

MINUTES (DRAFT)

Bolton Lakes Watershed Conservation Alliance (BLWCA) Meeting

Tuesday March 4, 2014

7:00 PM

North Central Conservation District

24 Hyde Avenue

Vernon, CT 06066

RECEIVED
VERNON TOWN CLERK
14 MAR 20 PM 6:27**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Rod Parlee (Bolton CC & CT Assoc. of Conservation and Inland Wetland Commissions-CACIWC); at 7:05 PM. Others attending were: Dorothy Mickiewicz (Tolland CC), Tom Ouellette (Vernon CC & CACIWC), David Forest, Jeffrey Phelon, Karl Prewo and Peter Van Dine (Friends of Bolton Lakes), Karl Hasel (Northern Connecticut Land Trust), invited guest Eric Thomas (CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection, Watershed Management Program), and members of the public.

2. Volunteer Scribe and Approval of February 3, 2014 Draft Minutes

Ouellette volunteered to serve as scribe for the present meeting. At the end of the meeting, a motion was made and seconded to approve the February 3, 2014 draft minutes. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

3. Bolton Lakes Watershed ERT Update

Parlee reported that all chapters of the ERT report have been completed and submitted to the ERT Coordinator and that publication of the report is expected in the near future.

4. Introduction of Eric Thomas, CT DEEP Watershed Manager

Thomas was introduced by Parlee. Thomas described his background and the DEEP Watershed Management Program, explaining that he manages and administers grant-funded projects dealing with nonpoint source (NPS) pollution. Parlee asked Thomas to discuss how the BLWCA can be most effective organizationally. Prewo asked Thomas to discuss implementation of an EPA 9-element management plan, similar to the Tankerhoosen River Watershed Management Plan, within the context of Bolton's Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) Grant.

5. Discussion

Thomas commented that each watershed is unique and that watershed management plans are not completely transferable. Plans typically follow EPA Clean Water Act (CWA) guidance documents, and require input of local support, knowledge and history. He stressed the importance of using existing information. Plans focus particularly on upper watershed contributions to receiving waters, and are based on biannual assessments of impaired waters required under the CWA. Attention to management of designated impaired waters drives staff involvement and watershed funding opportunities and priorities. He noted that although Bolton Lakes are not designated impaired, their improvement is consistent with DEEP's efforts to pilot "healthy watershed" management efforts. He explained that the designation of impaired waters is based on the presence and character of existing discharges to those waters, and that Class A waters can be designated as impaired.

Thomas said that DEEP can also engage in watershed planning if only part of a watershed is impaired, or if incidental problems exist in a watershed that could cause impairment of a non-impaired water body. He added that elements of an EPA plan may be eligible for funding even if the entire plan is not.

Thomas suggested conducting a Municipal Land Use Evaluation in which regional consultants would evaluate existing town regulatory and governing processes and potentially recommend revisions to most benefit watershed residents and resources. He suggested as models the Salmon River and Farmington River Valley watershed management plans. He advocated for grass roots level planning to ensure local support and municipal commitment to implementation, as well as legislative support. He commented that Conservation Commissions are well-positioned to explain to town governing bodies watershed principles and needs as they transcend municipal boundaries.

He noted that one mechanism for institutionalizing watershed-wide goals is a Conservation Compact. As an example, he described the Niantic River Watershed Management Plan, the first EPA 9-element plan in Connecticut, pursuant to which four towns joined a compact that includes the establishment of standing committees, a semi-annual work plan, and the designation of a Watershed Coordinator.

Thomas noted that actions detrimental to a watershed are most likely to occur in the less developed rather than the built-out areas, such that the less developed areas merit particular attention in managing resources.

Thomas suggested that DEEP Land Acquisition Program staff may be able to assist in identifying reported State ownership of the Upper Bolton Lake Atlantic white cedar forest. He also suggested the Green Valley Institute's *A Guide to Linking Regional Greenways, Blueways and Wildlife Corridors* as a model for protecting watershed-wide greenways and wildlife corridors. Others who might assist include Land Trusts and CT Farmland Trust.

Thomas noted that the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and DEEP have conducted hazards management planning that may supplement municipal planning for emergencies affecting lake integrity.

6. Public Comment

None.

7. Atlantic White Cedar and Search for a Champion

Parlee invited attendees to join a trip on March 5 to explore the Upper Bolton Lake white cedar forest.

8. Establish Next Meeting Date re: Protecting Critical Areas of Concern especially Wetlands and Emergency Planning.

Thursday, April 3, 7:00 PM.

9. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:30 PM.

Minutes prepared and submitted by Tom Ouellette.

RECEIVED BY EMAIL