

Lake Champlain Basin Program
Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday November 19th, 2009
Windjammer Conference Center, South Burlington, VT

Final Minutes

Members Present: Jonathan Wood, Betsy Lowe, Martin Mimeault (for Daniel Leblanc), Marilyn Stephenson (for Astor Boozer), Mike Winslow, Judy Doerner, Jason Shea (for Gene Brickman); Buzz Hoerr, Bill Ardren (for Dave Tilton), Mario Paula (for Mario DelVicario via phone), Ron Jackson, Roseanne Murphy (via phone); Laura DiPietro (for Roger Allbee via phone), Mike Latham **Staff:** Bill Howland, Jim Brangan, Nicole Ballinger, Meg Modley, Eric Howe, Kathy Jarvis, Fred Dunlap, Michaela Stickney **Guests:** Tom Berry, David Borthwick-Leslie, Jean-Pierre Laniel, Isabelle Simard, Mike Rapacz, Brendan Cosgrove

Meeting Begins: Jonathan Wood, Chair convened the meeting with a welcome and introductions.

Action Item: *Betsy moved to approve the September, 2009 Steering Committee meeting minutes with minor corrections; Mike W seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.*

Public Comments: None

Brief Updates:

New York - Betsy Lowe reported on the new congressional representative in NY, Bill Owens, whose district covers 2/3 of the NY sector of the Basin and who lives on the shore of Lake Champlain. NYS DEC has asked for comments on ship ballast regulations and is interested in moving up the date of the new rule to be implemented – to sooner than 2025. Quad celebrations were an important program for the Department this summer, and were very successful. The Crown Point bridge problems have everyone's attention right now as NYSDEC tries to work with all parties to plan accommodations for new construction.

Quebec - *Martin* reported on a draft publication concerning blue-green algae blooms in Missisquoi Bay in 2009 ; it is on the website (in French). The full report will be ready in January. 119 lakes reported blooms but only 6 lakes had restrictions on swimming. Missisquoi Bay experienced some blooms but needed no restrictions this year. Richard Lauzier continues to work with farmers and receives a good level of local cooperation. The new Mayor of Clarenceville is Louis Hak, replacing Kenny Miller. Daniel Leblanc will make the decision on who will be the new Steering Committee member. Real Pelletier and Jacques Landry were re-elected to their posts. The three-way MOU has been translated to French and English and is being circulated through government agencies.

Jean-Pierre Laniel reported on the status of waterchestnut management in Quebec, as a follow-up to the concerns raised by Kenny Miller at the last meeting. Isabelle Simard, the coordinator for AIS projects from Quebec City, reported on a new approach to AIS management that will likely continue Provincial support for the waterchestnut management program. Plans are for a new agreement, with better local cost-sharing, and this will be discussed at a meeting tomorrow with partners. An agreement is sought by March 2010.

EPA – *Mario* reported that EPA Region 2 has a new Regional Administrator appointed by President Obama, Judith Enck. Ms Enck served as the Deputy Commissioner for the Environment in New York State since 2007, and prior to that, she worked for the Attorney General of New York. Curtis “Curt” Spaulding was named the new Regional Administrator for Region 1. He served as Executive Director of *Save The Bay* in Rhode Island and he established the Narragansett BayKeeper and Habitat Restoration programs.

Vermont - *Jonathan* reported that the budget remains the biggest administrative issue in VT. Gov. Douglas is trying to keep the Lake and water quality programs a high priority. There was a successful lamprey treatment on the Lamoille river in October, although some non-target mortalities were above normal, about 500 mud puppies. There was a research program ongoing in the same river with 80 specimens of mudpuppies tagged, and none of those were in the 500. The TMDL implementation plan is on schedule. Julie reported that the draft plan is to be released on Dec 1st. There will be three public meetings for input, and then following final revisions, the plan will be presented to the legislature in January. The Crown Point bridge closure also is a big issue for VT, having a significant impact on area families, farms, and other businesses.

Legislative Update: Tom Berry reported that Sen. Leahy has recommended that the LCBP budget for the line item in President’s budget be raised to \$5million. Program funding is authorized at \$11M a year under the Special Designation Act. Tom distributed a list of appropriations requested by Senator Leahy. The Lake Champlain EPA line is now at \$4 million, for LCBP/ECHO. Tom was optimistic that funding for sea lamprey will be same as last year and should include additional funds for work on Lake Champlain. Quad funds appear to be \$750,000 again and will carry more specific language that it will be split evenly VT/NY.

Reports from Advisory Committees (written summaries were circulated)

Manager’s Report (written summary circulated) - Bill Howland

Most tasks are on schedule. CVNHP is a little behind schedule but is developing well, including positive public reviews of draft plan materials. Meg has taken over representation of LCBP on the National ANS Task Force and also will be co-chair of NEANS panel. A number of new agreements are nearing completion. The VT state laboratory and NEIWPC have reached an agreement for analysis of new monitoring samples. LCBP and NYSOAG have been in discussions about settlement funds, and those discussions now require agreement between VT and NYS before continuing. Eventually, they will result in a \$400,000 RFP for pollution prevention in the south Lake area. Seven RFPs are to be issued within next few months. A meeting with Congressional staff from our region (NY and VT) was held in November. A new organization of leaders of watershed organizations (North American Network of Basin Organizations, NANBO) has organized and Bill was asked to sit on its board. The Steering Committee indicated its approval of this level of LCBP participation.

Opportunities for Action plan revision

Aquatic Invasive Species chapter: The Committee considered how to address nuisance plants that may not be invasive. Jonathan noted that at public meetings this is often a topic. Bill noted that sea lamprey and cormorants, while not invasive, are included in Fish and Wildlife chapter because they require management; nuisance plants could be considered the same way. Julie Moore recommended that nuisance plant management be included in the management plan, whether they are native or invasive, as a reflection of public interest and priority.

The Committee indicated its wish to have the management of nuisance plant species considered in the plan, where they are located in wetlands or riparian areas adjacent to waterways. There was concern raised among some members that limited resources for AIS not be depleted by the demands of managing indigenous species.

Fish and Wildlife chapter: Bill Ardren described the ongoing review of chapter text by a number of groups involved in management and noted the need to obtain quantitative measures and goals in the jurisdictional commitments. The draft chapter focuses more on ecosystem health than on human resource use in this revision. Objectives are focused on habitat conservation, biological indicators, social and economic aspects of management, and a number of new actions. The fisheries section is the most developed at this point. The Committee discussed the degree to which the scope of the chapter should include terrestrial wildlife concerns. The consensus was that riparian areas and lowlands are clearly important, especially areas that flood. However, terms like “wildlife corridor” are too broad for this chapter unless focused on lakes and streams more specifically. Most management actions in the Lake are for fisheries. For more terrestrial wildlife there are less clear management actions so the chapters seem somewhat biased. Jonathan noted the importance of assessing native plant communities in the context of social and economic actions for restoration and conservation, including for hunting and fishing.

Bill Ardren asked about the potential role of the Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative in working with the LCBP to address fish and wildlife issues and to assist in plan revision and implementation. The Steering Committee felt it would be important to be more informed about the Cooperative and welcomed the prospect of their increased involvement in the program. Bill A. indicated that the chair may bring the topic up at their next meeting, to explore developing a stronger tie.

Phosphorus Reduction chapter: The Committee considered the updated Phosphorus reduction chapter, which contained many new jurisdictional actions, and specific LCBP actions. The Committee felt that education and outreach components of the chapter were important, but that there needs to be a separate E&O chapter, as in prior editions. Discussion focused on specific commitments and the importance of making the timing goals realistic. EPA favors having dated goals wherever possible. The Committee considered how to link this chapter with other chapters, such as climate change and wetlands and riparian streams, which address similar goals. Mike Rapacz recommended taking full advantage of participation in EPA pilot programs concerning TMDL implementation effectiveness, healthy watershed management and climate change.

The committee discussed the importance of tiling and the transition of field runoff from a nonpoint source to a virtual point source. The *Opportunities for Future Action* section of each chapter is for actions for which resources can't yet be committed, but that are of interest for the future. These tasks need to be recognized in order to be sure the reader knows they are priorities, even if action is not presently affordable.

Toxins and Human Health chapter: The Committee discussed the importance of including the redevelopment of brownfield sites and decided it should be included. The inclusion of brownfields redevelopment in the plan will help communities obtain support to address brownfield sites. This also is a means of supporting smartgrowth. The Committee also discussed inclusion of actions to preserve Lake Champlain as a drinking water source. The main threats seen by the public are coliform contamination,

blue-green algae toxin contamination, lampricide residuals and certain treatment additives, such as chloramines. The Committee will continue to consider this issue.

Economic Impacts chapters: The Committee invited TAC member Dr. Jon Erickson to discuss possible inclusion of a chapter devoted to the economic impact of priority issues and plan implementation. Jon described some background issues and asked the Committee for guidance in framing a draft chapter for their subsequent review. Bill noted that LCBP is providing staff assistance to Jon in order to pull together recent available economic data to support the chapter development. Jon will assemble and interpret relevant economic data and return to the Committee with a broad look at the value of the lake economically and the costs of action or inaction on priority tasks. The approach he will take uses an ecosystem services framework. Roseanne noted that she is working closely with APA and NYSDEC to develop a collaborative strategic economic development planning effort in the Adirondacks, and indicated her support for this approach. She offered to work with Jon in the development of this draft chapter. The Committee favored an updating of the chapter on Economics that links back to all the other chapters.

Climate Change Impacts on Management chapter: The Committee discussed the importance of characterizing climate change impact on management strategies. Ron emphasized the need to both have a unifying climate change chapter, and also to keep the specific climate change content in each other chapter. Mike W reported that TAC recommends including climate change in each chapter because that is where the actions will take place. Bill H. noted that the Executive Committee did advise that a separate chapter is needed to set the context, in addition to the actions detailed in the chapters. Tom suggested that because climate change affects everything we do, there is an argument to have a brief stand alone description so it is not considered piece-meal. We need a comprehensive approach to acknowledge the importance of the problem in a stand-alone chapter.

Other Business

Bill H noted that the next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for Dec 10th. We will talk about the next budget and more plan development guidance. On January 13th and 14th the Steering Committee will meet in West Brome, QC; we will start early on the 13th to work through a busy agenda.

Adjourn 2:40 PM