

# FRAMEWORK FOR PLAN IMPLEMENTATION



Members of the Lake Champlain Steering Committee and the Lake Champlain Basin Program staff.

Through the first five years of Plan implementation, the Lake Champlain Basin Program has provided the institutional framework for coordinating the comprehensive pollution prevention, control, and restoration actions for the future of Lake Champlain Basin. The Lake Champlain Steering Committee has served as the program's primary decision-making body through this period. Continued implementation of the Plan will build upon the success of this established teamwork to coordinate and assist the stewardship efforts of all levels of government, organizations, and citizens.

## Existing Frameworks

Several arrangements among agencies and organizations in the Lake Champlain Basin were formed prior to the passage of the Lake Champlain Special Designation Act in 1990 and have thrived through the first five years of plan implementation. The arrangements described below have played important roles in bringing together some of the key partners identified in this Plan, including government agencies, academic institutions, and citizens.

The Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 created the **International Joint Commission** (IJC) to resolve disputes regarding the use of boundary waters. IJC membership is comprised of six commissioners appointed by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Canada. The IJC convened a Champlain-

Richelieu Board to examine regulation of water levels in Lake Champlain during the 1970s.

Created by the *Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Cooperation on the Management of Lake Champlain* in 1988, the **Lake Champlain Steering Committee** consists of top-level officials representing state and provincial government in New York, Vermont, and Québec; local officials; US funding agencies; and citizen representatives from each jurisdiction. The Steering Committee serves as a forum for information exchange and a mechanism to coordinate state and provincial policies and programs. It is the only formal, international, tri-party, government-based institution currently focused on Lake Champlain.

The **New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission** (NEIWPCC) is a non-profit interstate partnership established by Congress in 1947. NEIWPCC's mission is to assist member states (New England states and New York) by providing coordination, public education, training, and leadership in the protection of water quality in the region.

The role of NEIWPCC in the Lake Champlain Basin is to conduct the business and financial affairs of the LCBP, including staffing and administration of grants and contracts.

**Citizens Advisory Committees (CACs)** in New York, Vermont, and Québec have been created to support the Steering Committee. Consisting of appointed representatives, the CACs make recommendations about the management of Lake Champlain to the Steering Committee and facilitate many aspects of public outreach, including public forums concerning lake issues. During the five-year planning effort which has resulted in this Plan, the CACs also advised the Lake Champlain Management Conference. The New York CAC has fourteen members appointed by the Commissioner of NYSDEC; the Vermont CAC has fourteen members appointed by the Governor and the Legislature; and the Québec CAC has eight to twenty-two members appointed by the Minister of Environment.

The **Lake Champlain Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative** was created through written agreement in 1973 by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. The Cooperative Agreement, which was updated in 1995, created a Policy Committee consisting of program directors from the three agencies, and Management and Technical Committees of agency staff. Organizations in Québec are not formal partners with the Cooperative but coordinate and communicate with it.

The **Lake Champlain Ecosystem Team** is an association of organizations involved in the conservation of plants, animals, and their habitats in the Lake Champlain watershed. The Lake Champlain Ecosystem Team maintains and enhances ecological integrity throughout the Basin. Their efforts include enhancing interdisciplinary cooperation and partnerships among federal, state, and private conservation organizations and academic institutions; facilitating and coordinating biological resource conservation activities; and exchanging information.

Several academic institutions have established a multidisciplinary research and education program for Lake Champlain called the **Lake Champlain Research Consortium**. Membership in the Consortium currently consists of selected academic institutions conducting research within the Basin boundaries. The Lake Champlain Research Consortium periodically prepares a list of research needs and priorities related to the management issues in the Plan.

All of these organizations have been involved in important research and management activities for the Lake Champlain Basin. Continued coordination of these programs and activities is of paramount importance to successful Plan implementation.

The Lake Champlain Basin and Adirondack region have been designated as one of the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) international biosphere reserves. This designation is strictly honorary and carries with it no restrictions, regulations, or funding.

ECHO



In 1999, the Rubenstein Ecosystem Science Laboratory, a new state-of-the-art lake research facility, opened on the Burlington waterfront as an extension of the University of Vermont, in partnership with St. Michael's College and ECHO at the Leahy Center for Lake Champlain.