

Memphremagog Basin Water Quality Council

Friday, December 5, 2025 9:00am - 11:00am

Attendees:

BWQC members: Ted Sedell OCNRCD, Sam Mayne EGNRCD, Eric Pope Morgan Selectboard, Patrick Hurley MWA, Meg Carter NWSC, Doug Morton NVDA, Beth Torpy NVDA, Remy Crettol VRC

Alternates:

DEC: Ben Copans, Chris Rottler

VHCB: Trey Martin, Rebecca Williams,

Guests: Sean Willison (EGNRCD), Will Marlier

Introductions and Agenda Review – Added an agenda item to Vote to add Remy to the BWQC as the land conservation organization representative.

Public Comment: none

Review and Adoption of October meeting minutes (action)

Motion to approve minutes was made by Beth Torpy with a second by Meg Carter. Motion passed

Vote to Add Remy to the BWQC

Motion to approve Remy as a BWQC Member Patrick motion Sam second

Remy is focused on restoration and conservation projects in the northern watershed. Has been involved with several BWQCs in other Basins

Set dates for 2026 BWQC Meetings (action)

Rebecca asked the BWQC for general feedback on next years meeting schedule and if this should remain the same as this years and BWQC members indicated that this schedule generally works well. Rebecca shared the dates for BWQC meetings if we followed the current years schedule. There was discussion of a challenge with longer timelines for task order meaning that dates that the task orders have been are finalized under this schedule did not align well with work need to be done under the current system. VHCB has worked to revise their process to get these in place two weeks after a BWQC vote so this should not be an issue going forward.

There was discussion and suggested to shift of two proposed dates from February 20th and April 17th to February 6th and April 3rd which was supported.

There was a discussion about moving the December meeting to a July 24th timeframe. A decision was made to keep the December meeting so that the BWQC will have 5 meetings scheduled for the next year, and one can always be canceled. There was some discussion that the July meeting could be a field visit to sites or in person in Newport, as well as a possibility to have this late in the afternoon to go out afterwards.

The final set of dates proposed are:

- February 6, 2026 -
- April 3, 2026
- July 24, 2026
- October 2, 2026
- December 4, 2026

VHCB Updates

Nathanael created much for the CWSP system and pushed for more flexibility for the partners and shared VHCBs appreciation for this work. Rebecca has been able to just step in and optimize things and is looking to continue to improve systems and resolve some of the kinks. They will continue to come to BWQC meetings and can work to address things. There are ongoing discussions with Janelle to talk about the wrap up of the GLFC to extend several grants for partners with remaining funds.

Rebecca came on board with VHCB while things work moving along and will be setting up times to talk with partners about improving systems. VHCB's goal is to make this program work as smoothly as possible. There was a question about a hiring process but plans are for Rebecca to take on this role permanently although there may be support from other VHCB staff. One concern is that VHCB is losing a local presence so they would welcome any feedback on this, although no concerns were expressed.

DEC Updates

The CRM is the big update but just a big shout out to VHCB and the BWQC partners for the great collaborative work.

Project Presentations

Coe Tributary Restoration Project (Will Marlier – OCNRCD)

Will noted that the application largely speaks for itself. The owner of the property has 14 acres of land with a tributary and down to the lake. Will visited the property in May with Gabby and noted some poorly retired forest roads that were hydrologically connected, and noticed a private drive had an undersized culvert that was a constriction on the stream and blows out frequently and then there is a lawn to lake management practice so offers to plant a riparian and lakeshore buffer as part of the project. Will has spoken with Ben, Alison, Sacha, Shannon around permitting and technical considerations and has gotten some background on the neighborhood. The project will include a more formal assessment of roads and private drive, on site surveying with a designer from watershed consulting, and working with a couple of other project elements.

The tributary comes in from the north side of the lake, and the project includes the restoration of a good area of buffer. There have been some concerns with the use of the property as an Air B&B and need to have additional communications to avoid issues with the loss. There is also the complexity with the lake level in flux with the dam issues. Will is mostly looking to obliterate roads with the exception one that leads to a spring. There is a large delta and lots of this is related to Clark Road so it would be great to see if there is a way to address this.

Project Deliberations and Vote on the Coe Tributary Restoration Project –

Motion to approve project made by Patrick Hurly and seconded by Sam Mayne

All votes in positive – Ted Sedell recuses himself from the vote - Motion passed.

Other Topics

Project updates moving into Project pipeline

Ted Sedell OCNRC

Lacross/Grandview farm has the 90% almost to 100% design completed with Fitzgerald Consulting. The project is to remove a dam and reroute a stream back to its original path. Still uncertain about costs due to cost to move mucky material but expect a ballpark of 75 – 100k for implementation but will get a better idea after final design is completed. Ted is looking to apply for implementation funding at the February BWQC round

The Brighton Brook project was approved in October and was completed in 3 weeks from BWQC vote.

Patrick Hurley MWA

MWA is closing in on final Beebe plan floodplain designs having meet with Wetlands, Rivers etc. and working through permits. Patrick is looking to submit final designs by the end of the month and this process was delayed a little by archeology review process. They are working on submitting for implementation funding in the February BWQC round looking to construct this summer. This project will now include work on an adjacent parcel just acquired by F&W. Best guess is 150k in expected costs with lots of buffer planting and some complexity with having to use small equipment and swamp mats.

Patrick is seeing contractors under bid and may have some funding returned to VHCB that isn't needed on a few projects.

Valley Brook Box Culvert and alluvial fan project was completed in October and looks great. They are likely to have some funding left over and so may discuss with VHCB to allow this to leverage GLFC funding for phase 2.2. They have moved planting to spring on this project and Comes O'Brien due to the drought this fall.

The VELCO project is complete but they need to do the as-built survey next spring. All projects close out in June and will have some final work to button things up.

The Barton stormwater effort is set to be installed in April or May by JP Siccard.

The Barton project development work is still in progress and MWA is looking to schedule a meeting to talk projects with partners about potential projects from this effort.

The Cole farm project on hold while acquisition is completed and MWA has just got task order for project development efforts around Seymour Lake.

Trey noted that there may be a few partners that could have some projects that could have some GLFC/CWSP cross over opportunities and suggested partners reach out to discuss.

Patrick noted a potential large earthen dam removal working with a realtor and client off Bard Road but not sure about p crediting or if this is going to be a CWSP project.

Ted is working along the Black, Brighton, Lords creek on a project that includes lots of buffer, removing a windrow, plugging ditches and wetland restoration which is likely to be a couple projects.

Remy is working on river corridor prioritizations. Ask partners to share with VRC if landowners might be interested in RCEs. As VRC identifies projects they will look to connect with partners to coordinate on restoration work.

Rebecca said that this agenda item was intended to get some input on setting up a conversation in February meeting to get a better sense of what the total request is going to be over the next year so that the BWQC can have this information when making funding decisions as the project funding may be drawn down with the level of projects moving forward. There may be ways for VHCB to add funding for conservation projects in some cases.

Building O&M into task orders

This agenda item was to initiate a discussion around project implementers adding 6 months to a year of O&M to project implementation task orders. This could include things like tree replacements, weed whacking but not major repair costs. There would be a need to track the O&M funding separately. There may be a way to build this into project proposals in the future. There seemed to be general support for this idea but still a lot of uncertainty in the O&M space. There was also a discussion of how landowner maintenance responsibilities may play into this. This would not necessarily change that process but would allow the project implementer to do O&M for a time before the CWSP would take on this responsibility.

Consideration of Cost-Effectiveness Thresholds/Scoring (DEC)

Ben presented some information on the Cost Rate threshold and any implications this may have for the BWQC and CWSP in terms of setting cost efficiency thresholds. The big picture is that the targets have been reduced by about 50% due to inflation, more cost data for projects, and a shift in how project types were aligned with specific sectors. The Basin 17 BWQC/CWSP was on track with the previous targets and still has a large gap to meet TMDL reduction targets so should continue to try to maximize p reduction potential. In this basin partners have done an amazing job finding, designing and implementing cost efficient projects across a wide array of project types. A suggestion was made to keep the project thresholds the same, although there is still need to set a private road project type threshold.

Private Road Project Type Threshold

There is a need to set a private road project cost efficiency threshold. VHCB is looking to get input from the BWQC on a process for doing this and suggested they could bring some ideas to the February BWQC meeting. It was noted that when the stormwater and natural resource project thresholds were set up, a subcommittee was organized to develop a proposal for the full BWQC to consider. There is not a lot of great data now to base a private road threshold cost on other than municipal road costs so there may have to be some judgements to set this threshold. VHCB will find a date in January with DEC for a meeting after lunchtime and share a date with the BWQC for anyone who is interested in joining.

A motion to adjourn was made by Sam Mayne seconded by Patrick Hurley.
Motion passed.