



Southwest Region Planning Commission
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**Energy & Natural
Resources Advisory
Committee**

ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

AGENDA

October 23, 2024

3:30 p.m.

**37 Ashuelot Street
Keene, NH 03431**

Joe Levesque, Chair
Alstead

Mari Brunner, Vice Chair
Keene

Pete Davis
Jaffrey

Alicia Flammia
Walpole

Jane Johnson
Swanzy

Matt Kelly
*UNH Cooperative Extension
Service*

John Kondos
*Clean Energy New
Hampshire*

Sean Leary
Hinsdale

Amanda Littleton
*Cheshire County
Conservation District*

Scott Maslansky
*NH Community Development
Finance Authority*

Richard Mellor
Rindge

Gus Ruth
Winchester

Marge Shepardson
Marlborough

John Snowdon
Westmoreland

Brett Amy Thelen
*Harris Center for
Conservation Education*

Francie Von Mertens
Peterborough

Ruth Ward
Stoddard

- I. Call to Order and Introductions
- II. Minutes of April 24, 2024, and July 24, 2024
- III. Presentations from Brian Hauschild, *Geoscience Program Specialist* at the New Hampshire Geological Survey (NHGS), on the New Hampshire Stream Crossing Initiative (NHSCI). The NHSCI is a multi-agency group that works to improve the management of stream crossing infrastructure across the state.
- IV. Partner Updates
- V. Next Meeting: January 22, 2025
- VI. Adjourn

Energy & Natural Resources Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

July 24, 2024

Present: Joe Levesque, Chair, *Town of Alstead*; Matt Kelly, *UNH Cooperative Extension*; Scott Maslansky, (remote) *NH Community Development Finance Authority*; Francie Von Mertens, *Town of Peterborough*; Ruth Ward, *Town of Stoddard*.

Staff members present: Jason Cooper, *Planner*; Chloe Gross, *Planner*; Rich Clough, *Office Support Specialist*.

Guests: Kurt Yuengling, (presenter) *NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Community Engagement Specialist*; Michael Nork, (presenter) *NHDES Supervisor in the Materials Management, Education & Planning Section of the Solid Waste Management Bureau*; Paige Wilson, (presenter) *NHDES Waste Reduction & Diversion Planner in the Solid Waste Management Bureau*; Terry Clark, (remote) *SWRPC Board of Directors*; Gordon Leversee, (remote) *Resident, City of Keene*; Gretchen Rae, (remote) *Business Manager, Public Works, Town of Peterborough*.

I. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Joe Levesque called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m. and introductions were made. Chair Levesque noted that a quorum was not present and stated that no votes would be taken.

II. Minutes of April 24, 2024

There was not a quorum present, therefore the minutes of the April 24, 2024 meeting were tabled for the next meeting.

III. Presentations from NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) staff

Jason Cooper introduced Kurt Yuengling, Community Engagement Specialist, who shared the expected timeline for work funded by an U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG), including the recently completed Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP). Kurt Yuengling explained that the completion of the PCAP allows NHDES to pursue federal funding for a number of different climate issues. He noted that an objective of the plan is to identify and mitigate sources of climate pollution in New Hampshire. One funding source which the state was successfully able to secure is the New England Heat Pump Accelerator program which is designed to increase the use of heat pumps to reduce carbon pollution. The program aims to eliminate funding gaps, improve aged houses, and install 580,000 heat pumps in buildings across New England.

Kurt Yuengling shared insight about the agency's draft Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) which will build upon the PCAP. Development of the CCAP will include robust stakeholder engagement, finding additional funding sources, and development of new programs and policies. He outlined the development process and noted that rollout kickoff meetings were scheduled for later in the year. When discussing the different kinds of pollution control measures that will be in the CCAP, Matt Kelly asked if wood pellet heating was included, and Kurt Yuengling replied that wood pellet stoves were not included. Ruth Ward asked for clarification on the emissions target in the plan. Kurt answered that the goal is for

New Hampshire to have no new emissions sources by the year 2050. Scott Maslansky asked how NHDES plans to most effectively gather public input for the CCAP. Kurt replied that the agency will be conducting a robust public outreach campaign in collaboration with NH Listens. Chair Levesque noted that details that help to understand the associated costs with proposed projects would be helpful. Kurt Yuengling acknowledged this and stated that an attempt to provide the data was underway.

Jason Cooper introduced Michael Nork, Supervisor in the Materials Management, Education & Planning Section of the Solid Waste Management Bureau, and Paige Wilson, Waste Reduction & Diversion Planner in the Solid Waste Management Bureau, to discuss the New Hampshire's plans and strategies to mitigate food waste and support composting efforts. Michael reported on an update to the 10-year NH State Solid Waste Management Plan in 2022 that identified 8 goals, 76 actions, and 5 strategies to decrease solid waste generation. He noted that the update is a broad road map targeting several different goals, including reducing solid waste generation, decreasing the amount of toxic waste generated, diverting more waste to be recycled or composted, increasing the use of local markets, and supporting environmental solutions. He reported that food waste makes up 24% of NH waste generation, and that the new law, which aims to reduce the amount of organic waste being sent to landfills, will go into effect in February 2025. At first, the ban will require that if an entity generates 1 ton of food waste per week and is within 20 miles of a commercial composting facility with capacity, the organic waste should be diverted from landfills.

Michael Nork and Paige Wilson then described the scope and expectations associated with an EPA Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) Grant which the state has secured to support a statewide waste characterization study, a food waste generation study, and, ultimately, outreach and education on promoting diversion of organics. They described the methodology and objectives within the study, provided a timeline for completion, and shared a webpage where more information is posted: <https://www.des.nh.gov/waste/solid-waste/managing-my-waste>. Jason Cooper thanked the presenters.

IV. Partner Updates

Chair Levesque reported that the town of Alstead was nearing completion of developing a Complete Streets policy which would integrate more transportation options into the existing infrastructure. Matt Kelly reported on a UNH Cooperative Summer Stewardship with Distant Hill in Alstead/Walpole.

V. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for October 23, 2024, at 3:30 p.m.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Clough
Office Support Specialist

Energy & Natural Resources Advisory Committee

Minutes

April 24, 2024

Present: Joe Levesque, Chair, *Town of Alstead*; John Kondos, *Town of Chesterfield*; Richard Mellor, *Town of Rindge*; Marge Shepardson, *Town of Marlborough*; John Snowdon, *Town of Westmoreland*.

Staff members present: Jason Cooper, *Planner*; Rich Clough, *Office Support Specialist*.

Guests: Frank Richter, *Monadnock Energy Circuit Rider*; Kate Buckman (presenter), *Connecticut River Conservancy*.

I. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Joe Levesque called the meeting to order at 3:34 p.m. and introductions were made.

II. Minutes of January 24, 2024

Motion: To approve the minutes of January 24, 2024.

Motion by Chair Levesque, seconded by John Snowdon. Approved by unanimous vote with Richard Mellor abstaining.

III. Relicensing of Hydroelectric Dams on the Connecticut River

Jason Cooper introduced Kate Buckman of the Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC) who reported on the progress of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) hydro dam relicensing process, as well as the CRC's work more generally. She described some of the focal points of the Conservancy's work including advocacy, community science, recreation, restoration, sea lamprey protection, and water quality. Kate Buckman explained that the number of dams within the Connecticut River watershed increased significantly from the 19th century to the mid-20th century, and that the 175 miles of river runs through 16 VT towns, 14 NH towns, with 2,000 dams of different types within the Connecticut River watershed. She reported that the FERC oversees large non-federal hydropower relicensing, that a typical license has a term of 30-50 years, gets renewed every 40 years, and that the Wilder, Bellows Falls and Vernon Dams were last relicensed in 1979. She stated that the Federal Power Act of 1986 has an equal consideration clause to address issues like energy conservation, protection of fish and wildlife and their habitat, recreational opportunities, and preservation of other aspects of environmental quality. Kate Buckman reported that relicensing is usually a 5-year process, and that FERC is bundling 5 dams on the Connecticut River together to be relicensed. She noted that the current process began in 2012 and the dams are owned by Great River Hydro and FirstLight. She reported that the process involves scoping out public concerns through forums and numerous studies. Because of the extended timeline of this relicensing process, some studies have had to be repeated, and that there have been 33 studies since 2012 on the function of the dams. She noted that the process considers multiple stakeholder values and integrates many laws and regulations, including the Clean Water Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act.

Kate Buckman stated that one important aspect in the relicensing agreement would be to fund research and data collection in the Connecticut River watershed. She noted that dams impact aquatic organism

passage. Richard Mellor asked if fish ladder provisions were included in the relicensing discussions. Kate Buckman affirmed that there must be consideration for the passage and health of many aquatic species. Accommodation for these species may include fish ladders and other infrastructure. Kate Buckman noted that the American eel doesn't use ladders, but other fish do.

She explained that the CRC would like to see faster implementation of the provisions included in the new license. Additionally, the CRC supports shorter active time spans for the licenses, since conditions can change drastically within the 40-50 years that licenses are valid. She reported that one exciting feature anticipated to be included in the new license, based on input from stakeholders, studies and by using modeling techniques, is that the relicensed dams would largely follow natural inflow and outflow patterns. This will more accurately mimic the flow of the river in its natural state.

Kate Buckman listed several benefits for the proposed operating system including:

- Having a stabilized reservoir
- Increased baseflows
- Reduced fluctuations upstream and downstream
- Reduced rates of change
- Improved aquatic habitat
- Increased protection of shoreline
- Increased availability and persistence of down-stream habitat
- Having the shortest possible licensing term to provide adaptability to environmental changes
- Dams should maintain energy and economic value
- Dams should maintain the ability to support and respond to regional energy needs and emergencies

She also noted that the application included the following mitigation and enhancement measures:

- Discussing additional fish passage requirements with resource agency staff including possible changes in fish ladders
- Developing and signing a programmatic agreement for managing historic resources
- Expanding operation of fish ladders from April 1 to July 15
- Maintaining primitive campsites
- Consideration of recreation recommendations
- Education about and protection of indigenous culture areas and creation of historical and archaeological programs and condition notification systems
- Annual investments in recreational facilities and programs including, ADA, portage, CT River Paddlers' Trail Marketing Plan, fish viewing facilities.

John Snowdon asked if further studies would change the parameters of the current license. He also expressed concern that the parent company of the dams is Hydro-Québec, headquartered out of the country. Kate Buckman stated that it wasn't likely and that she wished the process could be more responsive, but it would be good to monitor river changes. She explained the next step in the process is a public comment period that ends May 22, 2024, after which FERC could ask for more information. Great River Hydro and FirstLight would then apply to both VT and NH for 401-water quality certificates for the dams. She noted that each state can then define the measures to maintain quality. Jason Cooper noted that SWRPC needs feedback for a potential letter to FERC supporting the actions of the Conservancy. John Snowdon asked if certification could include funding to create parks. Kate Buckman answered that it is possible if FERC included it in the certification documents. Jason Cooper asked how comments could be addressed to FERC. Kate Buckman replied that people could email comments directly to FERC. Joe Levesque asked if FERC has any leverage with Hydro-Québec. Kate Buckman responded that the regulations apply regardless of ownership. She reported that the licenses may include other items such as

a recreation or historic preservation plan. She noted that after all the provisions had been agreed to there would be an issuance of licenses and follow-up requirements.

IV. Partner Updates

Marge Shepardson reported that in Marlborough there had been water testing at Stone Pond and that there were indications of degradation of water quality, and that the town was in the process of examining runoff from roadways. Jason Cooper suggested that SWRPC could investigate pursuing 604(b) funding from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to study the Stone Pond watershed if the community would like to pursue that option. John Snowdon reported that Westmoreland had contracted with SWRPC to do a Stream Crossing and Closed Culvert Drainage System inventory and assessment, and that the town was also looking into some bridge replacements. John Kondos noted some clean energy grant opportunities.

V. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for July 24, 2024, at 3:30 p.m.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Clough
Office Support Specialist