

## Co-Benefits Scoring for Memphremagog Basin Water Quality Council

### Consideration of Co-Benefits in Act 76 Formula Grants Funding

Co-benefits definition from Act 76 Rule: *“Co-benefit” means the additional benefit to local governments and the public provided by or associated with a clean water project, including flood resilience, hazard mitigation, education, ecosystem improvement, and local pollution prevention.*

While the primary consideration for the use of Formula Grant funds are to implement non-regulatory projects that reduce phosphorus pollution, Chapter 4 of Act 76 Guidance enables BWQCs to establish policy around how co-benefits are considered in the project identification and prioritization process. Water quality improvement projects and conservation practices can provide multiple benefits by providing economic and public health benefits; reducing nutrient pollution; and improving local waterways and wetlands by helping with their restoration and protection. The Memphremagog CWSP and BWQC have established a project review system that includes consideration of the value of co-benefits that are present. That co-benefits scoring matrix is further described below.

### Co-Benefits Scoring Methodology

The Co-Benefits Categories and specific co-benefits for the Memphremagog Basin Water Quality Council Co-Benefit Scoring were derived from three sources: the definition of co-benefits from the Act 76 Rule (see above), a report from the University of Vermont (UVM) entitled “Assessing Phosphorus Reduction Co-Benefits of Watershed Restoration Projects”, and from the consensus decisions from the Memphremagog Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC). The scoring matrix notes the sources of categories and specific co-benefits as follows: \*in the matrix indicates a required co-benefit from the rule; \*\* in the matrix indicates a co-benefit recommended from the BWQC, and the rest are defined in the UVM study.

Each co-benefit category will be scored on a scale of 0-3 (0=none present, 1=minimal presence, 2=solid presence, 3=robust presence). The category sums will be totaled to determine the overall project co-benefits score. The overall project co-benefits score will be a maximum of 20 points. The “Other Co-Benefit Categories” provides a category of co-benefit that is not listed.

<b>Co-Benefits Scoring</b>	
<b>Environmental Justice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritizes vulnerable communities</li> <li>• Engages community stakeholders</li> <li>• Honors traditional ecological knowledge</li> <li>• Improves access to clean water and food</li> <li>• Protects sacred resources and indigenous land</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	(0-3 points)
<b>Key Pollutants Other Than Phosphorus*</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nitrogen, road salts, microplastics/plastics</li> <li>• Sediments</li> <li>• Heavy metals</li> <li>• Pathogens</li> <li>• Sewage/wastewater</li> <li>• Contaminants of emerging concern</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	(0-3 points)
<b>Ecosystem Improvement*/ Services and Climate Resiliency</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flood resiliency and hazard mitigation*</li> <li>• Reduced runoff and erosion</li> <li>• Carbon sequestration</li> <li>• Promotes biodiversity, including native pollinator species</li> <li>• Reduces spread of aquatic and/or terrestrial invasive species</li> <li>• Improves terrestrial and aquatic habitat and/or connectivity</li> <li>• Address high risk areas due to past environmental degradation</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	(0-3 points)
<b>Recreation and Community</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhances accessibility to local natural areas</li> <li>• Provides or improves outdoor recreation opportunities</li> <li>• Protects green spaces and improves aesthetics</li> <li>• Enhances health and wellness</li> <li>• Increases tree canopy near recreational/community areas**</li> <li>• Public/private partnership**</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	(0-3 points)
<b>Education Benefit *</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes watershed education and awareness of environmental problems</li> <li>• Promotes trust among communities, scientists, and agencies</li> <li>• Project visibility and community outreach**</li> <li>• Includes community volunteers**</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	(0-3 points)
<b>Enhances Local Economy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job creation, retention, and workforce development</li> <li>• Promotes sustainable energy practices</li> <li>• Increases property values</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	(0-3 points)

<b>Co-Benefits Scoring - continued</b>	
<b>Other Co-Benefit Categories</b> (different from any above)	(0-2 points)
<b>Total Score Out of 20 points</b>	