

**Lake Champlain Basin Program  
Steering Committee Meeting  
Wednesday September 30th, 2009  
Valcour Conference Center, Peru, NY**

**Final Minutes**

**Members:** Betsy Lowe, Jonathan Wood, Daniel Leblanc, Erik Beck, Marilyn Stephenson (for Astor Boozer), Gene Brickman, Mario DelVicario (via phone), Rolf Diamant, Judy Doerner, Buzz Hoerr (via phone), Jane Gregware (for Ron Jackson), John Krueger, Pierre Leduc, Kenny Miller, Roseanne Murphy, Marcia Kees (for Bob Reinhardt), Dave Tilton, Mary Watzin, Mike Winslow **Staff:** Bill Howland, Jim Brangan, Colleen Hickey, Eric Howe, Meg Modley, Kathy Jarvis, Michaela Stickney, Tom Hall, Martin Mimeault, Mario Paula (via phone), Beth Card **Guests:** Col. John Boulé, Therese Lacombe, Julie Moore, Daniel Laven, Tom Berry, Susan Merrell, Jason Shea, Bob Paquin, Jeff Meyer, Press Republican reporter

**Meeting Convened:** Betsy Lowe, Chair, welcomed everyone and introductions were made around the table.

**Comments:** Col. John Boulé, US Army Corps of Engineers NY district commander (and a former Plattsburgh resident) spoke with the Steering Committee about the USACE commitment to water quality improvements. He also spoke of the Quadricentennial and the symmetry between the explorers Champlain and Hudson. A recent article by Sanderson characterizes the regional ecosystems and how they appeared in 1609. Presently the USACE has 12 Watershed Improvement projects in preparation or progress under the umbrella of the LCBP Steering Committee and WRDA Section 542.

**Action Item: May, 2009 Steering Committee meeting minutes approval** – *Dave, Bob P Erik and Mario D. offered minor language corrections. Dave moved to adopt the minutes as corrected; Jonathan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

**Public Comments & Dialogue:**

There were no statements from the public

**Updates from Jurisdictional Partners:**

**New York** - Betsy Lowe reported on the September Quad celebration in Crown Point and thanked LCBP for its presence – the Ambassador from France, NYS DEC Commissioner and VT Governor all participated. NYS DEC has now eliminated a contributor of P from the Cumberland Bay community system by connecting it to the Plattsburgh municipal system. The Whitehall wastewater treatment system will be redeveloped so that untreated wastewater and stormwater discharges will be eliminated. Budget challenges remain in New York and do affect the region.

**Vermont** - Jonathan Wood commended LCBP for its work on the Quad celebrations and the positive publicity for Lake Champlain. Vermont continues to work through budgetary issues that affect the Center for Clean and Clear and other parts of VTANR. Julie Moore is working on a revised TMDL implementation plan for release to the VT legislature in January. The stream bank stability project by Andrew Simon, with partial funding from LCBP, will begin in early November. Vermont plans to be treating the Lamoille River with lampricide today or tomorrow depending on water levels.

**Quebec** - Daniel Leblanc reported that during last summer Quebec adopted a new law establishing protection of public water resources. This followed many discussions about who

actually owns the water resource, and the obligations of individuals, organizations and government to declare how much water they used each year and the sources of that water. The QC Ministry of Environment provided \$1M to watershed associations to continue their action controlling blue green algae blooms. Martin has begun preparation of the action plan for 2009-2010, and will be having meetings with partners soon. Kenny Miller spoke of the water chestnut management problem in Quebec and asked Daniel to look into how funding might be made available for continued management. Daniel noted that the management tasks will need to be discussed between Ministries of Environment and Fish & Wildlife, who meet next week.

### **Reports from Advisory Committees:**

- **Vermont CAC-** Buzz Hoerr reported that the summer meeting in the north lake was well attended. One issue was concern about salt spreading in the islands and near the lake. North and South Lake organizations are struggling to pay for basic operations. The CAC is focusing next month on alternative agriculture opportunities for farms in VT, as a part of water quality management. Citizens in the South Lake areas are working with Julie on writing a South Lake watershed plan.
- **New York CAC-** Jane Gregware spoke for Ron Jackson about NYCAC activities. Once concern is the lack of funding to reimburse members for travel to meetings. The NYCAC sees a need to get new membership added to the committee, as well as replacing the support from DEC (since Art retired).
- **Quebec Citizens CAC** - Pierre Leduc described the state of Missisquoi Bay this summer – the first year since health advisories started that there were no health advisories needed. There were bluegreen algae patches, but the toxin levels were very low. CAC has started a series of seminars for public and private guidance on plants to use on shorelines to promote stability and better water quality. The Baie Missisquoi Corporation celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and soon the watershed council (CAC) will celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Pierre noted that this will be his last meeting as chair of the Quebec CAC, as he is stepping down; so he also will leave the Steering Committee. Daniel thanked Pierre for his hard work and help through the past 4 years on the Steering Committee.
- **Technical Advisory Committee** – Mike Winslow (TAC Vice Chair) reported that TAC had June and Sept meetings, and approved two projects: the TNC NAWCA project and the Bourdeau's & Bushey management plans on small farms in Missisquoi Basin. TAC also worked on OFA revisions, especially the phosphorus reduction chapter and the fish and wildlife chapter. Several TAC subcommittees met, including the Adaptive Management Workgroup, and the ANS subcommittee. Mike is serving as vice chair until a new TAC chair is appointed by the Steering Committee. Dave Tilton noted that the spiny water flea project RFP for work on the Champlain Canal feeder canal was released last Friday – a project supported with funds Sen. Leahy provided under the Great Lakes Fishery Commission budget.
- **Cultural Heritage & Recreation Advisory Committee** – John Krueger reported on recent CHRAC meetings, particularly work on the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership Planning Framework, which was shared with the Steering Committee. The Framework document provides an overview of the CVNHP planning process and will be the basis for a draft plan to be produced this fall. The draft plan will include three alternatives within the NEPA process: 1) taking no action; 2) following the congressionally mandated themes only, and 3) following the mandated themes and adding a sustainable living theme that would include care in managing and protecting natural resources from the impact of heritage tourism and recreation. The

draft management plan will be prepared for Executive and Steering Committees for review by the end of the year.

- **Education & Outreach Committee** - Buzz reported on a recent meeting at which the committee recommended increased education and outreach programs by watersheds, in addition to the present focus on schools. Colleen reported on the discussion about having E&O included in each chapter of *OFA* or as a separate chapter. The E&O committee recommends that only when there are very specific actions pertaining to chapters should E&O tasks be listed in each chapter. The many other E&O actions merit a separate chapter. E&O requests the Steering Committee send a letter of congratulations to Corporation Bassin on their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in view of their great work, especially with schools and watersheds. LCBP staff presented programs to 698 students in 22 programs in Clinton County last week, at Clinton County Cooperative Extension field days. The Resource Room at the Leahy Center had more than 10,000 visitors during the three summer months. This is a partnership that works well and an LCBP staff team that works very well together.

**Legislative Updates:** The Committee thanked Tom Berry and Susan Merrell for attending. Tom reported on funding initiatives by Senator Leahy for Lake Champlain. On the last day of the fiscal year it is clear that a Continuing Resolution will apply until the appropriations are approved. Tom indicated that increased EPA funding is a possibility, and that other Champlain budget lines look in reasonable shape for their stage of development. He thanked LCBP for organizing a recent congressional field visit to the Champlain Canal. Susan noted that Senator Gillibrand is new to the Senate and has been put on the Environmental and Public Works committee, a good committee for helping water quality initiatives important to the LCBP, especially invasive species.

**Manager's Report:** Bill reported on the summer activities, including adding Dr. Eric Howe to the LCBP staff as technical coordinator to replace Kris Joppe-Mercure (who left LCBP to go back to school). The IJC agreements required a number of deliverables, workshops, data gathering, and meetings; the tasks are on track. The relationship with the IJC has been very positive and collegial. IJC funding was provided through the State Department budget by Senator Leahy. USGS has taken a strong partnership role in the Critical Source Analysis project. LCBP has a new agreement with USGS in which they will install 6 new monitoring stations and 4 new meteorological stations. Measurements are already starting to go online. The 2006 IJC agreement for 30 management plans on small farms is complete. A great deal of work went into the revision of *OFA* chapters, especially for phosphorus reduction. We have begun planning for the online version of the plan, which will be linked to the listed partners.

Nicole described the approach being taken to the web-presentation of the revised plan. All actions will be in a database through which they will be very accessible to the public, and can be categorized, updated, changed. The online plan will list all actions and related tasks – there are 62 tasks listed to implement just the first action in the Phosphorus chapter. With this approach a viewer also can look to see what task activities have happened. LCBP is talking to contractors to build an in-house version of the phosphorus chapter that staff will review and share with the Committee.

**Recognition of Service:**

- Following lunch, the LCBP Steering Committee and staff recognized Bob Paquin for his tremendous work on behalf of the Lake and the program as a long time aide to Sen. Leahy. Many Steering Committee members and LCBP staff provided personal

messages of appreciation for Bob's tireless work to make the LCBP a strong and effective program.

- The Committee thanked Betsy Lowe for her careful and effective work during her two-year term as Executive Committee chair.

***Opportunities for Action plan revision dialogue:***

The Steering Committee reviewed the latest version of the P-reduction Chapter, including priority actions and jurisdictional commitments.

- The Committee discussed the character of the commitments being made by each jurisdictional partner, in view of present difficult financial times. There was general consensus on the understanding that partners making commitments in *OFA* to implement specific actions are doing so under the assumption that there will be adequate continued funding. This was considered an essential expression of management priorities and commitments, assuming that funding is adequate.
- A new category of actions has been added to the list: *Opportunities for Future Actions* was added to acknowledge important actions that are not possible to commit to presently, because we lack either the funds or the information that is needed, but that may be essential to meet the TMDL targets.
- The latest version includes actions for the LCBP to implement, keeping in mind that the LCBP is a composite of all the jurisdictional and citizen partners at the table, working together.
- The Committee decided that a section of the plan needs to be developed that defines the terms and/or acronyms, as used by each jurisdiction. A comprehensive glossary and acronym sidebars will be provided.
- A number of line-by line editorial corrections were discussed and will be incorporated in the next draft update.
- The Committee reaffirmed its intention that actions by partners be described in terms that are as specific as possible, with timelines and benchmarks included where they are appropriate.
- It was recognized that the actions and commitments of EPA, but not NRCS, will include regulatory and enforcement language.
- UASCE noted that WRDA Section 542 is not yet utilized to its potential. The Corps will assist in preparing language to describe its role in implementing *OFA* for the next update draft.
- Reorganization of advisory committee structure, as it pertains to TAC, is intended to mean that the organization of TAC and the growing number of special workgroups and subcommittees will be reviewed in total, so that no unreasonable burdens are placed on members, and professional technical or scientific advice is available to the LCBP as it is needed. Restructuring will address this growth in the scope of the TAC charge.

**Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership Plan Development:**

Jim reviewed the developing draft of the CVNHP Management Plan, the Environmental Assessment that will accompany it, and the related Appendices, including the federal authorization and the inventory of heritage resources and organizations.

- The framework document, completed last spring, was shared through April, May, and June at several public meetings attended by about 150 people. The plan development has followed the protocols of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as required. Page 34 of the draft shows the many meetings held during the draft plan development, as well as the attendance, which totaled about 900 people. Farm

Bureaus, Chambers of Commerce, historical organizations and general public meetings have given a strong sense of interest and approval for this program.

- Tom noted that the authorizing legislation took more than 6 years to develop and it, similarly, was taken out to many municipalities for discussion.
- The next steps for management plan development will be to obtain Steering Committee member feedback on the draft distributed, to adjust the language as needed, and then to confer with our NPS partners to consider the draft in full.
- Following appropriate additional revisions, a draft will come back to the Executive Committee and Steering Committee for approval of a final draft. Following Committee approval, the draft will be published in the Federal Register and a 30-day public comment period will begin.
- Following public comments, the Steering Committee will select a preferred plan alternative (from among the three considered) and a final plan draft will be presented to the NPS for review and approval.
- Bill noted that the draft calls for the recasting of the CHRAC into a new advisory committee. CHRAC was initially populated with people who asked to advise on the planning process. After the plan is approved, the Steering Committee will need plan implementation advice, drawing on an expanded scope of skills and geographical familiarization. The draft plan calls for CHRAC to transition into the Heritage Area Program Advisory Committee (HAPAC). CHRAC members will soon be asked to nominate themselves if interested, and others to serve on HAPAC.
- Marcia committed to providing feedback on the plan draft, following discussion with Bob Reinhardt.

**Action Item: Executive Session – Advisory Committee Nominations**

*Betsy moved to enter Executive Session to consider candidates for the Technical Advisory Committee. John seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous approval.*

The Committee entered Executive Session at 2:35PM and returned to Open Session at 2:55 PM.

**Action Item: Committee Appointments:**

*Mike moved to nominate three members to the Technical Advisory Committee: Dr. Dave Franzi, Dr. Mike Davis and Deborah Perry. Erik seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous approval.*

**Other Business** – The Oct 29<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee meeting needs to be rescheduled. Kathy Jarvis will contact members and work out a new meeting date. Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup> remains the date of the next steering committee meeting, which will be held in VT.

**Adjourned at 3:00 PM**