

Lake Champlain Basin Program
Steering Committee Meeting
Tuesday May 9th, 2006
Valcour Conference Center, Peru, NY

Draft Minutes

Steering Committee Members: Randy Beach, Jason Shea (for Gene Brickman), Stu Buchanan, (Chair) Gina Campoli, Louise Calderwood, Canute Dalmasse, Beckett Grealish (for Mario DelVicario), David Hoyt (for Judy Doerner), Marc Malchoff (for Larry Forcier), Buzz Hoerr, Bruce Hyde, Ron Jackson, John Krueger, Steve Lanthier, Daniel Leblanc, Pierre Leduc, Kenny Miller, Erik Beck (for Gerald Potamis), Bob Reinhardt, Dave Tilton, ***Staff:*** Martin Mimeault, Bill Howland, Meg Modley, Molly Michaud, Colleen Hickey, Nicole Ballinger, Jim Brangan, Kathy Jarvis; ***Guests:*** Tom Berry, Therese Lacombe, Jessica Babbie, Pixley Hill, Candi Page, Steve Mahoney, Rich Wagner

10:30 AM The meeting was convened by Stu Buchanan, Chair, who welcomed all attending and introduced new members and guests.

Public Comments:

The meeting began with public comments from Pixley Hill, representing *Friends of Missisquoi Bay*. Pixley spoke of the work of several partner groups, including the St Albans Bay Watershed Group and the new Farmer's Watershed Alliance. She thanked the LCBP for supporting the farmer to farmer assessment and the work of an agronomist. Pixley also spoke of the severe problem of farm runoff and the need to work more with farmers trying to address immediate problems on a voluntary basis.

(1.) She noted that the Agency of Agriculture has said it will take \$50 Million dollars to resolve problems with all farms in the Missisquoi watershed, including storage facilities and other structural improvements. The Rock River, which is only 25 miles in length, generates the same amount of phosphorus as the entire Lamoille River. Some farmers have taken initiative to voluntarily change their farming methods.

(2.) The Farmers Watershed Alliance is reaching out to other farmers to improve communications, and has stepped forward to recognize that there are problems and to find solutions.

(3.) The Bilodeau Report done in 2003 studied fish species in Missisquoi Bay and discovered many native species are now missing, following the introduction of white perch. This is an issue that people think about in addition to the blue green algae problem.

(4.) The LCBP Steering Committee needs to take a lead role in getting people involved in the allocation of the \$50 million dollars that will be used to clean up lake problems.

Past Meeting Minutes:

The Committee considered the Draft Minutes of the January, 2006 Steering Committee Meeting. Dave noted some statistical corrections on p. 7 and Daniel noted the reference to the minister of affairs rather than of agriculture. In the Municipality of Abercrombie, the new regulation obliged the municipality to have public hearings before project implementation.

ACTION ITEM: *Canute moved to accept the minutes with corrections discussed. Eric Beck seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Updates from the Regions:

Vermont - Canute reported that the Governor's proposed ANR budget is expected to be passed soon. Louise noted that the Agriculture Agency budget was supported with an additional \$25,000 for farm improvements, and \$75,000 for the Farmers Watershed Alliance. Everything in Clean & Clear will continue to be funded. Governor Douglas announced in 2003 that VT would establish a Clean Water Day and that has been scheduled for June 10 this year. It will continue on the 2nd Saturday of June from now on. LCBP has agreed to help with this. The congressional delegation will participate in the celebration of pollution prevention efforts at ECHO.

Quebec - Daniel reported that since February Claude B  chard has been the new Minister of Environment; he knows about Missisquoi Bay problems. At the next Steering Committee in July there can be further descriptions of planned Quebec actions for next year. The Province is in discussion with the community of Stanbridge regarding waste water treatment plant upgrades amounting to \$6,000,000. The Municipality of Venice en Quebec is allocating a similar amount to address its sewerage challenges as well. There is currently some controversy over a \$3,000,000 proposal to protect wetlands in Clarenceville.

New York - Stu reported that several wastewater upgrades are underway, including the Port Henry/Moriah project. It is hoped that this will correct the last significant point source that has to be dealt with under the TMDL. Westport and Willsboro projects are also ongoing. Steve noted that the agricultural environmental management plan awards have doubled this year, up to \$40,000.

Committee Reports:

Executive Committee - Canute reported that the Executive Committee has been working on the preparations for developing a base budget for the year ahead. The agenda today reflects the need to adjust our budgeting process.

Technical Advisory Committee - Molly reported that the TAC has been reviewing technical project workplans for coming year. All 2006 workplans have been approved except for the NY Agricultural Best Management Practice monitoring project, which will be reviewed in June. TAC reviewed USGS project workplans and met with the Toxic Materials Workgroup. The Ecosystem Indicators Team has developed recommendations for monitoring this year, including the addition of a station in Missisquoi Bay. Mary will give an update of Ecosystem Indicators Team recommendations at the July Steering Committee meeting. The Toxic Materials Workgroup has prepared a draft revision of the matrix of toxic substances that may be suitable for the next edition of *Opportunities for Action*. It also has generated a list of the contaminants of highest concern in Lake Champlain and reviewed possible management strategies. The ANS Workgroup met in March to consider the development of an identification manual and a rapid response plan. The Sea Lamprey Egg Survival project final report will be reviewed in June. The Economic Cost/Benefit Analysis project hopes to incorporate an economic analysis into every LCBP funded project. A workshop is scheduled for May 31st at Shelburne Farms for up to 30 people invited from VT, NY and QC, to discuss the economic impacts of the Lake cleanup projects.

Cultural Heritage & Recreation Advisory Committee - John reported on the CHRAC's recent meeting in Plattsburgh and its approval of several cultural and recreational project workplans. He also spoke about the recovery of artifacts from the Battle of Valcour, the archeology fact sheet project, the clearinghouse, birding trail exhibits, and plans for the quadricentennial events of 2009. John reported that CHRAC recommended that film documentary funding approved in 2004 and 2005 be redirected to LCBP support for the Quadricentennial. CHRAC has prepared nominations for chairmanship in view of Deborah's resignation as chair, and will present that nomination to the Executive Committee at its next meeting.

Education & Outreach Advisory Committee – Colleen and Buzz reported on recent activities of the E&O Advisory Committee. The committee met on March 31st. Nicole took the lead in developing four fact sheets and a poster for Lake Net and ECHO, featuring the ECHO mascot *Newton*. These products will be distributed through the CBEI workshop and the Resource Room. Colleen and Nicole have been working closely with Michaela and VT ANR staff to prepare logistics and materials in support of the first Clean Water Day on June 10th. Drafts of posters and fact sheets were circulated. The CBEI workshop is scheduled for May 19th at Shelburne Farms; 65 teachers are enrolled and 17 presenters are scheduled. LCBP will be hiring a communications intern for the summer to work on the searchable database of LCBP funded projects and other communications projects. The Resource Room is seeing heavy usage, with visits of 20 to 25 percent of the total ECHO visitation, often producing 10 to 20 people at a time in the Resource Room.

Colleen recapped E&O Committee recommendations for a widely distributed publication depicting the history of the LCBP and lake clean-up efforts to mark the 15th anniversary of the LCBP. It will also list events in which people may participate.

VT CAC - Buzz reported on recent meetings focused on the Missisquoi River watershed and particularly with the new Farmers Watershed Alliance. The first meeting was primarily informational, with less dialogue; the second included strong Quebec participation, and was especially successful. This meeting involved discussion of how programs in Quebec work and the need to apply new techniques to get results by 2009. There is now a group of very active and engaged farmers. The next meeting, on May 25th, will be at the Tyler Place and will feature the Friends of Missisquoi Bay. The CAC met last night to review all that has been discussed at these meetings.

NY CAC - Ron reported that the CAC now has 3 openings and two good nominees. The CAC also has worked closely with CWICNY which has some similar conservation interests. The focus this year, more than in the past, is the priority of getting adequate sewage treatment capacity in the NY part of the basin, as this is a major source of phosphorus. The CAC is also concerned with pathogens associated with human waste, beyond the issue of agricultural runoff. Before the end of the year, Ron hopes to meet with the Canal Corporation to talk about the issue of invasive species entering Lake Champlain through the canal.

QC CAC - Pierre reported that Chantal has presented the new education program for five primary schools (420 kids from grades 1-6). Each goes on an outing to a river, learns about watersheds, and goes home with a booklet. Eight schools are scheduled for the fall (5 French and 3 English). Pierre thanked the LCBP for partial funding for this project. On April 5th Bill came to Quebec to present the Roussell Farm with the LCBP award for best practices and the farm family has proudly put up their sign.

Pierre also reported that a new project will result in 20,000 trees planted on the banks of the Pike River. A number of interpretation sites and trails are also being established to inform the public about nonpoint source pollution prevention. An inventory of wildlife and what needs to be done to preserve their habitat, is underway. Six informational leaflets in French have been translated to English, summarizing work that has been done in our watershed and the priorities for the next five years.

Legislative Report:

Tom reported that a number of Lake Champlain projects were proposed in April, including Senator Leahy's usual request to bump up funding for LCBP operations. Senator Jeffords has a request in the budget for Army Corps funding. There is a growing need for a reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act. Senator Jeffords has made a priority to pass and fund the National Heritage Act in the next few months.

LCBP 15th Anniversary Preparations:

The Steering Committee discussed E&O recommendations regarding the celebration of 15 years of LCBP operations. The June 10th Clean Water Day press conference will include recognition of the 15th anniversary. Later in the summer, LCBP will produce a newspaper insert (like that produced in 2001), that tells story of what LCBP is, what we are trying to do, and what has been accomplished. During October, which is the 10th anniversary of the first signing the plan, an event is being planned that will involve members of the LCBP Management Conference, and recognize the many people whose efforts have helped the LCBP be successful.

Manager's Report:

Bill reported on recent program activities. Staff have all developed workplans to include the FY04 and FY05 projects in progress and the initiation of FY06 projects budgeted. Staff also support advisory committees, workgroups, and special projects called for in the LCBP budget and workplan. Bill reviewed the long list of workgroups now active: toxic management, ecosystem indicators, aquatic nuisance species TAC subcommittee (including rapid response and spread prevention workgroups), cost benefit analysis, urban indicators, agricultural indicators workgroups, and the phosphorus reduction task force. Staff also supports the Quadricentennial Commissions in New York and Vermont, and coordinates with Quadricentennial efforts in Quebec. Moreover, for every line item task in the budget, there is a workplan and some form of contract if it is done out of house. These contracts (now numbering over 600) are managed and maintained by the staff. The Resource Room has more public contacts than ever, and the website has been regularly updated. Staff are preparing the NEI grant request to EPA in 2 parts this year, for Clean Water Act Section 103b and Section 120. Two state grants for funding have been also prepared, both under Section 120.

Bill circulated the testimony regarding Great Lakes legislation that he was asked to present before the US Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in March. Staff will be reviewing in a retreat (May 10th) the way we operate in the office, how phone coverage is managed, accounting procedures, etc, and all staff will participate in a retreat in June at NEIWPC in Lowell.

Rescision of \$20,969.23 (FY'06 Budget):

Bill and Erik described the federal rescission and proposed a number of budget adjustments that would be discussed and voted following a lunch break. A revised budget proposal spreadsheet was distributed. Following lunch, the Steering Committee discussed the proposed rescissions and decided to achieve a \$10,000 reduction in local grants because that amount had been declined from an awarded grant in NY from the FY05 budget. The line items for PSA's and theater trailers in the E&O budget had been approved in January at \$10,000. These were combined at \$5,000, with the understanding that the E&O Committee and staff would choose

which part could be done effectively with the reduced funding, and implement accordingly. A \$1,600 savings on the purchase of a microscope, and a one-time reduction of the office management line of \$3,000 was also decided. The balance of the rescission will be taken from the E&O printing budget.

ACTION ITEM: *Buzz moved to accept the rescission proposals shown in the spreadsheet. Randy seconded the proposal. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Discussion of FY'06 and FY'07 EPA Budgets:

The Steering Committee reviewed the approved FY'06 Budget presented in a new format, as Core & Supplemental Tasks, as this is the format to be used in future budget deliberations regarding EPA funds. Stu and Canute described the background for this change. In the past, LCBP had one budget approved by the SC and it became the guidance for NEIWPC to follow in preparing its grant requests to EPA. It also permits the states to develop LCBP tasks in their EPA grant requests. However, it sometimes takes a long time to get the money (last fiscal year started in April, but funds were not available until early November). By breaking the budget into two parts, the core budget (our program budget, staffing, etc.) to be approved each summer and the supplemental budget (for special projects) to be approved in the following January (after we know how much money will actually be available), the budget process can be significantly accelerated. EPA can get the core grant in place and then amend it later when we have the final budget figures and have approved supplemental tasks. Staff and operations comprise the core expenses, along with the NY/VT long-term monitoring program.

Erik supported this as a wise move. The Committee discussed the nature of what was a core expense and what should be supplemental. The Long Term Monitoring budget was considered core, as it has been considered an essential role of the LCBP for the past 15 years. The committee also discussed whether the NY Agricultural BMP line should be considered core or supplemental, and Steve indicated that the offices in Albany probably would be inclined to apply the same way in either case. The committee agreed that Bill should prepare a new core budget draft, using this new framework, for the Executive Committee to consider in its June meeting, in preparation for Steering Committee action at the July meeting.

Cooperating Federal Partners Report:

- Erik presented an update of the recent work of the US Federal Workgroup. The group would like to involve more federal partners from NY. Erik summarized FY 05 and FY 06 funding and activities of the EPA in the Lake Champlain Basin. The Federal partners have been discussing a cooperative project on fish issues, and for the 2007 field season, will try to find priority fish passage issues in the basin and map them. At a public presentation attended by Bob Varney last week, Peter Clavelle and Ron Poltak were recognized with lifetime environmental merit awards.
- Jason presented an update on the status of the US Army Corps General Management Plan Implementation. The Lake George agreement has been signed and the project design is complete. The contract will be awarded this summer and construction on the project will start in October. The City of South Burlington has reached the stage of agreement on the Project Management Plan, and further steps await the City

obtaining an estimate on real estate value, as that will go toward their 35% contribution. The Plattsburgh project is for design work only (not construction), on an upgrade for wastewater treatment. This Project Cooperative Agreement recently went to Headquarters for approval. The City of St. Albans has a design project concerning stormwater problems and is in discussions. The Town of Keene, (Rivermead) river restoration project awaits the determination of real estate estimates and a finalization of a means of making available Bond Act money for local match. When this issue is worked out, the finalized Project Cooperative Agreement can be forwarded to headquarters for approval.

Bill described the process to be used for the next RFP. The RFP to be issued later this week has minor changes from last year. There will be no cost limit described, and the application format is a little more clear. A pre-application workshop is planned for mid to late June. Applications will be due on June 30th. We hope to have recommendations for project approval later in the summer.

The General Management Plan needs revision. A staff team will prepare recommendations for the Executive Committee to review in the fall, and pass on to the full Steering Committee later in the year.

- Bill gave an update on the status of International Joint Commission funding. The congressional intent of the \$300,000 earmark in budget this year through IJC is that the LCBP direct it to on-the-ground pollution prevention in Missisquoi Bay. On May 16th Bill will be speaking with the secretary of the US side of the IJC to discuss appropriate projects and mechanisms for making funding available.

New Business Arising:

- The next Steering Committee meeting, July 18 & 19, will convene at the VT Statehouse in Montpelier for the first day, and continue in Colchester, VT at the Hampton Inn for the second day. Lodging may be arranged at the Hampton Inn through the LCBP office (Kathy).

Stu thanked the LCBP staff for all work between meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 2:26 PM