

Draft Dated: November 24, 2008

Wetlands Sub-Committee Minutes

November 18, 2008

2:00 pm

Sub-Committee Members Present: Dale Conly, Laura Alexander, Pierre Bedard, Peter Stanley, and Ken McWilliams

Wetland Scientist Attending: Michael Simpson

Ken McWilliams called the meeting to order at about 2:05 pm after Peter Stanley tried to call Karen Ebel.

Ken McWilliams & Peter Stanley provided Michael Simpson with an overview of how the Streams and Wetlands Protection Map was developed, the use of National Wetland Inventory (NWI) Wetland Maps as the basis for the wetlands identified, the evolution of wetland protections and regulations in New London, and the “Wetland Fingers” issue.

Michael Simpson said he thought the width of the buffer from a wetland should be based on the function(s) of the wetland. He suggested using the Wetland Comparative Assessment method to identify the functions of wetlands. He suggested establishing minimum buffers based on the function(s) of the wetlands and then let developers refute through wetland studies that the functions differ than those previously identified and mapped. Michael Simpson suggested buffer widths could be reduced through the use of LID practices. Michael Simpson suggested the town do a comparative study of wetlands to categorize the wetlands in town into three groups:

1. Prime Wetlands - additional wetlands to designate as prime wetlands and add 200 foot prime wetland buffer;
2. Wetlands to buffer with buffer width based on functional values; and
3. Wetlands not worthwhile to buffer.

Michael Simpson indicated the cost to conduct a town-wide Wetland Comparative Assessment would range between \$15,000 and \$45,000. The low end of the range would utilize graduate students to reduce costs. They would be trained through the “Train the Trainer Program” on wetlands functional evaluations. A certified wetland scientist would accompany the graduate students in the field to assist with questions and identification of functional wetland values. The project would start with inside desk work identifying wetland locations using the town’s latest color aerial photography and other resources.

Michael Simpson noted that NWI Wetland Maps are not good to use as the basis for local land use regulations. They are good for use in doing broad landscape assessments.

Michael Simpson indicated that there would need to be revisions to the existing wetland regulations to implement his suggested approach on wetland buffers. Michael Simpson noted in addition he has reviewed the existing wetland regulations and he has some suggested revisions to pass along.

Ken McWilliams asked how the town addresses the “Wetland Fingers” issue. Michael Simpson indicated the state is in the process of redefining permanent and intermittent streams into three segments of a stream progressively moving upstream to the source: permanent stream segment, intermittent stream segment and the ephemeral stream segment. This segment approach could be used to define the upper limits of the “Wetland Fingers”.

In response to an inquiry, Michael Simpson noted that Section 319 Water Quality Grants administered by the NH Department of Environmental Services may provide funding for this type of work.

Michael Simpson asked what was needed of him. After some discussion Michael Simpson said he would follow-up to submit a proposal for conducting a town-wide Wetland Comparative Assessment using graduate students and recommending amendments to the wetland and stream regulations.

Karen Ebel arrived at 3 pm. She apologized to Michael Simpson and the group for getting confused on the starting time. Ken McWilliams and Peter Stanley summarized the discussion with Michael Simpson for Karen Ebel. Karen Ebel made several inquiries of Michael Simpson to clarify the points discussed prior to her arrival.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm.