

South Lake Clean Water Service Provider

a partnership of the Rutland Regional Planning Commission and the
Poultney Mettowee Natural Resources Conservation District

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Poultney Mettowee NRCD Introduction

- Part of State Government in Vermont Statute
 - Vermont Soil Conservation Act of 1939
 - Title 10, Chapter 31
- Poultney Mettowee NRCD 1940
- Statewide Coverage
- Federal and State crossover
 - tied to both Federal (NRCS) and national (NACD) organizations, as well as holding a defined role as liaison between state government and landowners

Poultney Mettowee NRCD Introduction

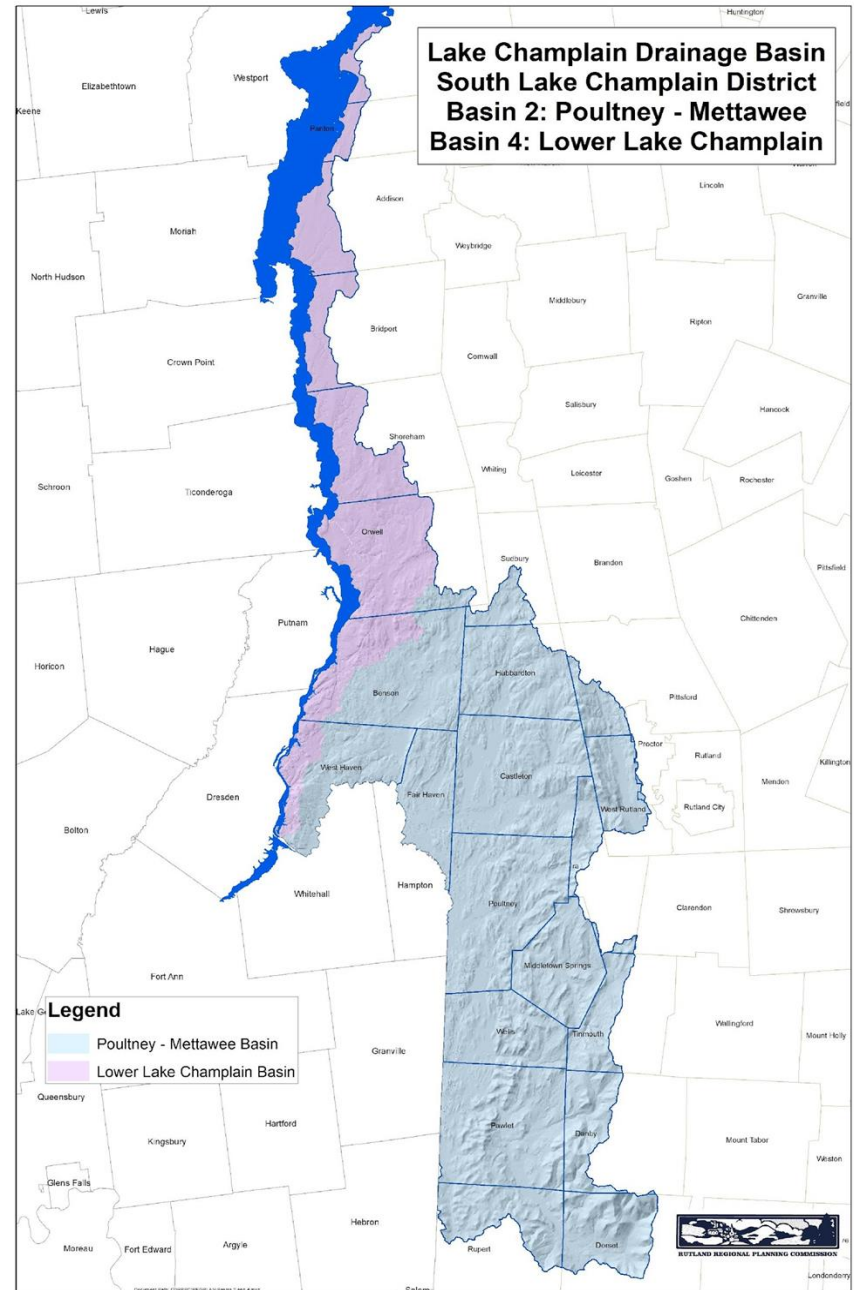
- Typical Conservation District Activities
 - Agricultural Water Quality
 - Natural Resources Projects
 - Stream Restoration
 - Wetlands Restoration
 - Forested Headwaters Projects
 - Developed Lands/Stormwater Projects
 - Natural Resources Assessments
 - Education and Outreach Programs

The South Lake Partnership between Poultney Mettowee NRCDC and the Rutland Regional Planning Commission

- PMNRCDC and RRPC provide complementary services
 - PMNRCDC routinely identifies, develops, and implements water quality projects
 - RRPC has in-house mapping, financial staff, and robust data storage systems in place
- PMNRCDC and RRPC have a history of working on complex projects together
 - Watershed scale, multi-town climate resilience work in the Flower Brook watershed

South Lake and South Lake Champlain Direct Watersheds

- PMNRCD and RRPC coverage areas overlap in Rutland County
- Share coverage areas with Addison County NRCD and Addison County RPC



New Funding Delivery Mechanism for Clean Water Projects

Establishes **a new system of grantmaking** and, ideally, local decision making.

The **CWSP is charged with overseeing** identification, development, and implementation, and ensuring ongoing operation and maintenance of clean water projects.

The **BWQC will guide decisions** on project prioritization and selection by reviewing information and voting on which projects to advance.

Projects must meet criteria prescribed by the Formula Grant, which is based on the Lake Champlain Phosphorus TMDL

Basin Water Quality Councils (BWQC)

CWSPs must convene a Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC) in each basin.

The Basin Water Quality Council will oversee project prioritization and selection for funding.

Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC) membership:

- two regional planning commissions
- two conservation districts
- two watershed groups
- a land conservation group
- two municipalities

Project Pipeline for the South Lake CWSP

Partners

- Land Conservation Organizations (VLT, etc)
- Conservation Districts (Poultney Mettowee, Otter Creek, and Bennington)
- Watershed Groups (TNC, TU)
- RPCs (Rutland, Addison, and Bennington County)
- Towns (23)
- Lake Associations (LSCA, LBA, LBEA)
- Landowners (farmers, forestland, rural residential)

Project Pipeline for the South Lake CWSP

Sources of projects

- Assessments
 - Stormwater Master Plans
 - Stream Geomorphic Assessments
 - Smaller watershed scoping studies
- Landowners with drainage or erosion concerns
- Towns with stormwater runoff concerns and/or road runoff issues

Project Pipeline for the South Lake CWSP

Project Sectors (TMDL modeling)

- Natural Resource Projects (ag/non-ag)
- Forest
- Stream
- Developed

Project Types (CWIP Funding Policy Appendix B)

- Stormwater
- Stream Restoration
- Wetlands Restoration
- Forest Road Stabilization
- Gully stabilization (in developed areas)
- Lake Shoreline Stabilization

Project Phases (CWIP Funding Policy)

- Identification
- Development
- Preliminary Design
- Final Design
- Project Implementation
- Operations and Maintenance

Grant Rounds at the South Lake CWSP

- Applications are accepted on a rolling basis
- The BWQC meets quarterly to vote on projects
- CWSP staff review project applications and score them based on criteria built into the formula grants:
 - Cost-efficiency by sector (developed, ag, forest, streams)
 - Average for South Lake CWSP is ` \$9,000 per kg of phosphorus
 - Life expectancy of the project
 - Complexity/cost of ongoing operations and maintenance
 - Value of the project within the larger goals of the basin
 - Co-benefits provided by the project (benefits in addition to the phosphorus reduction)

Operations and Maintenance

- As part of the new funding delivery mechanism, Clean Water Funds will now cover ongoing operations and maintenance activities at installed water quality projects.
 - CWSPs/BWQCs must consider costs and projects must meet the Formula Grant targets
 - Great opportunity to promote long-term projects with towns and private landowners

Success Stories of the South Lake CWSP

- Early-stage funds
 - Flexible ‘pot’ of funds that the CWSP can use to characterize new projects
 - Inexpensive and efficient way to hire a consultant to assist with phosphorus mitigation numbers to help us determine if the project is suitable for the Formula Grant
 - For projects that are not the result of an assessment and have no prior prioritization steps
 - So far 11 projects have been developed through this system
 - Partners can also apply for a similar fund – the deliverable is a set number of projects

Success Stories of the South Lake CWSP

- Project Adoption
 - The South Lake CWSP/BWQC has adopted three existing projects
 - We will receive the phosphorus credit (17/78 Kg)
 - We will be responsible for their ongoing maintenance
 - Raingardens behind the Poultney High School
 - Riparian buffer planting on a farm
 - Small stormwater project on Lake St Catherine

Challenges for the South Lake CWSP

- Formula Grant (FG) is very Specific
 - PMNRCD worked with Fitzgerald Environmental to identify roughly 200 projects through stormwater master plans (2016-2022)
 - Work completed before we knew the details of the FG
 - Of the 200 projects identified 13 meet the criteria
 - Of the 13, two have great than 1 kg phosphorus reduction
- Project types/project types table are limited
 - Early-stage fund has helped characterize new projects
 - 14 projects (from 4 locations)
 - Estimated 133 kg of phosphorus reduction
 - These projects are not allowed by the CWIP funding policy

Challenges for the South Lake CWSP

- Complicated program based on the modeling of the TMDL and funding tied to phosphorus reductions at the state agency level
 - ANR, VAAFM, and VTRANS
 - Example Eaton Hill Project: Road runoff draining through a barn and then across the road and to a gully. Likely not FG fundable.
- DEC is risk averse
 - Projects, such as gully stabilizations on agricultural lands are good projects and can't be implemented because they don't have an approved phosphorus crediting method.
 - DEC could assume more risk and give more freedom, especially in the early stages of this work as the details are being worked out.

Challenges

- Staff capacity is limited at multiple levels which creates a bottleneck and slows projects down
 - Project managers/implementers need more staff
 - Consultants...
 - Contractors...
- ❖ CWPS get “capacity building” funds in the water quality realm through the administrative funds associated with the Formula Grants and can hire more staff
- ❖ There is no corollary funding for Project Managers/Implementers (watershed groups/conservation districts) so that they too can hire more staff
 - There are limited funds available through DEC, LCBP, and several private grants, but not as stable and long-term as those provided for the CWSPs

Ending on a Positive Note

- South Lake BWQC is very engaged and developing their own programs and projects to help overcome the FG constraints
- DEC is generally very responsive (especially one-on-one)
- Pace of project funding and development is increasing
- The desire to grow capacity for project implementation is consistent across partners
- DEC has an action list that does include adding more project types to the list that we can fund