



Colchester Strategic Water Quality Plan

Town of Colchester Select Board

Town of Colchester Water Quality Committee



Project Background

Colchester's citizens value the environmental, recreational, aesthetic, human and aquatic health, and economic importance of clean water in Malletts Bay and all of Colchester's waters. This Strategic Water Quality Plan (SWQP) was drafted to maintain and improve the health of Colchester's waters and, ultimately, the quality of life for residents and visitors.

The Colchester Select Board appointed the Water Quality Committee members in 2000. The Water Quality Committee, in consultation with the Select Board, chose to draft the SWQP to help the Town comprehensively manage its water resources. The Select Board approved the plan on September 9, 2003, and it is to be used by the Select Board in conjunction with the Town's Master Plan, capital plans, and all other comprehensive planning documents to guide planning and regulatory decisions.

Planning Process and Outcomes of the Plan

A survey of available literature on water quality in Colchester identified the major water resources in Colchester as well as the extent and causes of degradation. Types and causes of degradation found in Colchester's water resources include phosphorus, toxins, invasive species, pathogens, and stream degradation.

The consultant team coordinated an outreach effort to appraise people of the planning process and gather any input they might wish to make. Input was gathered from Town of Colchester staff, Water Quality Committee members, the Select Board, the Planning Commission, and the Recreational Advisory Board. Public input was gathered in a number of ways, including through newspaper articles, meetings with representatives of marinas and boat clubs, activities at the Fourth of July parade, surveys, and a public meeting.

An initial, long list of alternatives was narrowed to a set of final recommendations over six months of work by the Water Quality Committee members, Town staff, and the consultants. An implementation table is included in the SWQP that will serve as a timetable for accomplishing the prioritized alternatives over the next six years.

The SWQP is designed to be a living document, so it is to be revisited and updated every five years, to assess progress towards the goals. With care and commitment, Colchester can achieve its goals of maintaining and improving the water quality that is so important to the town's economy and quality of life.

Key Goals

This plan sets goals of varying degrees as targets to strive towards to improve Colchester's waters. The very high priority goals identified are:

- Clean beaches
- Less phosphorus
- Clean up Sunderland Brook
- No increase in invasive species
- Edible fish
- Less sediment

Key Actions

The Strategic Water Quality Plan identifies dozens of actions that will help improve the waters. Those receiving the top priority status are:

- Manage/maintain onsite septic systems town-wide
- Fix stormwater systems
- Maintain stormwater infrastructure
- Match regulations to water quality goals
- Create a position to keep aquatic nuisance species out

Opportunities for Involvement

See the Water Quality Committee's website, <http://town.colchester.vt.us/water/>.

"This plan gives us a road map to understand our water quality issues and address them well."

Bill Romond, Water Quality Committee Chair

"Today's investment in water quality is our gift to Colchester's residents of tomorrow."

Marc Landry, Colchester Select Board