

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**NEW HAMPSHIRE WATER SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION**  
**May 26, 2011**

**Commissioners in Attendance:**

|               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| Chuck Souther | Glenn Normandeau |
| Alison Watts  | Tom Burack       |
| Martha Lyman  | Kris Blomback    |
| Cliff Sinnott | Michael Licata   |
| Denise Hart   | Dave Allen       |
| Amy Manzelli  | Bob Beaurivage   |
| John Gilbert  |                  |

The meeting opened with self-introductions and a brief discussion by Governor John Lynch of his objectives for the Commission's work and some of his thoughts and concerns about the future quality of the State's water resource. Fundamentally, the Governor noted that he is seeking a plan to ensure that the quality and quantity of New Hampshire's water resources is the same or better in 25 years than it is currently. He stated his view that the quality of life in New Hampshire, currently rated as one of the most livable states in the country, is closely tied to the quality of its water resources and that it is critical to protect that quality. He noted that it is a key factor for the tourism sector, as an example. The Governor emphasized that the work of the Commission was to be focused on a State-wide scale and that it was to be non-partisan in its approach and findings.

After the Governor's departure, the Commission turned to a discussion of organizational, operational, and process issues. It was agreed that the framework within which the Commission will work is that of the numerous water-related studies and commissions that have been completed within the State; there is not sufficient time to undertake data gathering efforts. Chairs or members of other commissions will be invited to speak to the Commission regarding the findings of their work. It was suggested that the New Hampshire Citizens Trade Policy Commission be invited to present because it is addressing international trade in water. The National Governors Association prepared a memorandum that will be circulated to the Commission summarizing water sustainability activities, reports, and plans developed in other states. It was agreed that the education component of the Commission's work needs to be included as part of the process to begin developing interest in water issues and inspiring commitment to its protection among New Hampshire's citizens. Effective education models need to be identified.

The Commission elected to start its work by generating a collective vision of the conditions in the State in 25 years, assuming that the work of the Commission is successful. The vision will set a context within which information reviewed and analyzed by the Commission will be evaluated. It is likely that the vision will be iteratively modified as new information is obtained and new understanding is attained.

The Commission decided that it should complete its initial steps as a group, everyone hearing the same information. After the initial vision is developed, the Commission will begin hearing from prior commissions. Part of the process will be to arrive at a common definition of “quality” as it relates to New Hampshire’s water resources, as well as a definition of “sustainability.”

To accomplish its work, the Commission decided that it will need a web site that can serve as a public reference for meeting schedules, minutes, and documents, reports, etc., that are consulted or used by the Commission. The services of an administrative support person to deal with minutes, public notices, and general coordination will be necessary at an estimated time commitment of at least 10 hours per week. A report writer to prepare the final report of the Commission will likely be necessary. Fundraising to defray expenses for these and other ancillary administrative needs will be focused around the visionary elements of the process.

It was agreed that the next meeting will include a presentation by a representative of New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services of an overview of water issues in the State to provide a baseline of information for the vision development process. The discussion of the vision will follow this presentation. Chairs of other water-related commissions will be invited to subsequent meetings to present and discuss the findings of their work. The Commission set meeting dates for June 7, June 21, July 12, August 16, September 13, September 27, and October 18, acknowledging that some dates may be dropped depending upon progress and processes that the Commission adopts as its work progresses.

Following discussion of the work process, members of the Commission offered comments regarding aspects of water-related issues in the State that they deemed important for consideration. The definition of sustainability relative to water needs to address carrying capacity and access issues. It was noted that there is a current general assumption that the water resource is inexhaustible, which must be challenged. Land use and management is closely connected to water availability and quality. A sustainability study of the seacoast ground water supply indicated a high level of uncertainty in the findings.

A brief discussion of the need to transcend political boundaries to formulate solutions prompted observations that there is not a watershed-level oversight or regulatory mechanism governing development. It was noted that lake advisory associations and river local advisory committees have been having some success at bridging political boundaries on water-related issues and might offer models for consideration. The US Fish & Wildlife Service is using landscape cooperatives concepts at the State-wide and regional level. The Connecticut River Joint Commission may also have experience that is relevant to this issue.

Allocation of the resource is likely to become an issue to be addressed. Watershed-wide analyses of ground water resources have been found to generate disputes about allocation. Allocation models developed around protecting in-stream flows in surface

water have been used in water management plans that address such factors as drinking water quality and use, irrigation flows, and wastewater dilution.

Members of the public in attendance at the meeting were offered the opportunity to provide input to the Commission. It was suggested that the Commission focus on highly practical approaches that can be implemented, giving the example of a State-wide ban on phosphorous as a relatively simple step that would have a significant impact on nutrient issues in surface water. Balancing limited funding with the level of impact that can be achieved in the public interest should be a key focus. These comments prompted an observation by one Commission member that solutions that employ long-term implementation will provide municipalities and the public time to respond and manage costs on a reasonable schedule.

A member of another water-related commission observed that it got stuck in the details of the issues it was to address and urged the Commission to focus on a realistic vision and how to achieve the vision. Attention should be paid to good land use planning, i.e., promoting development on land and in areas where they can be supported by local resources. Arsenic in ground water supplies, particularly in the southern part of the State, is an important concern.

Another commenter noted that the Commission must be very attentive to the economic impacts of its recommendations. The water-related work done at Monadnock Paper Mills was offered as a success story for consideration by the Commission.

A member of the Ground Water Commission noted that it dealt with allocation concepts and issues, receiving comments and input from stakeholders State-wide. The film "Liquid Assets" was recommended to the Commission as a useful background reference.

The final public commenter noted that a successful program needs to be affordable and that there needs to be a return to funding partnerships with the federal and State government. Federal mandates need to be funded. It will be important educate the people of New Hampshire to collaborate on putting money into regional solutions, focused on matching federal monies. Allocated funds will need to be separated from the General Fund, perhaps employing the concept of an infrastructure bank.

Chairman Gilbert thanked the members of the public present for their comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.