



**Northwest
Regional Planning
Commission**

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

**October 30, 2024
6:30 p.m.**

**St. Albans Town Office
398 Georgia Shore Rd, St. Albans, VT**

Virtual Meeting Access Information Below

- 1. Adjustments to the Agenda**
- 2. Welcome, introductions, opening remarks** –Peter Zamore, *Chair*
- 3. Opportunity for Public Comment**
- 4. Spotlight on St. Albans Town**
- 5. Minutes of the September 2024 Meeting** (*action item*)
- 6. Commission Reports:** written reports enclosed
 - Finance/Operations**– *Kirk Waite*
 - Personnel** – *Bob Buermann*
 - Executive Committee** – *Peter Zamore*
 - Project Review** (*no action needed*)– *Harold Garrett*
 - Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)** – *Harold Garrett*
 - Brownfields Committee** – *Megan Sherlund*
 - Regional Plan and Policy Committee**- *Lori Ruple*
 - Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC)** –*Barbara Murphy*
 - Green Mountain Transit**- *Bob Buermann/Catherine Dimitruk*
 - Healthy Roots Advisory Committee**- *Marietta Scholten*
 - Northwest Vermont Regional Foundation**- *Kirk Waite*
 - Office**-*Staff*

- 7. NRPC Public Participation Policy** (*action item*)
See attached: cover memo and draft policy.
- 8. Northern Lake Champlain Tactical Basin Plan** (*action item*)
See attached: staff review and recommendation
- 9. Commissioner Announcements**

Meeting Access Information

Please try to join the meeting 5-10 minutes prior to the start time. If you have trouble connecting, please call 802-310-6797.

Join Zoom Meeting via video

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84672495167>

Join Zoom via phone

1(312)626-6799 or

1(646)558-8656

Meeting ID 846 7249 5167

If you have questions about how to participate in this meeting or if you cannot attend, please contact NRPC: 524-5958 or AAdams@nrpcvt.com *In accordance with provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and Vermont's Open Meeting Law, the NRPC will ensure public meeting sites are accessible to all people or provide an opportunity to request accommodations. Requests for free interpretive or translation services, assistive devices, designation of a physical meeting location, electronic access to a meeting, or other requested accommodations, should be made to Amy Adams, NRPC Title VI Coordinator, at 802- 524-5958 or aadams@nrpcvt.com, no later than 2 business days prior to the meeting for which services are requested.*

1 **NRPC Board of Commissioners Meeting**
2 **September 25, 2024 at 6:30 PM**
3 **Hybrid Meeting (Zoom and NRPC Office)**
4 **Northwest Regional Planning Commission**
5 **75 Fairfield Street, St. Albans, VT 05478**
6

7 **Attendance**

8 Commissioners: *See attached*. A quorum was present to conduct business.

9 Staff: Catherine Dimitruk, Emily Klofft, Dean Pierce
10

11 Chair Peter Zamore began the meeting at 6:30 PM.
12

13 **Adjustments to the Agenda**

14 None.
15

16 **Welcome, Introductions, Opening remarks**

17 The Chair welcomed everyone to the NRPC's September board meeting followed by introductions.
18

19 **Opportunity for Public Comment**

20 None.
21

22 **Speaker: Clayton Clark, Green Mountain Transit**

23 C. Clark stated that due to the end of COVID era funding, Green Mountain Transit (GMT) will need to reduce
24 services to live within its financial means. The impacts to Franklin and Grand Isle County will be limited and
25 may even lead to better service. GMT was given \$18 million in COVID relief funds but those funds will run
26 out as of Q1 FY2026, requiring cuts in service to be made. The current proposed cuts are being considered;
27 the GMT Board will make a final decision at the end of the public comment period.
28

29 November-December 2024: Reductions of Saturday service in Chittenden County and the Jeffersonville
30 commuter will be eliminated.
31

32 February-March 2025: The Montpelier LINK service will be reduced; the St. Albans LINK service will be
33 combined with the Milton Commuter. Therefore, the bus will stop in Milton on its way to Burlington. This
34 will not add much time and also make connections between Milton and St. Albans easier. GMT is also looking
35 at possible extensions of the future St. Albans LINK/Milton Commuter to connect with the Richford and
36 Alburgh bus routes, although this may occur later.
37

38 June 2025: The bulk of cuts are scheduled for June 2025, which will give the Vermont Legislature and
39 additional year to decide whether to give additional funding to prevent these cuts in service. 3 urban routes
40 in Chittenden County may be eliminated.
41

42 C. Dimitruk asked C. Clark to discuss the rural services service provider study.
43

44 C. Clark stated that very few agencies provide both urban and rural services as GMT does. The Federal Transit
45 Administration funds these types of services differently. GMT is conducting a study to determine if it makes
46 more sense to separate urban and rural services to two different agencies. Currently, GMT's study is looking
47 at whether on-demand ridership services in Franklin County could be better served by Special Services

48 Transportation Agency (SSTA) or Rural Community Transit, while fixed route services would continue to be
49 run by GMT. The study so far has found that this may increase cost effectiveness, as SSTA or Rural Community
50 Transit drivers do not need to hold a Commercial Driving License (CDL). C. Clark stated that CIDER would
51 continue to provide on-demand services in Grand Isle County and that there are no plans to change this.
52

53 P. Zamore asked if GMT had considered reducing vehicle size in Chittenden County as a cost-saving measure.
54

55 C. Clark stated they had; however the impact would be negligible because the larger buses have a longer
56 lifespan, having only one bus type reduces repair costs and allows for all buses to be used interchangeably in
57 case of repairs.
58

59 S. Hadd asked when the decision would be made on changing special services to SSTA. She noted that the
60 Town gives money to GMT each year for these services.
61

62 C. Clark stated that it would be after July 1, but all money given by the towns to GMT for special services
63 would be transferred to the new service provider.
64

65 **Minutes from the July Meeting**

66 E. Nance noted 4 grammatical errors that will be corrected, none were substantive.
67

68 *E. Nance motioned to approve the July Board of Commissioners meeting minutes. S. Bousquet seconded.*
69 *Motion carried with two abstentions.*
70

71 **Commissioner Reports**

72
73 Finance/Operations – K. Waite stated that the committee met and determined municipal
74 assessment rates to be decided by the Board tonight. There was an error of \$30,000 in the meeting
75 packet, the budget is balanced.

76 Personnel – B. Buermann stated that the committee did not meet but noted that NRPC has a new
77 employee starting in October.

78 Executive Committee – P. Zamore stated that based on the results of the Commissioner survey the
79 meeting time had been moved to 6:30 PM. Other results indicated that the general preference is to
80 increase the number of primarily virtual meetings (with in-person location staffed for public
81 attendance) and that the amount of information in the Board packet is generally just right.

82 Project Review Committee – Committee did not meet.

83 Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) – H. Garrett stated that the Committee had met. The
84 Town of Swanton had concerns regarding VT 78 where the truck had gone into the river, and
85 wanted to know what the State was doing to repair the issue and whether guardrails would be
86 installed. H. Garrett stated that after getting in touch with the State he was able to pass on that
87 stone would be added for repairs, and that the State is considering installing guardrails next
88 construction season. The committee reviewed its procedures.

89 Brownfields Committee – No additional update.

90 Regional Plan and Policy Committee – No update.

91 Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC) – B. Murphy stated she attended the meeting, there
92 were no regional projects.

93 Green Mountain Transit – No updates.

94 Healthy Roots Advisory Committee – M. Scholten stated that the committee was meeting in
95 October and had been invited to CVOEO’s Board of Directors meeting.

96 Northwest Vermont Regional Foundation – Update in report.

97 Staff Announcements –None.
98

99 **NRPC Regional Plan Amendment**

100 C. Dimitruk explained that the energy plan was coming back to the Board for approval due to removing an
101 outdated appendix as requested by Department of Public Service.
102

103 P. Zamore provided context regarding the energy plan. If approved, the policies of the plan will be provided
104 substantial deference in the review of Section 248 energy projects.
105

106 *H. Demars motioned to approve the Regional Plan. A. McCracken seconded.*
107

108 Several Commissioners asked how the plan related to the state’s Clean Heat Standard. C. Dimitruk stated
109 that the plan does not take a position on the Clean Heat Standard.
110

111 *H. Garrett requested a roll call vote. Vote by roll call, all members in attendance voted “aye”. The motion*
112 *carried.*
113

114 C. Dimitruk thanked the Energy Committee, Regional Plan Committee and staff for their work and noted
115 that the plan would be submitted to the Department of Public Service.
116

117 **Regional Approval of Montgomery Town Plan and Confirmation of Planning Process**

118 S. Hadd provided a committee update and congratulated Isle La Motte on their first town plan. The
119 Committee is looking at restructuring due to a lack of members.
120

121 S. Hadd stated that the Montgomery Town Plan was complete and addressed all categories, the committee
122 recommends approval of the plan.
123

124 *S. Hadd motioned to approve the Montgomery Town Plan. E. Nance seconded. The motion carried.*
125

126 *B. Murphy motioned to confirm the Town of Montgomery’s planning process. N. Draper seconded. The*
127 *motion carried.*
128

129 **FY 26 Municipal Assessment Rate**

130 K. Waite stated that based on the committee’s policy of increasing municipal assessment rates as the lower
131 of the two following: the employment cost index or 3%, the proposed increase for fiscal year 2026 is 3%.
132

133 *H. Garrett motioned to approve a 3% increase in the municipal assessment rate for FY26. H. Demars*
134 *seconded. The motion carried.*
135

136 **Commissioner Announcements**

137 D. Pierce stated that there would be a public information session on the State’s 3-acre stormwater rule on
138 Monday and thanked Commissioner Rosenquist for bringing the idea to staff.

139 S. Hadd shared information on the St. Albans Town’s project on Transportation-Oriented Development
140 (TOD) planning, a community meeting was scheduled for Thursday the 26th of September.

141

142 C. Rosenquist recognized the passing of a longtime Georgia Selectboard member and important member of
143 the community, Gilles Rainville.

144

145 H. Garrett noted that the Co-Op store is closing on November 1st.

146

147 **Adjourn**

148 *C. Rosenquist motioned to adjourn. Motion carried.*

149

150 *The meeting adjourned at 7:38 PM.*

FY25 NPRC Board of Commissioners- Meeting Attendance

Municipality	Board Member	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June
		7/31/24	No Meeting	9/25/24	10/30/24	TBD	TBD	1/29/25	2/13/24	3/13/24	4/10/24	5/28/24	6/25/25
Frkln Cty Youth	Vacant												
Gl Cty Youth	Vacant												
Alburg Town	Alex McCracken	X		X									
Alburg Town	Donna Boumil												
Alburg Village	Vacant												
Alburg Village	Vacant												
Bakersfield	William Irwin	X											
Bakersfield	Linda McCall	X		X									
Berkshire	Vacant												
Berkshire	Claude Charron												
Enosburg Falls	Leonard Charron												
Enosburg Falls	Vacant												
Enosburgh Town	Jesse Woods												
Enosburgh Town	Vacant												
Fairfax	Barbara Murphy	X		X									
Fairfax	Sarah Hadd	E		X									
Fairfield	Julia Callan	X		X									
Fairfield	Chuck Verderber	X		X									
Fletcher	Vacant												
Fletcher	Lori Ruple	X											
Franklin	Yvon Dandurand	X		X									
Franklin	Wesley Kempton												
Georgia	Carl Rosenquist	X		X									
Georgia	Kirk Waite	X		X									
Grand Isle	Barclay Morris	X											
Grand Isle	Howard Demars	X		X									
Highgate	Jack Pelkey	X											
Highgate	Sharon Bousquet	X		X									
Isle La Motte	Sylvia Jensen	X											
Isle La Motte	Mary-Catherine Graziano												
Montgomery	Leanne Barnard												
Montgomery	Mark Brouillette												
North Hero	Andy Alling	X		X									
North Hero	Mike Curtis	X		X									
Richford	Marissa Tessier												
Richford	Vacant												
Sheldon	Vacant												
Sheldon	Jeff Kane												
South Hero	Peter Zamore	X		X									
South Hero	Bob Buermann	E		X									
St. Albans City	Elisabeth Nance	X		X									
St. Albans City	Chip Sawyer			X	E								
St. Albans Town	Marietta Scholten			X									
St. Albans Town	Megan Sherlund	X											
Swanton Town	Harold Garrett	X		X									
Swanton Town	Nicole Draper			X									
Swanton Village	Heidi Britch-Valenta	X		X									
Swanton Village	Neal Speer												
	# Municipalities	16	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

QUORUM = 12

E= Excused ; X=Present

Northwest Regional Planning Commission
Balance Sheet
As of September 30, 2024

	Sep 30, 24
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
1000 · People's Checking Account	530,470.70
1020 · People's Money Market Account	11,084.05
1035 · New England Federal Cr~1Year CD	46,923.84
1036 · New England Fed Cr-CD 5 Year	65,999.39
1037 · Lamoille CWSP	216,523.01
1038 · Missisquoi CWSP	656,510.37
1040 · Union Bank	188,737.35
1080 · Petty Cash	9.05
Total Checking/Savings	1,716,257.76
Accounts Receivable	
1200 · Accounts Receivable	130,551.27
Total Accounts Receivable	130,551.27
Other Current Assets	
Account for Credit Transfer	-2,300.00
1400 · Prepaid Software	16,524.85
1499 · Undeposited Funds	10,390.63
Total Other Current Assets	24,615.48
Total Current Assets	1,871,424.51
TOTAL ASSETS	1,871,424.51
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
2000 · Accounts Payable	21,513.89
Total Accounts Payable	21,513.89
Other Current Liabilities	
Payroll Liabilities	313.01
2100 · Employee Health Ins. Payable	22.62
2106 · Dental Insurance Payable	-242.84
2110 · Health Equity	4,633.48
2120 · Accrued Payroll	35,595.78
2130 · Accrued Vacation	63,556.32

11:33 AM

10/23/24

Accrual Basis

Northwest Regional Planning Commission
Balance Sheet
As of September 30, 2024

	<u>Sep 30, 24</u>
2213 · VT Tax Withholding Payable	2,321.27
2215 · Retirement Payable	8,575.60
Total Other Current Liabilities	<u>114,775.24</u>
Total Current Liabilities	<u>136,289.13</u>
Total Liabilities	136,289.13
Equity	
3000 · Opening Bal Equity	1,139,023.29
3900 · Fund Balance	520,469.35
Net Income	75,642.74
Total Equity	<u>1,735,135.38</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u><u>1,871,424.51</u></u>

Northwest Regional Planning Commission
Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual
 July through September 2024

	Jul - Sep 24	Budget	\$ Over Budget	% of Budget
Income				
4016 · EDA	0.00	145,000.00	-145,000.00	0.0%
4026 · Grants in Aid Pilot Program	0.00	10,000.00	-10,000.00	0.0%
4027 · Healthy Roots	316.25	0.00	316.25	100.0%
4030 · ACCD	179,995.01	602,798.00	-422,802.99	29.86%
4035 · VAOT	91,174.57	362,650.00	-271,475.43	25.14%
4044 · Shared Services	82,450.57	274,335.00	-191,884.43	30.06%
4045 · Public Safety	2,068.98	58,626.00	-56,557.02	3.53%
4047 · Municipal Assessments	68,388.00	68,389.00	-1.00	100.0%
4050 · Municipal Contracts	17,316.00	88,850.00	-71,534.00	19.49%
4054 · Other State Grants	21,578.18	191,000.00	-169,421.82	11.3%
4055 · Other Federal Grants	31,735.00	621,755.00	-590,020.00	5.1%
4056 · VANR	8,684.57	219,121.00	-210,436.43	3.96%
4058 · Clean Water Service Provider	34,903.54	1,035,630.00	-1,000,726.46	3.37%
4059 · RSEP-St. Albans Town & City	1,576.87	10,000.00	-8,423.13	15.77%
4080 · Misc. Income	10,820.01	43,000.00	-32,179.99	25.16%
4600 · Interest Income	1,405.79	1,500.00	-94.21	93.72%
Total Income	552,413.34	3,732,654.00	-3,180,240.66	14.8%
Expense				
5010 · Salaries & Wages	269,678.46	1,099,128.00	-829,449.54	24.54%
5015 · Employer Social Security	16,213.86	68,145.94	-51,932.08	23.79%
5016 · Employer Medicare	3,791.94	15,937.36	-12,145.42	23.79%
5020 · Fringe Benefits	63,790.52	261,927.00	-198,136.48	24.35%
5030 · Travel	3,647.45	18,000.00	-14,352.55	20.26%
5040 · Advertising	3,443.40	5,000.00	-1,556.60	68.87%
5055 · Insurance-Liability	1,244.00	12,000.00	-10,756.00	10.37%
5080 · Meetings	4,597.04	16,000.00	-11,402.96	28.73%
5085 · Membership Dues	12,630.00	13,000.00	-370.00	97.15%
5090 · Technology and GIS	370.08	17,665.00	-17,294.92	2.1%
5092 · Healthy Roots Expense	549.42	12,739.00	-12,189.58	4.31%
5095 · Software	3,705.46	48,500.00	-44,794.54	7.64%
5100 · Supplies & Furniture	5,964.70	65,000.00	-59,035.30	9.18%
5660 · Postage	304.17	2,500.00	-2,195.83	12.17%
5680 · Printing & Copies	65.34	7,000.00	-6,934.66	0.93%
5700 · Telephone	4,521.41	19,500.00	-14,978.59	23.19%
5800 · Bank Service Charges	9.00	0.00	9.00	100.0%
6200 · Foundation Transfer	21,250.00	21,250.00	0.00	100.0%
6300 · Professional Services	55,199.59	1,943,504.00	-1,888,304.41	2.84%
6400 · Building/Utilities	3,922.36	46,375.00	-42,452.64	8.46%
6560 · Payroll Expenses	1,872.40	0.00	1,872.40	100.0%
Total Expense	476,770.60	3,693,171.30	-3,216,400.70	12.91%
Net Ordinary Income	75,642.74			

Open Invoices as of September 30, 2024 \$130,551.27 Original Mortgage
 Franklin County Industrial Dev Corp - outstanding mortgage **\$72,849.62 \$130,000**

Project Review Committee: Monthly Business Report

Month: October 2024

Project Reviews

1) **Project Type: Act 250-** Bernard Martel Berkshire Barn & Gardens LLC

Project Location: 485 Mine Road, Berkshire VT

Substantial Regional Impact: Yes No (*If yes, Board action required*)

- *Project Details:* Conversion of the upper level of an existing post & beam horse barn and improvements to surrounding lands for use as a seasonal (May-October) wedding and events venue at an existing small farm with up to fourteen (14) total events per year.
 - *Project Comments:* The Committee noted that there was a need for more information about the potential impacts of event spaces in rural areas overall. The project is in conformance with the Regional Plan and not a substantial regional impact.
 - *Conformance with Regional Plan:* Yes No
-

2) **Project Type: Section 248-** Reservoir Road Solar LLC/2.375 MW-Berkshire

Project Location: 640 Reservoir Road, Berkshire, VT

Substantial Regional Impact: Yes No (*If yes, Board action required*)

- *Project Details:* 45-day notice for a 2.375 MW solar project.
 - *Project Materials:* 45-day notice
 - *Project Comments:* The Committee noted that the project is located next to the Enosburg Falls water source and had the following questions. 1) Possible impacts to watershed, 2) If there is anything that could create runoff (i.e. transformer), 3) decommissioning plan, 4) protection to address potential construction contamination, 5) vegetation control.
 - *Conformance with Regional Plan:* Yes No
-

3) **Project Type: Section 248-** Bullis Savage View Farm, LLC

Project Location: 7 East Shore N, Grand Isle, VT

Substantial Regional Impact: Yes No (*If yes, Board action required*)

- *Project Details:* 150 kW electric generation facility utilizing methane and other greenhouse gases derived from agricultural operations (“farm methane”).
 - *Project Comments:* The project is in conformance with the Regional Plan and is not of substantial regional impact.
 - *Action Required This Meeting :* Review sound study
 - *Conformance with Regional Plan:* Yes No
-

4) **Project Type: Section 248: Peggy and David Howrigan/100 kW small wind in Fairfield**

Project Location: 1272 Menard Rd, Fairfield

Substantial Regional Impact: Yes No (*If yes, Board action required*)

- *Project Details:* 100 kW wind system with four turbines, each with a tower of 100’.
 - *Project Materials:* Howrigan Response to NRPC Discovery
 - *Project Comments:* The Committee agreed that the previous comment letter should be re-sent.
 - *Conformance with Regional Plan:* Yes No
-

Staff Reviews:

1) **Project Type: Act 250- Mark Lareau**

Project Location: 1164 Brigham Road, St. Albans, VT

Substantial Regional Impact: Yes No (*If yes, Board action required*)

- *Project Details:* Construction of four open-sided, covered storage buildings and additional outdoor storage area upon ±41.03-acre Lot 3 of a previously approved 3-lot subdivision.
-

2) **Project Type: Act 250- Vermont State Parks, Northwest Region**

Project Location: 44 Knights Point Rd, North Hero, VT 05474

Substantial Regional Impact: Yes No (*If yes, Board action required*)

- *Project Details:* Construct 4 pickleball courts in an area that was previously used as a horse performance arena. Construct a concrete pad at the point of beach access of the existing asphalt walkway to provide ADA access to the beach.
-

3) Project Type: Act 250- Michael McGuiness and Anne Marie McGuiness Revocable Trust

Project Location: 1627 Main Street, Fairfax, VT

Substantial Regional Impact: Yes No (*If yes, Board action required*)

- *Project Details:* As-built permit for RV park.
-

4) Project Type: Act 250- Sandy Birch Road LLC

Project Location: Sandy Birch Road, Georgia

Substantial Regional Impact: Yes No (*If yes, Board action required*)

- *Project Details:* Addition of natural gas pipeline into a previously permitted subdivision.
-

Board Action Necessary: None.

Committee and Staff Reports – October

Reminder: NRPC has a YouTube channel for Board meetings, trainings and select committee meetings.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1JLkE8lwP-Vjd-5RYRaQjQ>

Finance/Operations – *Kirk Waite*. The committee will next meet on 11/12/2024 and will be working on a capital plan for the building and other NRPC assets. The committee will also meet in January to review the FY24 audit.

Personnel Committee- *Bob Buermann*. The committee did not meet.

Executive Committee- *Peter Zamore*. The committee met and reviewed the draft Public Participation Policy.

Project Review – *Harold Garrett*. Business report is enclosed. Board action is not required.

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) – *Harold Garrett*.

The committee met October 10th. Meeting topics focused on Vermont Rail and Rail Trail updates. VTrans staff provided an overview of the upcoming Vermont Rail Plan update. The first public meeting was held in St. Albans on October 23, 5:30-7pm at City Hall. NRPC and VTrans staff provided updates about several regional and statewide MVRT and LRVRT projects and focuses.

Brownfields Committee – *Staff, Megan Sherlund*. The Committee did not meet in October. Next meeting will be November 18, 2024.

Regional Plan Committee- *Lori Ruple*. The committee has a meeting scheduled for November 13th.

Municipal Plan Review Committee –*Sarah Hadd*. The committee met on October 16th about the draft Georgia Town Plan preliminary review. The Sheldon Town Plan approval public hearing is rescheduled for November 20th, along with a public hearing for the draft Isle La Motte Town Plan and public hearings on several Enhanced Energy Plan determinations of compliance. The Plan Review Committee will also make findings and recommendations to the Board of Regional Commissioners on the Sheldon and Isle La Motte Town Plan on November 20.

Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC) –*Barbara Murphy*.

St. Albans is going to be highlighted at the retreat in October.

GMT- *Bob Buermann/Catherine Dimitruk*. The GMT Board met and discussed: planning for route adjustments in the urban area, ADA fares, and rural operator contract changes.

Staff Reports:

Transportation

- Attended October TPI meeting at AOT in Barre: session included updated Complete Streets training. “Complete Streets” refers to Act 34, a transportation bill that took effect in 2011 to ensure that the needs of all users of Vermont’s transportation system – including motorists, bicyclists, public transportation, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities – and complete streets principles are considered in all state and municipally managed projects.
- Supported South Hero Planning Commission as they facilitated an event to identify needs, community support, and opportunities for expanded pedestrian/bicycle access within the village and along South Street.

- Staff joined representatives from other RPCs, statewide, to discuss a possible National Scenic Byway Program grant application.
- Staff attended the NADO (National Association of Development Organizations) RPO America (rural transportation planning professionals) special meeting. Members received a national legislative update in regard to post-election policy considerations, bylaw amendments, upcoming federal grants overview.
- Staff met with US General Services Administration staff to discuss planned projects at border crossings in Alburgh Springs and Richford.
- Staff facilitated the Northwest Vermont Rail Trail Council September 2024 meeting. Topics of discussion: community/council vacancies, LVRT community grant updates, available grant funding sources.
- Staff planned and facilitated the September TPI monthly meeting, attended by representatives from all RPCs. Topics of discussion: statewide rail/freight plan update, big data resources, RPC grant updates: Safe Streets for All (SS4A), Environmental Justice Government to Government (EJG2G).
- As part of Municipal Project Management (MPM) activities, conducted a “substantial completion” walkthrough for the Town of Franklin Pidgeon Hill Road culvert replacement project; documented plant survival at Town of Montgomery’s Longley Bridge Road streambank restoration project; and circulated consultant contract for Town of South Hero project to identify safety improvements for pedestrians and cyclists at the US 2/Featherbed Lane intersection area.

Emergency Management

- Held a concurrent Grand Isle County Mutual Aid Association and Regional Emergency Management Committee meeting on October 7th. Meeting included information on the state of the State’s Disaster Declarations (July and August 2023 and July 2024), as well as a presentation on the Alburgh Hazard Mitigation Plan. It was the annual meeting for Grand Isle County Mutual Aid.
- Submitted proposal for the annual Emergency Management Planning Grant to the Dept. of Public Safety.
- Continued outreach and coordination efforts regarding the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Several municipalities in region submitted letters of interest including flood buyouts, generators and road infrastructure projects.
- Submitted Enosburg Falls local hazard mitigation plan to VEM/FEMA for review and approval.
- Continued working with Fairfax, South Hero, Berkshire and Enosburgh Town on updating their Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP) and supporting Alburgh, Grand Isle and North Hero’s HMP planning efforts.
- Met with VT Department of Health regarding combining the Northwest VT Medical Reserve Corps with Chittenden County Medical Reserve Corps. A tentative agreement was achieved.

GIS

- Continued updating the Community Maps of the municipalities in the Northwest Region.
- Created a Zoning/Parcel boundary online map for the Town of Fairfax.

Municipal Planning

- Provided Sheldon and North Hero with zoning services.
- Supported the Town of South Hero’s community wastewater project including, reviewing invoices and committee coordination on the new grant scope of work to purchase a property with wastewater capacity and complete engineering design.
- Supported the Town of Highgate’s village wastewater project with project management assistance specific to Section 106 compliance and scheduling coordination between the State of Vermont and the project engineer.
- Continued work on the Town of Grand Isle municipal plan, including completing a full draft of the plan for review on October 22.
- Assisted the Town of the Isle La Motte Town Plan with the Municipal Plan adoption. Process.
- Met with the Montgomery Planning Commission and members of the Development Review Board to further work on a bylaw update, including addressing short-term rental regulations.

- Supported the Town of St. Albans with the Transportation Oriented Development (TOD) master planning and bylaw project for the growth center areas north and south of St. Albans City, including attending project team meetings and two public workshops during the consultant visit September 24-26.
- Distributed an RFP for building assessments for Isle la Motte as part of the Municipal Technical Assistance Program, hired a consultant and held a kick-off meeting with the town.
- Assisted with survey outreach for the Town of Richford as part of their Town Plan update.
- Met with the Town of Fairfield Planning Commission to further work on a zoning bylaw update project focusing on development regulations in the rural areas of town. NRPC reviewed examples of zoning standards related to density and lot size.
- Met with the Town of Franklin to complete an Enhanced Consultation and discuss their plan update.
- Completed draft Georgia Town Plan preliminary review for regional approval.
- Granted Regional Approval to the Montgomery Town Plan and confirmed the town's planning process.

Regional Planning

- Worked to finalize an online housing dashboard that will display housing development from 2020 to 2023 by type and location at the municipal level.
- Staff coordinated around the schedule for the upcoming Regional Plan update to come into compliance with Act 181.

Climate & Energy

- Continued assisting municipalities in the implementation of Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) with technical assistance, assessment attendance, and ongoing communication with the Department of Buildings and General Services (BGS).
- Held public outreach for the Regional Energy Plan adoption process.
- Began creation of municipal profiles using the Municipal Vulnerability Index.
- Ongoing assistance for the Swanton and Saint Albans City Energy Committees.
- Continued coordination and organization of second WindowDressers community build, scheduled for October 17-23, 2024.

Water Quality

- Continued as the regional Clean Water Service Provider (CWSP) for two basins. CWSP activities included: issuing call for applications for sixth round of project development funds; completing a field training related to operation and maintenance (O&M) of clean water projects; and carrying out quarterly invoicing, project tracking, and reporting for water quality programs.
- Also met with DEC representative to discuss proposed changes to procurement requirements and initiated comments relating to renewal of CWSP designations.
- Investigated potential new water quality projects in Town of Georgia, the Champlain Islands, as well as outside the region (Caspian Lake).
- Completed planning for and hosted public information session for municipal officials and residents affected by state "three acre" permitting requirements.
- Attended kickoff meeting for new phase of Lake Champlain Basin Program's Unifying Stormwater site assessment program. Continued activities contained in FY 24-25 Tactical Basin Planning work plan, with focus on reviewing draft Tactical Basin Plan (TBP) for conformance with Regional Plan.
- Hosted two informational meetings for landowners for the two selected private roads sites in which conceptual plans and summary tables have been drafted. This work is a part of Decision Tree to Categorize and Develop Projects initiative, as part of contract with CCRPC for work in three Grand Isle County communities. Project summaries were discussed with the DEC Planner and sent to the TMDL Tracking and Accounting Supervisor to verify projects are eligible within the Funding Policy.

- Continued to investigate potential water quality projects near Lake Carmi. Participated in latest meeting of task force created as outgrowth of Town of Franklin “Community Voices” project, focusing on future of Lake Carmi.
- As part of NRPC-led Regional Stormwater Education Program (RSEP), created social media posts and planned events for fall and winter seasons.

Workforce & Economic Development and Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD)

- Supported projects in Enosburgh, Bakersfield, St. Albans City, LVRT, as well as efforts in homelessness & housing, and workforce & business support. NVEDD is done in partnership with Lamoille County Planning Commission, Lamoille County Industrial Development Corporation, Northeastern VT Development Association, Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation and Lake Champlain Islands Economic Development Corporation.
- Coordinated Regional Partners meetings, monthly gatherings of workforce, community and economic development organizations in the region.
- Coordinated kick-off of a new \$400,000 EDA Disaster Resiliency Grant for the NVEDD region, focused on flood resilience in the Lamoille River basin.

Housing For All - Working Communities Challenge

- NRPC staff continues work with our Core Team and the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston on a transition plan and financial support for additional activities beyond the March 2025 implementation grant period.
- We have completed seven sites visits as part of our Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) pilot project and are preparing site assessment reports for property owners. We will conduct an additional three visits this Fall and plan to support up to five property owners with financial assistance and navigation support to construct a new home.
- We continue our work with CIDER to begin offering home rehabilitation services for low-income and senior property owners in Grand Isle County.

Building/Office

Repairs were made to the conference room floor and preparations are underway for winter weather.

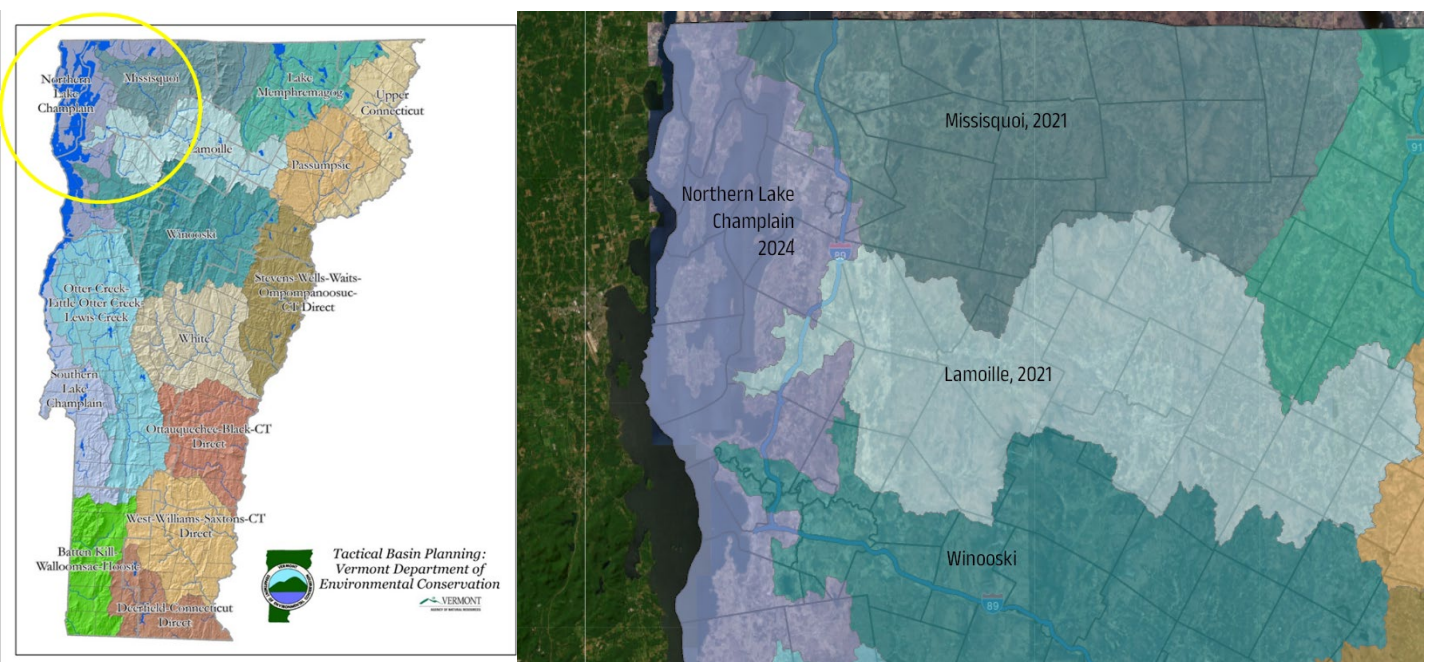
To: NRPC Regional Commissioners
From: Dean Pierce, Senior Planner, and Nora Brown, Assistant Water Quality Coordinator
Date: October 25, 2024
Subject: CONFORMANCE OF DRAFT NORTHERN LAKE CHAMPLAIN BASIN PLAN WITH THE 2023-2031 NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLAN

The Agency of Natural Resources has completed an update to the basin plan for the Northern Lake Champlain Basin. VT statute requires that these plans conform with the regional plans. The question of conformance with the regional plan is on the agenda for this month’s meeting.

NRPC staff have reviewed the “September 2024” Draft of the Northern Lake Champlain Tactical Basin Plan (or TBP) and assessed its conformance with our Regional Plan. A staff report regarding TBP conformance with the Regional Plan is attached. NRPC staff recommend the Board find as follows:

- the “September 2024” Draft of the Northern Lake Champlain Tactical Basin Plan (TBP) is in conformance with the Northwest Regional Plan; and
- the Department of Environmental Conservation works closely with Northwest Regional Planning Commission when prioritizing water quality improvement projects within the region.

Maps of the basin are below. The complete draft of the TBP can be downloaded here:
https://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/WID/WPP/Watershed%20Plans/NorthLake_TBP_2024_Public_Comment.pdf



STAFF REPORT- CONFORMANCE OF DRAFT TACTICAL BASIN PLAN WITH REGIONAL PLAN

Prepared for: Northwest Regional Planning Commission Board

Prepared by: Dean Pierce and Nora Brown

Date: October 25, 2025

INTRODUCTION

NRPC staff have reviewed the “September 2024” Draft of the Northern Lake Champlain Tactical Basin Plan (TBP) and assessed its conformance with the Northwest Regional Plan. We have conducted the review to address two sections of Vermont Statutes Title 10, Chapter 47, §1253(d):

- (2)(l) ... the Secretary [of Natural Resources] shall: develop, in consultation with the regional planning commission, an analysis and formal recommendation on conformance with the goals and objectives of applicable regional plans.
- (3)(D) ... [the regional planning commissions are to] assist the Secretary in implementing a project evaluation process to prioritize water quality improvement projects within the region to assure cost effective use of State and federal funds.

The Commission’s Board is expected to discuss this review at its meeting on October 30.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NRPC staff recommend the Board find as follows:

- the “September 2024” Draft of the Northern Lake Champlain Tactical Basin Plan (TBP) is in conformance with the Northwest Regional Plan; and
- the Department of Environmental Conservation works closely with Northwest Regional Planning Commission when prioritizing water quality improvement projects within the region.

NRPC staff also notes that the “September 2024” Draft includes language addressing issues that were raised in NRPC’s 2020 comments regarding the current TBP, which is further evidence of cooperation.

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Goals and Policies

The Northwest Regional Plan has three main sections: Economic Region, Social Region and Physical Region. Each of these sections has goals and policies that are relevant to the draft tactical basin plan. The following table details how the Tactical Basin Plan’s Objectives by Sector relate to specific Goals and Policies of the 2023-2031 Northwest Regional Plan.

Draft Northern Lake Champlain Watershed Tactical Basin Plan, Chapter 4. Objectives dated September 2024	Goals, Policies, and Actions of 2023-2031 Northwest Regional Plan
<p>AGRICULTURE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Required Agricultural Practice (RAP) Compliance: The plan aims to educate and provide technical assistance to farms, particularly small farms (CSFOs and SFOs), on developing and implementing Nutrient Management Plans (NMPs). It also seeks to improve NMP implementation on larger farms by training technical service providers, consultants, and manure applicators. • Support Field BMP Implementation: The plan focuses on promoting the adoption and implementation of field-based Best Management Practices (BMPs) to improve water quality, soil health, and crop resilience. This includes educational outreach as well as technical and financial assistance. • Support Soil Health Improvements: The plan encourages practices that enhance soil health, minimize soil erosion, and meet both the NRCS 590 NMP Standard and the broader RAP requirements. Specifically, it encourages practices like reducing soil compaction through cover cropping, low tillage, rotational grazing, and fencing. • Support Collaboration: The plan aims to foster collaboration by identifying information gaps, facilitating exchange, and addressing training and technical assistance needs for both partners and farmers. 	<p>Maintaining the Working Landscape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 2 (Land Use): "Maintain healthy and diverse forest and conservation areas as well as a strong working landscape, including agriculture and forestry". This goal underscores the Regional Plan's commitment to both agricultural viability and environmental protection. <p>Preserving Agricultural Land and Soils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 2 (Land Use): This goal directly addresses the preservation of agricultural land and soil health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy b: "Ensure that development in rural, forestry and conservation areas will not diminish the viability of agricultural or woodland operations, or fragment high-priority forest and connectivity blocks." This policy aims to prevent development patterns that could hinder agricultural operations. <p>Supporting Sustainable Agricultural Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 2 (Land Use): This goal includes policies that align with the Tactical Basin Plan's emphasis on BMPs and soil health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy g: "Support agricultural, forest and conservation land protection strategies including but not limited to transfer of development rights, purchase of development rights, fee-simple purchase of agricultural lands and use of value tax assessment." This policy aims to provide financial incentives for landowners to maintain their land in agricultural use and adopt conservation practices that protect natural resources. <p>Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 5 (Economic Development): "Facilitate collaboration among Franklin and Grand Isle Counties to address issues that are similar throughout each county and secure the communities' economic future." This goal broadly underscores the importance of collaboration in addressing regional challenges, including those related to agriculture and water quality.
<p>COMMENT:</p> <p>The Tactical Basin Plan provides detailed recommendations for addressing water quality issues within the region. It delves into the specifics of BMP implementation, outlines phosphorus reduction targets, and identifies funding opportunities for agricultural conservation practices. The Regional Plan, on the other hand, sets broader land-use and development goals that provide a supportive context for these strategies.</p>	

DEVELOPED LANDS – STORMWATER:

- **Stormwater Permitting and Compliance:** The plan focuses on ensuring compliance with stormwater permits, including the MS4 General Permit for municipalities, the 3-acre General Permit (3-9050) for larger properties, and the Construction Stormwater Discharge Permits. It emphasizes developing and implementing stormwater management programs, flow restoration plans, phosphorus control plans, and chloride response plans.
- **Stormwater Mapping and Master Planning:** The plan highlights the use of stormwater infrastructure mapping to identify priority projects and support the development of Stormwater Master Plans (SWMPs). SWMPs provide a strategic approach for municipalities to address stormwater runoff through prioritized projects identified in mapping efforts.
- **Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development:** The plan promotes using green infrastructure (GI) and Low Impact Development (LID) practices to manage stormwater runoff. It encourages the use of the Vermont Green Infrastructure Toolkit as a resource for municipalities and promotes training and information sharing through the Green Infrastructure Collaborative.
- **Residential Stormwater Outreach and Education:** The plan recognizes the importance of individual actions in mitigating stormwater runoff and encourages outreach campaigns like Lawn to Lake and Rethink Runoff to promote residential best management practices.

Focusing Development to Protect Natural Resources

- **Goal 1 (Land Use):** "The region is characterized by compact villages and growth centers separated by rural countryside and the working landscape". This goal is foundational for managing stormwater runoff as it encourages directing growth away from areas with sensitive natural resources and protects ecosystems that can absorb and filter runoff.

Integrating Stormwater Management into Development

- **Goal 2 (Utilities and Facilities):** "Residents, communities, and businesses will have solid waste disposal, wastewater treatment systems, and stormwater treatment methods that are cost-effective and environmentally sound". This goal highlights the need for integrating effective stormwater management systems into new development and redevelopment projects.

Utilizing Low Impact Development and Green Stormwater Infrastructure

- **Goal 2 (Utilities and Facilities):** This goal emphasizes implementing environmentally sound stormwater management strategies, aligning with the Tactical Basin Plan's promotion of LID and GSI:
 - **Policy e:** "The cumulative impact of development on stormwater facilities must be addressed in considering stormwater treatment options". This policy encourages a comprehensive consideration of stormwater impacts in planning and design.
 - **Policy f:** "Stormwater management and facility design must incorporate: consideration of cumulative impact, low impact development techniques, green stormwater infrastructure, and long-term maintenance plans". This policy endorses LID and GSI as essential components of stormwater management.

Protecting Water Quality

- **Goal 1 (Natural Resources):** "Protect significant natural resources, including air, wetlands, wildlife, lakes, ponds, woodlands, earth resources, open spaces, groundwater resources, and wildlife habitat". This goal underscores the Regional Plan's commitment to protecting water resources, which directly connects to the need for effective stormwater management.
- **Goal 3 (Natural Resources):** This goal emphasizes protecting water quality from various threats, including pollution from developed areas:
 - **Policy b:** "Ensure that development mitigates the anticipated effects on water quality through Low Impact Development techniques, such as limiting the amount of impervious surface on a site and incorporating adequate amounts of vegetation, trees, and shrubs to aid in

	<p>stormwater treatment". This policy promotes LID principles to minimize the negative impacts of development on water quality.</p> <p>Collaboration in Planning and Implementation</p> <p>The Regional Plan's emphasis on collaboration among municipalities, regional entities, and state agencies is essential for successfully implementing stormwater management strategies. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 5 (Economic Development): "Facilitate collaboration among Franklin and Grand Isle Counties to address issues that are similar throughout each county and secure the communities' economic future". While this focused on economic development, this goal acknowledges the need for collaboration on issues like stormwater management, which impact both economic and environmental well-being.
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COMMENT:

The Tactical Basin Plan contains detailed strategies that fit within the framework for promoting stormwater management practices outlined in the Regional Plan. The Tactical Basin Plan's objective of protecting and improving water quality reinforces Regional Plan policies emphasizing compact development, integrating stormwater management into infrastructure planning, and promoting Low Impact Development (LID) and Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI). The collaborative approach encouraged by both the TBP and the Regional Plan strengthens the implementation of shared goals.

<p>DEVELOPED LANDS – ROADS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) Compliance: The plan focuses on achieving compliance with the MRGP, which aims to reduce stormwater-related erosion from municipal roads. This includes conducting Road Erosion Inventories (REIs) to identify road segments needing improvement, upgrading roads to meet MRGP standards, and providing technical and financial assistance to municipalities for implementation. • Transportation Separate Storm Sewer System (TS4) Permit Compliance: The plan aims to ensure compliance with the TS4 permit, which covers stormwater discharges from Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) infrastructure. It highlights the importance of VTrans's Phosphorus Control Plans (PCPs) in achieving required phosphorus load reductions and promotes using the Vermont Transportation Resilience Planning Tool to prioritize projects that 	<p>Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) Compliance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 2 (Disaster Resilience): This goal focuses on reducing infrastructure damage from disasters, which directly relates to the MRGP's aim to improve road resilience to flooding and erosion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy a: "Support community projects and grant applications that seek to reduce losses from all-hazards events through programs to elevate, relocate or retrofit buildings and infrastructure within flood-prone areas, prioritizing people or communities at greatest risk." While this policy broadly addresses infrastructure, it can encompass road improvements aimed at mitigating flood risks. <p>Transportation Separate Storm Sewer System (TS4) Permit Compliance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Regional Plan doesn't explicitly mention the TS4 permit. However, its broader goals and policies related to transportation, water quality, and disaster resilience indirectly support the Tactical Basin Plan's emphasis on TS4 permit compliance. <p>Road Erosion Control and Stream Crossings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 3 (Transportation): This goal focuses on enhancing the transportation network's positive impacts while mitigating negative ones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy a: "Ensure that construction and maintenance of the transportation network minimizes negative impacts on natural,
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<p>enhance the resilience of transportation infrastructure to flooding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road Erosion Control and Stream Crossings: The plan emphasizes the importance of proper road design and maintenance to minimize erosion and protect water quality. It highlights the role of REIs in identifying problem areas and promotes best management practices to reduce sediment and nutrient loading. 	<p>cultural, and scenic resources." This policy highlights the need to minimize transportation infrastructure's impact on the surrounding environment, including through road erosion control.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Regional Plan's discussion of river corridors emphasizes the importance of riparian buffers for stabilizing stream banks and reducing erosion. • The Regional Plan's emphasis on Complete Streets can indirectly support road erosion control and stream crossing improvements. While Complete Streets primarily focus on multi-modal transportation and safety, their principles of context-sensitive design and integration with the surrounding environment can encourage road projects that minimize impacts on streams.
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COMMENT:

The TBP policies encouraging innovative approaches to road erosion control and stream crossing design align with the Regional Plan's recognition of the need for "creative approaches to maintain, improve, and expand the region's transportation network" (Goal 2, Transportation). Like the Regional Plan (e.g., in Implementation Strategy 3), the Tactical Basin Plan recognizes that addressing road erosion and stormwater runoff requires coordination among various agencies and stakeholders, including the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and municipalities.

<p>WASTEWATER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrades and Optimization: The plan emphasizes upgrading wastewater treatment facilities to meet current water quality standards and reduce phosphorus loading to Lake Champlain. It highlights the importance of Phosphorus Optimization Plans and Phosphorus Elimination/Reduction Plans to optimize phosphorus removal at treatment facilities. The plan also acknowledges the need for asset management planning to ensure timely upgrades and efficient use of funding. • Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Abatement: The plan aims to address CSOs, which are a significant source of pollutants during storm events. It highlights the importance of developing and implementing Long-Term Control Plans to eliminate or significantly reduce CSOs. • Soil-Based Wastewater Disposal System (Septic System) Management: Recognizing the prevalence of septic systems in the basin, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 2 (Utilities and Facilities): "Residents, communities and businesses will have solid waste disposal, wastewater treatment systems, and stormwater treatment methods that are cost-effective and environmentally sound". This goal aligns with the Tactical Basin Plan's focus on upgrading and optimizing wastewater treatment facilities to ensure they can meet demands while minimizing their environmental impact. • Goal 2 (Utilities and Facilities): This goal includes several policies directly supporting the Tactical Basin Plan's wastewater management objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy a: "New or upgraded wastewater management systems will reinforce the desired settlement patterns of compact villages and growth centers separated by rural countryside". This policy promotes directing growth toward areas with existing or planned wastewater infrastructure, reducing reliance on decentralized septic systems. ○ Policy b: "Creative inter-municipal and public/private partnerships that promote cost-savings for providing wastewater and stormwater treatment are encouraged" . This policy acknowledges that addressing wastewater treatment needs often requires collaboration and innovative approaches to funding and implementation, aligning with the Tactical Basin Plan's emphasis on finding cost-effective solutions.
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<p>the plan promotes proper management and upgrades to minimize their impact on water quality. This includes financial and technical assistance for homeowners, outreach and education on septic system maintenance, and exploring alternative wastewater solutions for communities with inadequate or failing septic systems. The plan highlights the potential of decentralized wastewater systems as a viable solution for certain areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Regional Plan's discussion of municipal wastewater treatment plants highlights the need to ensure that wastewater treatment capacity keeps pace with growth, which support the Tactical Basin Plan's focus on facility upgrades. The Regional Plan also notes that "some communities maintain combined wastewater and stormwater systems" and acknowledges the need to address the challenges these systems present, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall. This statement aligns with the Tactical Basin Plan's emphasis on CSO abatement. <p>Septic System Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Regional Plan recognizes the prevalence of septic systems, stating that "Most communities in the region do not have a municipal wastewater system and utilize private septic systems". It further acknowledges that this reliance on septic systems can limit growth and economic development, suggesting a need for alternative approaches. This statement indirectly supports the Tactical Basin Plan's attention to managing septic systems to minimize their potential impact on water quality. <p>Connecting Transportation and Land Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 1 (Land Use): "The region is characterized by compact villages and growth centers separated by rural countryside and the working landscape". This goal supports proper managing of stormwater runoff, as concentrating development helps preserve natural landscapes capable of absorbing and filtering runoff.
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COMMENT:

The TBP's wastewater strategies extend the Regional Plan's goals and policies for wastewater management. The Regional Plan's emphasis on directing growth, supporting sustainable infrastructure, and promoting collaborative solutions aligns with the Tactical Basin Plan's strategies and vice versa.

<p>NATURAL RESOURCE RESTORATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Corridor and Floodplain Restoration: The plan prioritizes restoring and protecting river corridors and floodplains to enhance their natural functions. It highlights use of the Functioning Floodplain Initiative tool (FFI) to identify restoration opportunities and quantify projects' phosphorus reduction benefits. The plan also highlights River Corridor Plans (RCPs) to guide restoration efforts and recommends updating existing RCPs and Stream Geomorphic Assessments (SGAs) to reflect current conditions. 	<p>River Corridor and Floodplain Restoration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 1 (Natural Resources): "Protect significant natural resources, including air, wetlands, wildlife, lakes, ponds, woodlands, earth resources, open spaces, groundwater resources and wildlife habitat". This goal emphasizes the Regional Plan's commitment to protecting and preserving the region's natural systems, which aligns directly with the Tactical Basin Plan's support for river corridor and floodplain restoration. • Goal 3 (Natural Resources): This goal focuses specifically on maintaining and improving the quality of water resources, which is intrinsically linked to healthy river corridors and floodplains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy c: "Improve surface water quality and protect it from point and non-point nutrient loading". This policy acknowledges the importance of addressing pollution from various sources, including
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stream Stability and Connectivity: The plan stresses the importance of enhancing stream stability and connectivity to improve water quality and ecological health. It recommends implementing projects like floodplain reconnection, dam removal, riparian buffer planting, in-stream wood additions, and upgrading undersized stream crossings. The plan highlights process-based restoration techniques, such as strategic wood addition and beaver dam analog construction, to enhance stream resilience. • Dam Removal and Management: Recognizing the ecological impacts of dams, the plan encourages dam removal where feasible, prioritizing removals that restore stream equilibrium, improve habitat connectivity, and mitigate public safety risks. • Lakeshore Protection and Enhancement: The plan focuses on protecting and enhancing the ecological health of lakeshores to improve water quality and habitat. It highlights the role of the Shoreland Protection Act in regulating development within 250 feet of lakes and promotes the Lake Wise Program, which encourages lakeshore owners to implement best management practices. The plan also emphasizes the use of Lake Watershed Action Plans (LWAPs) to identify and address pollution sources within lake watersheds. • Wetland Protection and Restoration: The plan recognizes the critical role of wetlands in water quality protection. It highlights the importance of the Wetlands Rules in regulating activities within wetlands and promotes the use of wetland assessments to identify opportunities for restoration and protection. • Forest Management for Water Quality: The plan emphasizes the importance of sustainable forest management practices to protect water quality, including Acceptable Management Practices (AMPs) used to minimize erosion and sedimentation during logging operations. The plan also encourages increased enrollment 	<p>runoff and erosion, which are key concerns addressed by river corridor and floodplain restoration efforts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy d: "Maintain and expand vegetative buffers along surface waters of sufficient width as a tool for improving water quality and protecting habitat". This policy directly supports establishing and maintaining healthy riparian buffers to filter pollutants, stabilize banks, and provide habitat. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 3 (Disaster Resilience): This goal emphasizes the importance of building resilience to natural hazards, which is directly related to the functions of healthy river corridors and floodplains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy a: "Recognize the connections between land use, stormwater, road design and maintenance as well as how they might be affected by disasters and climate change, and incorporate mitigation into site design and infrastructure planning". This policy acknowledges the interconnectedness of natural systems and human activities, promoting an integrated approach to planning that aligns with the goals of river corridor and floodplain restoration. ○ Policy g: "Protect and restore floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and serve as important areas for groundwater recharge". This policy explicitly supports restoring and protecting floodplains, recognizing their crucial role in mitigating flood risks and maintaining healthy hydrological cycles. <p>Stream Stability and Connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Regional Plan's discussion of rivers and watersheds acknowledges the importance of stream stability, noting that "The absence of trees and other woody vegetation along stream banks can accelerate the rate of erosion" . This statement underscores the connection between healthy riparian areas and stream stability, aligning with the Tactical Basin Plan's focus on stream stability and connectivity. • The Regional Plan's support for developing a network of recreational trails can indirectly support stream stability and connectivity by encouraging recreational activities that are sensitive to riparian areas and promote their preservation. <p>Dam Removal and Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 3 (Natural Resources): While not specifically mentioning dam removal, this goal's focus on improving water quality aligns with the objectives of dam removal and management, which aim to restore natural flow patterns and improve ecological health: <p>Lakeshore Protection and Enhancement</p>
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<p>in the Use Value Appraisal Program (UVA), which provides tax benefits to landowners who practice sustainable forestry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 1 (Natural Resources): This goal's broad focus on protecting natural resources encompasses the preservation and enhancement of lakeshores. • The Regional Plan's discussion of water quality initiatives highlights the importance of reducing phosphorus loading to Lake Champlain and other water bodies. Protecting and enhancing lakeshores can help achieve this goal. <p>Wetland Protection and Restoration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 1 (Natural Resources): Wetlands are explicitly included in this goal's list of significant natural resources to be protected, aligning with the Tactical Basin Plan's emphasis on wetland protection and restoration. <p>Forest Management for Water Quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 2 (Land Use): "Maintain healthy and diverse forest and conservation areas as well as a strong working landscape of agriculture and forestry". This goal highlights the importance of managing forests sustainably while balancing economic interests. It indirectly supports the Tactical Basin Plan's emphasis on forest management practices that protect water quality by minimizing erosion, maintaining healthy riparian buffers, and preserving the overall health of forested watersheds. • The Regional Plan's recognition of the importance of forestland and wildlife habitat further supports the connection between healthy forests and water quality.
<p>COMMENT: The Regional Plan's goals and policies establish a framework for the Tactical Basin Plan's more specific and extensive natural resource restoration strategies and implementation measures. The restoration objectives outlined in the Tactical Basin Plan in particular align with the Regional Plan's emphasis on protecting natural resources, sustainable development, and improving water quality. Together the two plans promote forms of watershed management that recognize the interconnectedness of natural systems and human activities.</p>	

II. TBP Implementation Strategies

While the table above focuses on the conformance of policy statements contained in the Tactical Basin plan, the list below focuses on the compatibility of specific Tactical Basin Plan implementation strategies (found in Chapter 5) with the Regional Plan, with a focus on the TBP strategies that will include action by NRPC or municipalities within the basin.

Overall, tasks within the Implementation table demonstrate a high degree of compatibility with the policy language in the Northwest Regional Plan.

Collaboration

Many strategies in the Implementation Table emphasize collaboration among diverse stakeholders. For example:

- Task 12: Supports collaboration between landowners and municipalities to manage agricultural stormwater eroding road ditches.
- Task 13: Identifies priority stormwater management projects through collaborations in developing Stormwater Master Plans.

This emphasis on collaboration aligns with the Northwest Regional Plan's Goal 5 (Economic Development): "Facilitate collaboration among Franklin and Grand Isle Counties to address issues that are similar throughout each county and secure the communities' economic future."

Stormwater Management

Several strategies focus on improving stormwater management practices, recognizing their impact on water quality. Examples include:

- Task 14: Supporting the implementation of stormwater projects identified in plans created by MS4 and TS4 permittees.
- Task 16: Promoting social marketing programs to encourage residential stormwater management approaches.
- Task 17: Educating towns and contractors on winter maintenance strategies that reduce chloride use, impacting stormwater runoff.
- Task 18: Evaluating and improving salt and sand storage facilities to minimize stormwater pollution.

These tasks align with various policies in the Regional Plan's "**Developed Lands – Stormwater**" section.

For example:

- Policy e: Addresses the cumulative impact of development on stormwater facilities and encourages comprehensive consideration of stormwater impacts.
- Policy f: Promotes incorporating low-impact development techniques and green stormwater infrastructure in stormwater management design, as emphasized in several tasks.

Road Erosion and Infrastructure

The Implementation table includes strategies aimed **at mitigating road erosion and improving road-related infrastructure**:

- Task 19: Assisting municipalities in updating Road Erosion Inventories and implementing projects to meet the Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP).
- Task 20: Piloting a methodology to identify and implement private road restoration projects, addressing a source often overlooked in broader plans.

These tasks align with the Regional Plan's policies under "**Developed Lands – Roads**", for example:

- Goal 2 (Disaster Resilience): Focuses on reducing infrastructure damage from disasters, aligning with the MRGP's objective of improving road resilience to flooding and erosion.
- Goal 3 (Transportation): Emphasizes minimizing the negative environmental impacts of transportation infrastructure, supporting efforts to control road erosion.

Wastewater Management

Several strategies address **wastewater management**, a crucial aspect of protecting water quality. These include:

- Task 21: Supporting municipalities in upgrading wastewater treatment facilities to meet TMDL allotments and phosphorus reduction requirements.
- Task 23: Educating onsite septic system owners about maintenance and alternative systems.

These tasks are compatible with the Regional Plan's "**Wastewater**" section, specifically:

- Goal 2 (Utilities and Facilities): Promotes cost-effective and environmentally sound wastewater treatment systems.
- Policy a (Utilities and Facilities): Encourages directing growth towards areas with existing wastewater infrastructure, aligning with the focus on treatment facility upgrades.

Natural Resource Protection and Restoration

A significant number of tasks in the Implementation table focus on **protecting and restoring natural resources** crucial for water quality:

- Task 24: Implementing protection and restoration projects identified in Stream Geomorphic Assessments and River Corridor Plans.
- Task 25: Enhancing riparian buffers by establishing woody vegetation along waterways.
- Task 27: Updating Stream Geomorphic Assessments to guide restoration efforts.
- Task 28: Developing and implementing dam removal projects.
- Task 31: Supporting municipalities in updating flood hazard bylaws and adopting river corridor protections.
- Task 36: Supporting Lake Watershed Action Plans for inland lakes and bays experiencing nutrient loading.
- Task 39: Coordinating efforts to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species, protecting lake ecosystems.
- Task 41: Identifying and implementing wetland protection and restoration projects.
- Task 42: Supporting efforts to reclassify wetlands to higher protection levels (Class I) based on their ecological significance.
- Task 43: Educating stakeholders about updated wetlands mapping to promote informed decision-making.
- Task 45: Identifying forest road segments impacting water quality using the Forestland Erosion Assessment tool.

- Task 47: Implementing Acceptable Management Practices (AMPs) and forest road projects to minimize erosion.

These tasks strongly align with the Regional Plan's "**Natural and Cultural Resources**" section, particularly **Goal 1 (Natural Resources)**, which emphasizes protecting various natural assets. They also align with various specific policies:

- **Policy d (Natural Resources):** Supports maintaining and expanding vegetative buffers along waterways for water quality improvement and habitat protection.
- **Policy g (Disaster Resilience):** Promotes protecting and restoring floodplains for flood mitigation and healthy hydrological cycles.

III. ASSESSMENT REGARDING COLLABORATION

Consistent with Title 10, Chapter 47, §1253(d) (3)(D), NRPC staff also reviewed the TBP for evidence indicating the Agency of Natural Resources and/or the Department of Environmental Conservation have worked closely with Northwest Regional Planning Commission when prioritizing water quality improvement projects within the region. The Tactical Basin Plan illustrates this collaboration in the following ways:

- **Direct Involvement in Basin Planning:** The TBP explicitly identifies NRPC as a key partner in the basin planning process. The plan states that "tactical basin planning is carried out...in coordination with other state agencies and watershed partners," including NRPC.
- **Joint Efforts in Stormwater Management:** The TBP highlights collaborative efforts between ANR/DEC and NRPC in managing stormwater runoff. For example, NRPC and the state worked together in developing the Vermont Green Infrastructure Toolkit. NRPC's is also assisting towns with Road Erosion Inventories (REIs) required by the Municipal Roads General Permit.
- **Coordinated Approach to Wastewater Management:** ANR/DEC and NRPC collaborate on addressing wastewater challenges. For instance, NRPC has been instrumental in supporting discussions regarding alternative wastewater solutions in South Hero, highlighting their role in exploring localized solutions.
- **Partnership in Floodplain Management:** The plan recognizes efforts made by ANR/DEC and NRPC in promoting floodplain protection. Both entities collaborated on facilitating the adoption of model flood hazard bylaws by municipalities.

IV. OTHER COMMENTS ON THE PLAN: RESPONSE TO NRPC COMMENTS IN 2020

In its 2020 comments on the then-draft version of the Tactical Basin Plan, NRPC's comment memo noted the importance of forests and the need to protect the forested landscape and significant wetland communities to reduce resource fragmentation. The comments also identified the importance of allowing communities to plan for and regulate new development or re-development in areas where stream system stability and development in river corridors could be in conflict. As staff, we feel it is valuable to mention that the 2024 TBP addresses concerns regarding Forest landscapes, wetlands, and stream stability the following ways.

Forestry and Intact Forested Landscapes

The 2024 TBP emphasizes the importance of forestry in maintaining water quality. It acknowledges that although forest lands meet their phosphorus reduction targets through compliance with Acceptable Management Practices (AMPs), continued support for additional forest BMP implementation is needed. Forest road assessments and management are prioritized to mitigate erosion and phosphorus runoff. The TBP also encourages forest conservation and Use Value Appraisal enrollment, especially in Source Protection Areas to safeguard surface water and groundwater resources.

Wetland Protection and Resource Fragmentation

The proposed TBP notes the importance of wetland protection and restoration. It recommends prioritizing projects identified through various assessments and programs. The TBP acknowledges the role of wetland restoration in reducing downstream phosphorus loading. It encourages partnerships and highlights funding opportunities to facilitate these efforts.

Stream System Stability and Development Conflicts

Finally, the TBP recognizes the importance of stream system stability and impacts of development on river corridors. It advocates for implementing projects that enhance stream stability, (e.g., floodplain reconnection, dam removals, and riparian buffer plantings). The TBP also addresses the need to update flood hazard bylaws and consider adopting river corridor protections. The plan supports regional planning commissions in performing targeted outreach to municipalities regarding flood hazard bylaw updates.

V. CONCLUSION

Considering the observations above, NRPC staff recommend the Board find the September 2024 Draft of the Northern Lake Champlain Tactical Basin Plan (TBP) is in conformance with the Northwest Regional Plan, as required by 10 VSA §1253(d) (2)(I). We also recommend the Board find the Department of Environmental Conservation works closely with NRPC when prioritizing water quality improvement projects within the region, as required by 10 VSA §1253(d) (3)(D).