

Sunset Advisory Commission
Board and Commission Review of Connecticut River Watershed Advisory Commission

The Commission reviews every State board and commission and takes testimony regarding whether each board or commission should continue to operate or be eliminated and whether the powers and duties of any board or commission should be revised. Each board and commission has the burden of justifying its continued operation.

The Commission also reviews whether members of a board or commission should be entitled to a per diem and, if so, the amount of that per diem.

In testifying before the Commission, you should be able to provide the following information:

1. In general, how often does the board and commission meet? Provide specific information on how often the board or commission has met in the past two fiscal years. Provide information on where agendas and minutes of meetings can be found.

The Connecticut River Watershed Advisory Commission, also known as the CT River Joint Commissions (CRJC) full board (FB) meets 4 times per year The Executive Committee (EC) meets on alternate months, 5x/year. In FY 19 the FB met 5 times and the EC met 5 times. In FY 20 the FB met 6 times and the EC met 6 times.

Minutes are available at: <http://www.crjc.org/about-crjc/minutes-of-crjc-meetings/>. Meeting minute archives were very recently updated and present a complete accounting of meetings held.

2. Provide the names of members of the board or commission, their term length and expiration, their appointing authority, and the amount of any per diem they receive.

Vermont Commissioners are appointed by the Governor at the recommendation of each municipality along the Connecticut River. Terms are for three years. Commissioners are volunteers. VT Commissioners include:

Commissioner	Term Expiration Date	Town	Affiliation
Tara Bamford,	2023	Thetford	Member-at-large
Chris Campany, VP – CRJC, Chair - VCRWAC	Statutory - None	Brattleboro	Executive Director, Windham Regional Commission
Marie Caduto, Vice - Chair - VCRWAC	Statutory - None		designated by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources
Elizabeth Kennett	2021	Rochester	Member-at-large, representing agriculture

Steven Lembke - Immediate Past President - CRJC	2023	Guilford	Member-at-large
Alison Low	Statutory - None	St. Johnsbury	Northeastern Vermont Development Association
Jason Rasmussen, Secretary – CRJC, Secretary-Treasurer - VCRWAC	Statutory - None	Ascutney	Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission
Pete Fellows	Statutory - None		Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission

3. Provide an overview of the board or commission’s purpose.

The purpose of the Connecticut River Watershed Advisory Commission is to provide a mechanism for a cooperative effort with the State of New Hampshire. This Commission guides any development that may occur in order to maximize the conservation of the visual, ecological, and agricultural integrity of the Connecticut River watershed (10 V.S.A. § 1191). It also ensures that development within the Connecticut River watershed proceeds in ways that protect its outstanding ecological, scenic, recreational, historic, cultural, agricultural, fish, and wildlife values. (10 V.S.A. § 1192)

4. Is that purpose still needed? What would happen if the board or commission no longer fulfilled that purpose?

There is no other statutorily empaneled entity in the upper Connecticut River watershed that brings Vermont and New Hampshire together to cooperate on development and resource management and protection within the watershed. The CRJC and the regional Local River Subcommittees (LRS) provide bi-state planning and outreach throughout the watershed, which covers 42% of Vermont. No other legislatively authorized entity is in place to guide development that may occur in a way that maximizes the conservation of the visual, ecological, and agricultural integrity Vermont’s portion of the Connecticut River watershed.

5. How well is the board or commission performing in executing that purpose? What evidence can you provide to substantiate that performance?

The CRJC continues to provide development permit review in New Hampshire, comment on legislation and through the Local River Subcommittee provide education of watershed and water quality topics. In Vermont, CRJC may provide advisory comments to certain permits administered under Act 250, or in certain cases, individual ANR authorizations, but does not carry party status as it does in NH. CRJC in both States has party status in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s relicensing process for the three lower CT River hydroelectric dams, participating in meetings, filing comments, and conducting outreach.

CRJC occasionally also engages higher-level policy discussions of importance to the CT River watershed, supports the Connecticut River Byway's outreach efforts, and maintains communication between the NH Rivers Program and the VTDEC, watershed groups, and municipal boards. Local River Subcommittees provide input to Vermont's tactical basin plans, which direct clean water regulatory efforts and clean water project funding.

Recent budget limitations, staff changes, and pandemic restrictions have limited some activity by the Commissions. However, the Commissioners remain committed to the work of the organization and have just completed a new 5-year Strategic Plan laying an active course of work with annual tasks and timelines. The first task is now being implemented with the development of a convening to initiate bi-state discussion on how to prepare and plan for the predicted human climate (and COVID) migration into VT/NH from more vulnerable regions. This is a fitting role in accord with CRJC's mandate to ensure that development occurs in a way to protect the Connecticut River's outstanding ecological, scenic, recreational, historic, cultural, agricultural, fish, and wildlife values. This event will likely take place in December 2020.

6. If the purpose is still needed, can State government be more effective and efficient if the purpose was executed in a different manner?

The mission of the CRJC to guide development does overlap with the Agency of Natural Resources' regulatory and non-regulatory environmental policies and management programs that have been promulgated by the General Assembly since 1989. Oversight of development patterns and protective measures in Vermont is primarily in the purview of Regional and Town Plans, Act 250, and individual permit programs. The Agency maintains statutory party status for Act 250 and administers most standalone environmental permitting programs, all; of which is subject to public comment.

This noted, in Vermont, the Commission serves a public convening status which is not otherwise duplicated and is similar to certain committees active in the Lake Champlain or Lake Memphremagog Basins. The Agency has recently promoted this level of engagement with the appointment of a CT River-based Watershed Planner as the ANR representative to the Commission. The engagement of communication with other CT River Watershed Planners on both sides of the River has already improved the VT/NH/CRJC relationship and the direction of the Strategic Plan. LRS's are also now engaged in the tactical basin planning process and provide an efficient venue to get local feedback on tactical basin plans along the Connecticut River with representatives from each town along the Connecticut River.

7. If the purpose is still needed, do any of your board or commission's functions overlap or duplicate those of another State board or commission or federal or State agency? If so, is your board or commission still the best entity to fulfill the purpose?

There is no State board or commission or federal or State agency that oversees development and resource protection of the entire Connecticut River watershed. A task of the LRS is to provide comment on permit applications within their region that may impact waters of the states, with comments on NH applications bearing party status. Comments on Vermont

permits, when offered, are advisory. Regional Planning Commissions are also tasked with this review, particularly under Act 250, and with party status. The LRS have a different perspective on resource protection and intimate knowledge of local conditions and community needs. LRS can evaluate development proposals with very localized knowledge as well as from a broader watershed standpoint. This is valuable information not always available from RPCs.

8. Does the board or commission's enabling law continue to correctly reflect the purpose and activities of the board or commission?

Yes, as stated in #3 above.

9. Provide a list of the board and commission's last fiscal year expenditures including staffing costs. How are these funded?

See the financial accounting form at Appendix A.

10. Is the board or commission required by law to prepare any reports or studies for the Legislature, the Governor, or any State agency or officer? If so, have those reports or studies been produced? Does the board or commission have ongoing reporting obligations?

The Advisory Commission shall file a report on its activities under this subchapter. The report shall be filed with the Agency of Natural Resources, the Governor, and the General Assembly on or before July 15. These reports are available at: <http://www.crjc.org/about-crjc/annual-reports/>. Local River Sub-committees also provide Annual Reports which are available under each committee at: <http://www.crjc.org/lrs/>. The archives of annual reports were very recently updated and now present a complete record. Annual reports to both states and financial audits are required.

11. How would you measure the performance of the board or commission?

The newly adopted 2020 strategic plan of the Commission is commendable in its brevity and directness, and is laudable in its goals for inclusivity of voices in the municipalities directly bordering the waters of the Connecticut River. The convening of voices for the Connecticut River fills a gap in the watershed, and which can complement the regulatory authorities of the Agency of Natural Resources and Regional Planning Commissions. The recent updating of publicly available minutes and reports, and the pivot of the Commission under the new strategic plan establishes a valuable public venue for Vermonters to provide public input regarding the Connecticut River. Continuation of the Commission will allow the new strategic plan to be realized.

Appendix A.

CONNECTICUT RIVER JOINT COMMISSION
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS
FOR THE MONTH AND FOR THE YEAR TO DATE ENDED 06/30/2020

	Jun-20				YTD				12 MONTH BUDGET
	NH	VT	NHCF	TOTAL	NH	VT	NHCF	TOTAL	
State grant support	7,255.80	4,160.00	-	11,415.80	35,000.00	19,960.00	-	54,960.00	54,960.00
NHCF	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,805.05	4,805.05	5,000.00
CSB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,000.00
Contributions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Miscellaneous Income	-	-	-	0.23	-	-	-	170.11	-
Book Sales	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	120.00	72.00
Total revenues	7,255.80	4,160.00	-	11,416.03	35,000.00	19,960.00	4,805.05	60,055.16	62,032.00
COGS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	120.00	54.00
Consultant - UVLSRPC	3,531.17	2,014.01	-	5,545.18	30,169.73	17,207.37	-	47,377.10	45,300.00
Total consultant exp	3,531.17	2,014.01	-	5,545.18	30,169.73	17,207.37	-	47,377.10	45,300.00
CSB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,000.00
NHCF	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,805.05	4,805.05	5,000.00
Total other Grant exp	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,805.05	4,805.05	7,000.00
Advertising	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100.00
Conference and meetings	-	-	-	-	172.47	98.37	-	270.84	100.00
Dues and subscriptions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	170.00
Filing Fees	-	-	-	-	47.76	27.24	-	75.00	88.00
Insurance	-	-	-	-	991.49	565.51	-	1,557.00	1,550.00
Legal and accounting	-	-	-	-	2,547.20	1,452.80	-	4,000.00	4,460.00
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Office supplies and postage	-	-	-	-	8.33	4.77	-	13.10	60.00
Printing and publications	-	-	-	-	71.76	40.94	-	112.70	150.00
Telephone	15.89	9.06	-	24.95	190.68	108.72	-	299.40	300.00
Travel	-	-	-	-	693.67	395.62	-	1,089.29	2,300.00
Website Hosting	-	-	-	-	133.65	76.22	-	209.87	400.00
Donations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total general exp	15.89	9.06	-	24.95	4,857.01	2,770.19	-	7,627.20	9,678.00
Total expenses	3,547.06	2,023.07	-	5,570.13	35,026.74	19,977.56	4,805.05	59,929.35	62,032.00
Change net assets	3,708.74	2,136.93	-	5,845.90	(26.74)	(17.56)	-	125.81	-