and invoice.
 - How do you envision yourself fitting in?

Steering Committee:

Marie, Kathy, Amanda, Judson, Nikki, Olivia

Survey subcommittee:

Marie, Abby, Kathy, Geof

Secondary source review:

Abby, Naomi, Isabel, possibly Ryan from CRC

Agricultural outreach:

Carl, Abby, CRC staff (possibly), Amanda, Heather, Nikki, Olivia (possible)

Additional comments:

- Carl: Outreach, farm and field
- Tom: Needs to talk to supervisors
- Marie: Involved in a lot, steering, interested in the early survey phase and getting it out. Interested in how to go about research.
- Abby: See in a few areas, but can't commit to all. Fill in where needed. Help with survey development. Can help with workshops. Very interested in Phase 2.
- Naomi: Secondary source assessment
- Isabel: Secondary source
- Kathy: steering committee, survey design. Farm outreach could be other staff. Circle back to Kate, she might do producer outreach
- Amanda: Steering committee, ag outreach. Happy to help in other ways
- Geof: Survey development
- Judson: Not a lot of capacity. Happy to provide feedback. But feel free to reach out and he can come to meetings
- Nikki: Producer outreach, review and provide feedback on survey.
- Olivia: Happy to sit on the steering committee, limited in capacity. Review surveys and provide feedback. Potential to support producer outreach, talk to their membership first.
- Subcommittees meet in December
- What did we miss?
- Set date of next meeting:
 - January 19th
 - Hybrid and same location
 - 2 hours long
- Finally comments
 - THANK YOU!