

*** * * Basin Planning; Natural Resources Conservation Council * * ***

Sec. 12. 10 V.S.A. § 1253(d) is amended to read:

(d)(1) Through the process of basin planning, the Secretary shall determine what degree of water quality and classification should be obtained and maintained for those waters not classified by the Board before 1981 following the procedures in sections 1254 and 1258 of this title. Those waters shall be classified in the public interest. The Secretary shall prepare and maintain an overall surface water management plan to assure that the State water quality standards are met in all State waters. The surface water management plan shall include a schedule for updating the basin plans. The Secretary, in consultation with regional planning commissions and natural resource conservation districts the Natural Resources Conservation Council, shall revise all 15 basin plans and update the basin plans on a five-year rotating basis. On or before January 15 of each year, the Secretary shall report to the House Committees on Agriculture and Forest Products, on Natural Resources and Energy, and on Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources, and to the Senate Committees on Agriculture and on Natural Resources and Energy regarding the progress made and difficulties encountered in revising basin plans. The report shall include a summary of basin planning activities in the previous calendar year, a schedule for the production of basin plans in the subsequent calendar year, and a summary of actions to be taken over the subsequent three years. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to be made under this subsection.

(2) In developing a basin plan under this subsection, the Secretary shall:

* * *

(G) develop, in consultation with the applicable regional planning commission, an analysis and formal recommendation on conformance with the goals and objectives of applicable regional plans;

* * *

(3) The Secretary shall, contingent upon the availability of funding, contract with a regional planning commission or the Natural Resources Conservation Council to assist in or to produce a basin plan under the schedule set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection. When contracting with a regional planning commission or the Natural Resources Conservation Council to assist in or produce a basin plan, the Secretary may require the regional planning commission or the Natural Resources Conservation Council to: (A) conduct any of the activities required under subdivision (2) of this subsection;

(B) provide technical assistance and data collection activities to inform municipal officials and the State in making water quality investment decisions;

(C) coordinate municipal planning and adoption or implementation of municipal development regulations to better meet State water quality policies and investment priorities;

or

(D) 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.