

Lake Champlain Basin Program Steering Committee Meeting

Thursday & Friday February 13 & 14, 2014
Middlebury Inn, Middlebury, VT

Draft Minutes Thursday February 13

Members: Pete Laflamme (for David Mears) *Chair*, Daniel Leblanc, Renée Rouleau, Catherine Brooks, Miro Weinberger, Mike Winslow, Jan Surface, Lynn Hamjian, John Krueger, Buzz Hoerr, Dave Tilton, Vicky Drew, James Ehlers (phone), Rich Wagner (via phone for Bob Stegemann), Chuck Ross, Mario Paula (phone), Tom Berry **Staff:** Bill, Jim, Ryan, Elizabeth, Eric, Stephanie, Meg, Kathy, Clair, Michaela, Martin, Fred (phone) **Guests:** Phelan Fretz, Kari Dolan, Robin Gregory, Michael Harstone, Philip Halteman, Walt Lender, Laura DiPietro

Meeting Convened with Introductions

Draft Meeting Agenda review - accepted

Public Comments: No comments.

ACTION ITEM - Daniel moved to accept the December, 2013 Steering Committee minutes, Dave seconded. Approved by unanimous vote.

Public Comments: Phelan spoke of free choice learning institutions, their role in our culture and the importance of funding for their educational programs. At ECHO, when guests and non-guests are asked what encouraged their interest in science, institutions like ECHO are third in line behind, books. Those surveyed sense a high level of information integrity is provided in a nurturing environment at ECHO. Phelan thanked LCBP for its support and partnership, noting that the Resource Room is a great informational center supported by LCBP and located at ECHO. He also reported that ECHO has been invited to join the Great Lakes Environmental Observation Network. Bill thanked Phelan for the partnership.

Brief Jurisdictional Updates - Written updates were circulated. Additional comments included:

NY: Gov. Cuomo called for a review of rail transport of crude oil in NYS. DEC has adopted a statewide sauger management plan which calls for determining populations and identifying opportunities for habitat improvement. Mandatory boat inspections and decontamination for Lake George are starting in May.

Quebec – Quebec – The Ministry of Sustainable Development, Environment, Wildlife and Parks has adopted new regulations on management of municipal wastewater. The Missisquoi Bay Interagency committee is reviewing the QC actions in response to the LCBP Flood Report, for presentation to the Prime Minister in July.

Vermont – Pete reviewed the progress and timeline for the Lake Champlain P-TMDL development. There was a large meeting yesterday at the state house, providing testimony to legislature; Chuck Ross, Brian Searles and David Mears presented the way the TMDL is shaping up. Among new legislative initiatives emerging is another version of a lakeshore bill.

Legislative Update - Tom Berry reported that the Farm Bill was signed last week –extending it five years. This important bill is the largest domestic spending item, and includes conservation funding

that is very important to Lake Champlain. IJC was allocated \$480K to start work on a flooding assessment, as a first step towards the recommended plan of action. ACOE funding for water chestnut is in good shape. GLFC funding for Lake Champlain of \$3million will cover sea lamprey control, other USFWS tasks, and LCBP work. Unfortunately, the EPA line for Lake Champlain took 40% cut in this year.

Manager's Report - Bill reported on recent work preparing for a number of new contracts to be issued for local grants. Executive Committee meetings on Jan 8 and 22 have resulted in a draft budget for Steering Committee action at this meeting. Bill participated in the Alliance for National Heritage Areas meeting in DC last month and while there met with congressional staff, and had discussions with management figures from the Northeast-Midwest Institute and Great Lakes Fishery Commission about LCBP work.

Implementation News - LCBP Staff presentations described work recently completed and in progress, additional updates and information are in the meeting binder.

Structured Decision-Making workshop – Eric introduced LCBP Contractors Robin Gregory & Michael Harstone, (ValueScope Research) and gave some background on their task. Robin and Michael presented an *Overview of Structured Decision Making (SDM) concepts, techniques, case studies* and summarized how SDM may be helpful for LCBP Operations. This included a review of program objectives and the application of contingency & strategy tables in resource allocation. They are scheduled to return in June to give recommendations and next steps on what to do to apply SDM techniques.

FY14 LCBP Budget Review - Bill facilitate the budget development discussion, beginning with pie charts describing how funding was allocated in FY12 and FY13. Because the Jan 22nd Executive Committee became aware of reduced FY14 funding they recommended fewer tasks for Steering Committee review. The proposed task list (distributed as a spreadsheet) is \$195K more than we probably will receive. We are budgeting for 1.5M from GLFC but we are not sure what final number will be. NPS has allocated 295K a slight increase. Tom noted that the EPA allocation is about \$1.4M. Dave noted that the spreadsheet may need to recognize uncertainty about the final GLFC allocation for LCBP, so the committee needs to be prepared for potential additional changes in that allocation.

Rich recalled that the EC had reviewed all the proposed tasks and identified the bare minimum necessary for each. If partial funding was not feasible for the task, it either was dropped from the proposed list or was retained with full funding. Several tasks were dropped by the Executive Committee due to budget constraints, but also were identified for consideration next year as their importance will continue. All tasks were retained on the spreadsheet, including those for which no funding is recommended for FY14, so the Steering Committee can change the priority assigned to particular tasks if inclined. Vicky noted that \$20K could be cut from the continuation of the edge of field monitoring task.

The Steering Committee and staff discussed all proposed tasks at length and made several adjustments to the budget proposed by the Executive Committee. Notably, the Local Grants line will be cut for this budget, in view of the timeline that FY13 local grants are now going to contract, and should local grants be funded in FY15, as hoped, the gap in available new funds for this purpose may be only slightly more than a year in duration. To compensate somewhat for this reduction, the Steering Committee added significantly to the Education Grants line item and the Organizational Support line, with increased emphasis on local watershed support. Rich underscored the need to

restore local grants if more funding becomes available, and if not, to keep it in mind as a high priority for next year.

ACTION ITEM - John moved to accept the draft budget proposed by the Executive Committee with several small modifications, and elimination of task 17 (initially proposed for \$230k) and to move the remaining \$37k in it, along with \$25k initially proposed for task 39 into task 30 (Organizational Support) to bring that line to \$87k. The motion was seconded by Buzz and approved by unanimous vote.

ACTION ITEM - Chuck moved to give Bill discretion within \$10K more or less on any particular task, in working the budget details out. Dave seconded the motion, which was approved by unanimous vote.

Structured Decision Making – continuing discussion: Robin and Michael facilitated further discussions:

Robin asked all present to share how they saw the structured decision making process might help in making decisions.

Jan – likes the linking of tasks

Chuck – could get clarity and be able to evaluate trade-offs

Dave – real time evaluation of trade offs

Tom – structure and organization of the groups may influence the outcomes

Clair – ability to access consequences of management decisions

Bill – the stronger group process that should come from this

Kari – articulating objectives to make the process work better

Pete –greater clarity of goals, clearer structure of organization, coming up with structured process

Daniel – need to have in mind the main goal of the organization in making a decision

Martin – keeping it simple is important

Renee – this will help get consensus on objectives and better understand where we are going.

Catherine – the improved context of clarity and goals

Lynn – would like to see improvement in directional priorities, also - within committees this will be useful to prioritize what we want to fund

Mike – using this process and defining the big goals

Jeanne – the process being helpful in targeting implementation projects that have measurable results

Mario – better definition of objectives and goals – this will help break institutional habits

Vicky – are there parts of this process that can be brought to the agricultural community, and recommendations then brought back to steering committee

Eric – the influence table diagrammed

Elizabeth – organize the priorities

James – thoughts will be emailed to staff

Laura – will be interested to see how projects are cued up and presented to steering committee

Robin summarized the general themes of these comments:

- How tasks and priorities are grouped together
- Budget issues – better consistency in allocation of resources
- Phosphorus loading – what is in the domain of this group, what are the specific goals?

The meeting recessed at 4:40 pm.

Lake Champlain Basin Program Steering Committee Meeting – Continued (*in a major snowstorm*)

Friday, February 14, 2014

Members: Jan Surface, Dave Tilton, Daniel Leblanc, Renee Rouleau, Lynne Hamjian, Mike Winslow, Catherine Brooks, Jan Surface, Tom Berry; **Via Phone:** Vicki Drew, Kari Dolan, James Ehlers, Mario Paula, Rich Wagner; **Staff:** Colleen Hickey, Fred Dunlap, Clair Ryan, Bill Howland, Meg Modley, Martin Mimeaule, Jeanne Voorhees, Ryan Mitchell, Eric Howe, Elizabeth Lee, Stephanie Castle, Michaela Stickney; **Guests:** Tom Manley

Meeting Reconvened - Daniel chaired the meeting

Brief summary of agenda and the previous day's work - The Steering Committee discussed the decision to fund the existing agronomist positions and revisited the task description that was approved by the Steering Committee vote the previous day. Vicki, Kari and Tom agreed to explore together the possibility of funding parts of the continuation of the agronomist costs (Vermont side) through another grant recently received in the basin.

Public Comments: No comments.

Six Advisory Committee updates (CACs, E&O, HAPAC, TAC):

- **TAC** – Mike Winslow reported that the TAC has met once since the last Steering Committee meeting (this past Wednesday). TAC approved the work plan for an Ecosystem Services Assessment by UVM. TAC also received an interactive decision making presentation from Robin Gregory and Michael Harstone.
- **VTCAC** - Michaela (for James) handed out the VTCAC Action Plan to Steering Committee members. The format and plan is similar to last year, prioritizing funding to improve water quality in the state. The VTCAC secured two days to share their top priorities with legislators at the state house. The legislators requested that the VTCAC look into fees that would fund its priorities.
- **NY CAC**- Fred (there being no chair) reported that no new chair has yet been identified, and membership has dropped by half. NYCAC is in the process of recruiting a new chair and new members. Any nominations for consideration should be forwarded to Fred Dunlap at this time.
- **QC CAC**- Martin reported for Real who was not able to make the meeting. The lakeshore in St. Armand is being restored after the 2011 flood with grants from the provincial government.
- **E&O** - Ryan (for Buzz) reported that January 3rd was the first meeting of the committee with the newly approved members. The committee reviewed how the budget process works and how it relates to *OFA*. The committee drafted a budget proposal for the Executive Committee meetings in January.
- **HAPAC** - Catherine reported that stakeholder committee meetings continue to take place throughout the region. One group met earlier this week in NY. Local grant recipient letters went out this week. The titles of grant proposals may be found at www.lcbp.org. Catherine recommended adding two brief sentence synopses of each grant to the website to better communicate with partners what the projects, especially the CVNHP grants, are about.

Federal Partners – Jeanne reported that LCBP and EPA have been working on the *Trip of the Drip* video which will show how federal partners are working together for water quality. EPA region 1 will do a lot of the video production and LCBP will contract with local producers and a Champlain

College Environmental Studies class to develop video script and interviews. Dave Tilton noted that water quality is a high priority of LCBP, but it is not the only priority and recommended additional diversified public outreach to address biodiversity, waterfowl, and fish issues. If successful, the *Trip of the Drip* model which begins in the headwaters of a soon-to-be Wild and Scenic River and ends in a National Wildlife Refuge will lend itself to addressing other wildlife priorities.

James shared concerns about the need to address priorities other than phosphorus reduction. He supported the timing of the Structured Decision making process to address this challenge. He is concerned that the public does not understand all of the Basin Program's priorities because all they see are LCBP funded phosphorus projects. LCBP needs to address other issues that relate to the public such as fisheries, toxins, etc. James commented that he did not see a reflection of the federal partner's missions in what has been funded through LCBP. He requested that the Steering Committee look harder at funding projects that speak to multiple lake issues.

Tom recommended that we think about how to address multiple issues in the process of updating *OFA*.

Opportunities for Action - Bill noted that the expectation of the MOA between VT/NY/QC is that the management plan will be updated in 2015. This was a laborious process in 2009-2010, when a strong commitment was made to have an increased accountability loop. He asked the Steering Committee to consider how this management plan should be presented, and to review our recent actual progress with the objectives and tasks. *OFA* lists 614 tasks; 190 are incomplete, 31 are complete, 289 are inactive, etc. Some of the tasks in *OFA* will always be ongoing by their nature. The issue to address at the time *OFA* 2010 was approved, concerned partnering agencies being held accountable to the public for follow-through on tasks they had prioritized in *OFA*. SC members and staff are requested to update *OFA* regularly so that overall progress can be assessed. James noted the problem of agency follow-through is of concern to the public.

Bill noted that the Steering Committee needs to decide how to update the Plan; there will be a new TMDL and other new goals of all sorts, and new task priorities to address them. We need to ensure that short term tactical needs don't erode commitments to the longer term goals of the management plan. On Thursday June 5th in QC we will have an *OFA* update and committee chairs will lead discussions of emerging issues. In order to make that dialogue effective, Steering Committee members agreed to provide implementation updates to LCBP in the interim.

ACTION ITEM - Dave Tilton moved that partners should submit *OFA* updates by May 15th 2014. This was seconded by Catherine Brooks. The motion passed with unanimous approval and no abstentions.

Daniel noted that the MOU expires in 2015 and if the two Governors and the Prime Minister are to sign a renewal at that time, they will have questions about *OFA* and the State of the Lake. Maybe we should prepare *SOL* for 2015. The committee will discuss this schedule further at the June 2014 Steering Committee meeting in Quebec. At that meeting we will review emerging issues, such as the TMDL and we will have a retrospect discussion of where we are in *OFA* implementation – This will be helpful in approaching the Structured Decision Making workshop that will be part of the agenda. Although we will not have the new structured decision making model finalized, we will have Robin and Michael return to work with us about how to best move forward with the new version of *OFA*.

State of the Lake Report - The *SOL* report may be the most significant document we produce; it tends to fly off the shelf. The 2012 report reflects the data that was available in 2011. There are a

few gaps in information but it has been very successful. This is the objective analysis and presentation of current science that we present to the public and explain what information is available and what we know about the condition of Lake Champlain. We are anticipating about a June 2015 release for the next *SOL*. *OFA* can be released in November, 2015 or perhaps later. The Steering Committee and staff discussed the possible scope of *SOL* content, including the following comments:

Mike –The flooding part can be reduced; climate change should be updated. Add the boat launch steward data and better BGA information – which should be separated from the beach closures.

Daniel – We can update the flood resiliency looking ahead.

Rich – We should consider a section that discusses risks – particularly the increase in the crude oil traffic up and down the Champlain corridor.

Tom –We could look at the traffic of all hazardous materials through the basin that might put environmental resources at risk for rail and roads and pipelines.

Colleen – The health of the public is a question we face daily, and how beach closures are decided.

Dave – the format of the report FAQs and answers, is great. We can add a page or two about the implementation partners.

Martin – In *SOL* we refer to *OFA* to reference partners and their actions and we added the sidebars about actions citizens can take. But we don't have the annual **Progress Report** anymore, and that would be a better place to show what our response to the state is.

Ryan – we have three websites *lcbp.org* (pressure), *SOL.lcbp.org* is an online version of *SOL* (state) and the *OFA* part of our website which is the (response). We design the document in house and manage those three web resources.

Martin – We use to translate the *SOL* in French and now we put one page in the written report. We put more French translation in the on-line version.

Mike – swimmable, fishable, drinkable are the key goals, and we don't have anything in there about that right now. I also am concerned about those that use the Lake as a drinking water resource. We should look at the drinking water facilities to help decide what the value of the drinking water is. We don't have an indicator for it yet – and we should be thinking about this.

James – the VTDEC drinking water report shows lots of violations – this investment would not be the best valuation of drinking water.

Mike – We should limit our focus to source water and not finished water.

Clair – We may be able to use results of the economic valuation project that is getting underway.

Martin – About the timeline for *OFA* and *SOL*. Perhaps we should consider reporting to the public 20 years after we signed the first plan (1996 to 2016). This would mean pushing out a year, and would give us time to use the results of *SOL* in the whole planning process for updating *OFA*.

Jan – We need to look at what goals we actually can achieve, and focus on where we can make a measureable change.

Kari – VT is developing a new approach to tracking our progress as a way to keep track of TMDL sources. We also talk more about protection in addition to enhancement or restoration of biodiversity. We have a lot of forested riparian areas that are predominantly ash and the arrival of the emerald ash borer would have huge impacts. We can stop talking about flooding of 2011 because has now become about long term resilience to all flooding. The TMDL now requires a component of climate change for each component of the TMDL and this gives the opportunity to talk about what we are doing to strengthen these areas.

Dave – It is a good idea to reflect on where this is used; the tables are not intelligible to color-blind readers.

Tom – I like the map with the sections of the lake –this provides a good overview for the legislature and others, showing that we can't characterize the lake as one unit. It is more complicated than that and this is a good illustration of that point.

Renee – The citizens like to see *where they live* and what issues are relevant to them. Why is the indicators table in the middle - separate from the map in the back that shows the places described in the table? Maybe they should be put together up front.

The mission statement should be prominent in the beginning of the document: who are we and what are we trying to accomplish? FA and maybe we can make it more appealing. Maybe change to a goal. We should say it is to address water quality.

Jan – The map and indicators should go together in the front

Mario –There should be more discussion about the TMDL and about the AIS.

Draft Criteria for Prioritizing Support for Tasks

Lynne described the draft task criteria that were first introduced to the Steering Committee in November, and has been updated based on discussions. The recommendations from EPA propose eight criteria for considering proposed tasks within a structured decision process. This is to ensure that the process of making decisions about what we are going to fund reflects the goals of the management plan, rather than short –term interests or budgetary shortfalls of partners. Kari asked about the origin of the draft criteria. Jeanne responded that they are an outgrowth of the discussion about project screening that Robin provided in his earlier meeting with the Steering Committee.

Lynne noted that last year we had a lot more debate over which projects to fund and some of those discussions hung up on tasks involving new staffing – such as the agronomists. The Steering Committee at that time discussed the need for specific criteria for new projects that involve staff, including how long we would fund those positions and why we would prioritize support for staff to be positioned in state government when they were not included in state budgets. This proposal is intended to get the conversation going, so that next year we will have an easier time reaching consensus. Tom noted that he appreciated EPA taking the initiative with this issue.

Daniel thanked everyone for their time and participation.

Lunch was followed by a presentation from **Dr. Tom Manley**, Middlebury College Dept. of Geology, about his recent research on Lake Champlain.

1:30 PM Meeting Adjourned