

Lake Champlain Basin Program Steering Committee Meeting

Wednesday - April 25th, 2007

Valcour Educational Conference Center, Peru NY

Minutes

Members: Daniel Leblanc, Canute Dalmasse, Stu Buchanan, Judy Doerner, Buzz Hoerr, Ron Jackson, Gerald Potamis, Kenny Miller, Réal Pelletier, Seth Ausubel (for Mario DelVicario), Mike Latham, Marilyn Stephenson (for Ron Alvarado), Diana Carter (for Bob Reinhardt), Gina Campoli, John Krueger, Randy Beach, Phil Benedict (for Dave Lane), Mike Winslow (for Mary Watzin), Larry Forcier, Jen Thalhauser

Staff: Martin Mimeault, Art Stemp, Michaela Stickney, Mario Paula, Erik Beck, Bill Howland, Colleen Hickey, Nicole Ballinger, Molly Michaud, Meg Modley, Kris Joppe-Mercure, Kathy Jarvis

Guests: Therese Lacombe, Rich Wagner, Craig Giroux, Willie Giroux, Steve Mahoney,

The meeting convened at 10:20, as Stu Buchanan, Chair welcomed members and guests. Introductions were made around the room. Kathy was recognized with flowers as it was Administrative Professional's Day.

Action Item: Buzz moved to approve the draft minutes of the January, 2007 Steering Committee as presented. Randy seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Public Comments - none

News from Jurisdictions

NY - Stu reported that the Draft NE Regional mercury TMDL is finished and in review by EPA. NY has recently adopted several actions to reduce mercury in environment, focusing on new air pollution control regulation intended to cut mercury emissions by 90% by 2015. Invasive species management has significant new support in the 07-08 budget and most of this money will go out in grants to municipalities. Lake George was allocated \$250,000 for use in the Lake George Basin. CWICNY will receive \$250,000 from the Environmental Protection Fund for nonpoint source projects in county-level runoff programs.

QC - Daniel reported on the March election in Quebec and the new budget. There will be a budget line for Baie Missisquoi, probably available in May, and hopefully level funded with last year. Martin passed out an executive summary of the 06-07 action report. Funding of \$2.2 million is available for waste water treatment improvement for Abercrombie. A new report about water quality in Missisquoi Bay indicates some improvements, especially in the tributary rivers.

VT - Canute reported that the budget for Vermont's Clean and Clear initiative is holding up in the legislative process. The capital bill funding sewage treatment plants has passed both houses now. Canute described the legislative initiative that calls for a review of the Clean and Clear program, stricter regulations, and additional agency reporting to the legislature. Canute described the preliminary results of the St. Albans Bay study of options for treating sediments with alum or dredging sediments. The next step is for the Agency to evaluate costs and the permit process. Canute noted that he is retiring and this will be his last meeting chairing the Steering Committee. ANR Secretary Crombie would like to participate but probably will not be the regular representative. He noted that it is now time to transfer Executive Committee chairmanship from VT to NY, so his departure will not break stride in the Executive Committee leadership cycle.

Stu noted that his tenure as EC chair will be will perhaps be short, as he expects to move from his position at the end of May. In his absence, Rich Wagner will chair the Executive Committee until a new Regional Director is chosen.

Updates by Advisory Committee Chairs

NY CAC - Ron noted that he will miss both Canute and Stu and their careful leadership. The NY CAC been quiet in the last month. The recent waste water funding meetings had good representation from all four Senators and three Representatives for the Basin. He is hopeful that some infrastructure resources will emerge from this initiative. Ron complimented the "***Don't P on the Lawn***" campaign and noted that the brochure seems to be catching on in NY also.

VT CAC - Buzz joined Ron in thanking both chairs in their leadership. The VT CAC's ***Action Plan*** was distributed to members. Michaela was editor of the document and Buzz complimented her on the excellent presentation of the work of the committee. The CAC's highest priority, specific initiatives for nonpoint agricultural pollution control for every farm (of whatever size) is a result of over a year of public and informational meetings. Buzz noted the increased involvement of the VT Agricultural Agency and the significant involvement of many farmers. A second priority is to press to continue funding for the TMDL and a 3rd is better support for Mary's phosphorus accounting work.

QC CAC - Martin reported that support of Corporation includes a grant of \$65,000 for water protection planning and to continue other work this year. The education programs (materials were distributed to the Steering Committee) are supported by \$12,500 from MDDEP and the LCBP, with other partners assisting also. The Corporation, working with local partners, does have funds to support ongoing streambank restoration projects.

E&O - Buzz reported on the development of the ***Don't P on your Lawn*** campaign. He noted that most lawns in the region do not need phosphorus, though they might benefit from nitrogen, and that any fertilization should be done in the fall, and not the spring. Colleen reviewed the involvement of partners listed on the back, including the Lake Champlain Sea Grant and Cooperative Extension office of universities on both sides of the lake. In VT, the Agency of Agriculture also is a partner, and the Lake Champlain Committee (LCC) has taken a lead role in developing the materials.

TAC - Mike Winslow reported that the TAC has been reviewing workplans for summer projects, including the scorecard project, long term monitoring (both the workplan and QAPP), the blue-green algae monitoring program, and the boat launch steward program. The project to update land use data is in review and the project is scheduled for completion in the next month. TAC also heard a report on changes in chloride levels in the lake by VT DEC who looked at monitoring data (supported by LCBP) from the last several years. While there are no significant immediate problems identified, chloride (probably from road salt) may present a problem in the future.

CHRAC - John reported that CHRAC has not met this spring, because decisions regarding the funding and project evaluation are up-to-date, reflecting the limitations of budget. The Steering Committee was reminded of the LCBP's planned Quadricentennial Workshop on June 13th at St. Michaels College in Vermont, and encouraged to participate.

Legislative Update

Bills pending in the US House and Senate to establish a Quadricentennial Federal Commission with \$500,000 in funding now bear the same language. NPS funding for the new heritage corridors and partnership programs is not plentiful this year but should be appropriated for FY2008. There may be some funding to help new areas get started, probably at a nominal level. Bob indicated that next year's EPA funding may well be equal or better than in 2006. The present year should be considered an unusual year of low funding, and we should be back at the \$2 to \$3 million level next year.

Manager's Report

Bill circulated handouts of recent activities of the Technical, Cultural and E&O staff teams. He also reported on a recent trip to Washington, DC to discuss heritage partnerships, how they work, and how we can build stronger partnerships. Bill and Beth visited EPA offices in Boston to discuss the program priorities and operations. Bill met with Gene Brickman of USACE to review progress in the LCBP-USACE partnership. Bill and Jim joined other quad leadership figures in a meeting with Quebec Consular office staff about plans for 2008-2009, and focused on the connections of the Quadricentennial concept to lake water quality and stewardship. With help from Art Stemp, the director of the Miner Institute, the LCBP, NRCS and others are working on an initiative to assemble and review current information on drainage tiling. NRCS staff (both NY and VT) is providing technical assistance in planning a fall workshop to examine the state of knowledge of management of clay soils and bottomlands of the Richelieu valley and Champlain lowland. LCBP has approved the workplan for the IJC-funded nutrient management plan project and a contract should be in progress soon.

Army Corps Draft Revised GMP

Jen circulated the updated General Management Plan. In the revision, the application process is made more user-friendly. Instead relying on an annual RFP, this plan will invite communities to send letters of request to the Corps at any time, to see if their project is eligible. TAC screen and rank eligible requests and the Steering Committee will recommend a ranked list to the Corps for consideration. The Corps retains the final approval and will enter agreements with the community to get the task done. Canute reported that the Executive Committee recommends that the Steering Committee approve the updated plan and submit it to the Corps for final approval.

Action Item: Canute moved to accept recommendations of the Executive Committee and approve the updated General Management Plan for the LCBP USACOE Partnership under WRDA Section 542. Ron seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

At lunch the Steering Committee presented the 2007 Farm Award and thanked the retiring Executive Committee chair:

Award - The Steering Committee presented the 2007 New York Farm Award to the Giroux Poultry Farm, in recognition of the careful environmental stewardship demonstrated by their operation.

Recognition - The Steering Committee presented Canute Dalmasse with an expression of appreciation and thanks for his 12 years of leadership of the LCBP, on the occasion of his retirement.

Re-Draft FY'07 Budget Task Review

Bill reviewed the redraft of the FY'07 EPA budget proposed by the Executive Committee. The Steering Committee discussed the budget revision with reference to the most recent budget spreadsheet. Bill indicated the amount of existing funding available for each task and the amount required to complete the remaining tasks. Tasks that involve staffing were configured so that staff would be supported through August 2008, in the expectation that new (FY'08) funds would be available by that time. All lower priority tasks were trimmed from the budget. The Committee resolved informally to boost the Local Grants line substantially at the next opportunity.

Stu described the Executive Committee priorities in redrafting the budget were to meet the bottom line requirements while leaving the structure of the Basin Program intact. The Committee chose not to reduce the capacity of the program given the likelihood that the budget next year will be back up

to familiar levels and can continue with ongoing projects. Staff assignments will be adjusted this year anyway to accommodate the developing Ecosystem Indicators program in-house, rather than by contract, and preparations for the Quadricentennial also need immediate staff support this year. It also would be counterproductive to cut staff and other main tasks and then have to need to rebuild next year. Erik noted that the FY2008 federal budget includes President Bush's line item for \$934,000 for the LCBP.

Action Item: Canute move to adopt the proposed revised FY'07 budget. Randy seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Other Business

Bill reviewed the many grant applications that were provisionally approved for funding, contingent on availability of funds. The newly revised FY'07 budget includes about \$50,000 for local grants. Canute proposed that the Steering Committee leave to the Manager's discretion the selection of projects to fund from the group that had already been provisionally approved, with special attention being given to organizations with broad constituency membership and projects that address the most pressing priorities

Adjourned 2:20