

**Lake Champlain Basin Program
Steering Committee Meeting**

Tuesday and Wednesday February 10 & 11, 2015
Comfort Inn Suites Conference Room – Shelburne Road (US RT 7) South Burlington, VT

Approved Minutes
Tuesday February 10, 2015

Members present: Pete Laflamme, Bob Stegemann, Daniel Leblanc, Chuck Ross, Mike Winslow, Julie Moore, Renée Rouleau, Breck Bowden, Bradley Young (for Dave Tilton), Buzz Hoerr, Johanna Hunter, Bob Brower (for Mike Latham, via phone), Vic Putman, Catherine Brooks, Vicky Drew, Gina Campoli, Mario Paula, Christina Marts, Tom Berry, Haley Pero. **Staff:** Bill, Jim, Colleen, Ryan, Eric, Meg, Stephanie C, Kathy, Elizabeth, Clair Ryan, Michaela Stickney, Martin Mimeault, Jeanne Voorhees, Fred Dunlap (via phone), Myra Lawyer. **Guests:** Phelan Fretz, ECHO, David Borthwick-Leslie, FNLC, Walt Lender, LGA, Laura DiPietro, Kari Dolan, Denise Smith, FNLC, Darlene Reynolds, FWA, Hilary Solomon, PMNRCD, Jennifer Alexander, PMNRCD, Jeff Carter, UVM Extension.

Meeting Begins *Pete LaFlamme, Chair*
Welcome and Introductions

Draft Meeting Agenda review – Renee asked that there be fewer acronyms in minutes or a list of acronyms being used.

ACTION ITEM: Buzz moved to approve the September, 2014 Steering Committee minutes as drafted and Johanna seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Public Comments (10 min)

Darlene Reynold shared that attendance at Farmers Watershed Alliance meetings has been great and momentum is growing with the farmers, there has already been a lot that the farmers have done and the organization is getting the word out about work that is needed on farms. **Denise Smith** reiterated what Darlene said and spoke about what her organization is dealing with in northern Lake Champlain. They want the Steering committee to consider the legacy of the lake and accessibility of federal funding is essential for farmers to implement best management plans this planting season.

Bill circulated over 40 letters he has received from the public regarding cormorants. He mentioned that these letters reflect a mixture of science and beliefs about cormorants; TAC has looked closely at the cormorant concerns and the priority of LCBP funds for control. The TAC's recommendation to the Steering Committee is reflected in the prioritized list of draft budget items.

Brief Jurisdictional Updates (*NY, QC, VT, US Fed Partners*) *Written reports were circulated.*

NY- The proposed Governor's budget for NY state includes additional funds for oil train safety, lowering Imperial Dam by 8 feet and removing sediment behind dam, and mandatory boat wash stations in Lake George.

VT- Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) related issues dominate the report circulated. The report touched on pending legislation, nutrient trading grant activity, the Ecosystem Restoration Program annual report was released, and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) report was also released. Other news: micro-bead legislation is pending.

QC – Circulated a report mentioning that the MOU update will occur during 2015; controlling sea lamprey in Québec on the Morpion Stream using a seasonal barrier has been a success; a cross boundary watershed mapping data informational meeting was hosted by LCBP; Québec representation to the LCBP HAPAC has been proposed; Richard Lauzier, MAPAQ, retired in December 2014.

Federal partners – **Jeanne** reported that the Federal partner's workgroup will be meeting on Feb 19th and Kari Dolan will come to discuss the phase 1 TMDL implementation plan, so federal partners can discuss collaboration opportunities. EPA staff is reviewing sections of the TMDL. The schedule for TMDL is that it will be presented this spring, and after that public comments will be considered and incorporated if needed. The timeline is for the TMDL to be transmitted to VT for inclusion in their water quality plan in early summer. **Johanna** said \$1.39M is the president's budget recommendation again for Lake Champlain. **Vicky** reported that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has applied for RCPP. We are at the stage of negotiating the requested \$20M and it includes staff time for NRCS to administrator the project. VT funds also cover tasks in southern Lake Champlain Basin. **Brad** reported that since 1990, when the sea lamprey program began, there has been a great improvement – a decline in wounding rates.

Legislative Update - **Tom** reported on the recent visit of the EPA Administrator to Vermont. Most of the 2014 work of the congress got done in the last weeks of the term. Authorizing legislation named the *Trout and Missisquoi Rivers* as Wild and Scenic Waterways – a designation that should provide some National Park Service (NPS) funding for interpretation and stewardship. There is a likely role for LCBP to assist in the program administration but that has yet to be determined. Lake Champlain geographic area funding came in strong for FY 15 at \$4.399M. Also Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC), which funds sea lamprey and other projects for LCBP, is at \$3.5M for FY15, a slight increase over last year. U.S. Army Corps Of Engineers (ACOE) funds for water chestnut came in at \$300,000. Senator Leahy remains on same committees, and though he is not the Judiciary chair as before, he remains a ranking member. What that means in future funding recommendations is to be seen. Tom welcomed Haley Pero, who is in attendance representing Senator Sanders' office.

Manager's Report - *Bill Howland*

Two flyers were circulated 1) **World Water Day** on March 19th with guest speaker Rachael Miller, (Rozalia project) and 2) **Love the Lake** series is starting on 2/20 for 5 weeks. This program was started in memory of Jane Potvin, a former LCBP employee.

The new **LCBP FY2014 Annual Report of Activities** was circulated to all members. The Steering Committee noted at last year's February meeting in Middlebury that it would be nice to see what staff is doing through the course of a year. This report shows the work of the staff, the projects, the monitoring, research, educational programs and grants that are in progress or have been completed during the last year. Bill highlighted some of the projects. He also noted some of the other tasks that are being worked on in-house, including climate change research, wine trail development, Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs), e-news, videos, teacher training, atlas development, etc. At request of the International Joint Commission (IJC), LCBP is working with Daniel's office and preparations are underway for a data harmonization meeting. Bill was asked by the VT House and Senate to critique the water quality draft bills. The Leahy Summit will be held in March at ECHO.

Agronomist Task updates, VT and NY: Jeff Carter, Hilary Solomon, and Myra Lawyer made presentations on tasks being done by LCBP-supported agronomists in New York and Vermont.

Eric noted that the Agricultural Commodities Assurance Program (ACAP) has been funded by LCBP for the past five years. Bob said that the powerful things the agronomists are doing is to make it possible for farmers to improve their practices and be more viable farmers while they reduce their impact on the water quality of the Lake. Pete said that the Steering Committee and DEC wants to commend the staff that has been doing the agronomic work.

FY15 LCBP Budget Review & Discussion – Introduction

Bill presented the budget recommended by the Executive Committee. He reviewed line-by-line the key functions (base) budget, followed by E&O projects, technical projects and National Park Service projects. Narrative descriptions of tasks were also included in the meeting packet.

Gina asked about the difference in VT and NY coordination task amounts. Bill reviewed that this has historically been tied to the compensation rates prevailing in the jurisdiction where the staff are located. Tom commented on the grants programs totaling \$775,000 and asked how that relates to the level of requests we typically receive. Bill said that we often have at least twice as many requests as dollars available.

Among the discussions about specific tasks, the committee spent the most time on the proposal for cormorant control. Tom noted that cormorant management should be given careful thought in view of the many emails supporting the projects. The Steering Committee considered that the Cormorant Communications Committee has been working on developing a Colonial Water Bird Management Plan for a few years, but that has not been completed yet, so it might be wise to allocate \$20k to finish developing the Plan. Vic said the NY CAC supported continued management of cormorants in some way. The Executive Committee and TAC both have ranked the task very low as an LCBP funding priority, though it may well have merit for other funds from other sources. Bill said based on emails received there would be good reason for the Steering Committee to raise the priority for even a modest level of support to above the funding cut-off. Bob noted that completing the Plan rather than reducing the population before the study is complete is understandable, but that the requests are more action oriented. The Steering Committee also reflected on the real limitations of a letter writing campaign forming any real basis for policy or spending decisions, and agreed to consider the request overnight.

Buzz reviewed the tasks proposed by the E&O committee, which are reflected in the Executive Committee's ranked list. Jim and Catherine described the process used in obtaining input for the committee to discuss and come up with the projects to be funded. The Executive Committee reviewed the projects and accepted them as presented.

After the Steering Committee had discussed each task proposed and ranked by the Executive Committee they then adjourned to rank the itemized proposals during the evening, through a new survey monkey tool. Eric gave an overview of survey monkey tool and provided specific instructions.

APPROVED Minutes **Wednesday February 11, 2015**

The meeting re-convened with a brief summary of the Agenda and the previous day's work.

Six Advisory Committee updates (3 CACs, E&O, HAPAC, TAC):

QC CAC– provided a handout describing:

- Restoration of shoreline of Lake Champlain pilot project for \$200,000 in St. Armand

- Riparian agents MRC Brome Missisquoi report, 2014
- Watershed management ditches, Selby Lake, Dunham

NY CAC continues to work to increase membership, review its strategic plan and mission statement and strategic priorities. Emerging priorities include AIS management and stream gauge maintenance (and wishes that gauges could also yield temperature data).

E&O – Provided a handout summarizing the following task areas:

- Last meeting Dec 5, 2014
- Teacher training
- Local watershed group workshop
- Local EO grants
- World Water Day celebration of student work
- Video content for the LCBP website
- LCBP Resource Room

Jeanne asked about trout in the classroom news clip. Colleen said that we do work with a couple of schools in Burlington but there is a larger program by Trout Unlimited and US Fish and Wildlife, with 23 teachers involving cultivating salmon eggs in the classroom. Buzz said that the connection with WPTZ continues (since 1999) and it has been a great partnership. The *Love the Lake* series is starting in February. Bob asked about what areas of E&O are priorities. Buzz replied that grants are always a top priority, and watershed group support is essential. Buzz said our presence within ECHO also enables us to present our message to exactly the public that wants to learn about the lake. Bob said he was impressed in the number of people reached in the Resource Room.

HAPAC –This is the 4th year of the HAPAC going through this budget process. Even before the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership (CVNHP) was in place, EPA was able to fund some heritage programs, so heritage and recreation projects by the LCBP go back to the first year of the program in 1991. The award-winning TAUNY project video was shown. It has been seen on public television across the country, sharing the stories of the northern Adirondacks. Clinton County Historical Association has published a report in 2 volumes, on the record of the people from Clinton County that served in the Civil War. There are about 20 grants ongoing, doing similar projects. Tom noted that it would be a great time after 10 years (in 2016), to mention that Senator Jeffords worked for 10 years to get this bill passed in 2006, to make the CVNHP possible. Bill noted that everyone around the table has a connection to the Basin and the CVNHP area. If there are places and events happening that mean something to you, please be sure to share them with Jim and John.

TAC – Provided a handout summarizing activities:

- 5 meetings since September
- Project reports and updates included the City of Plattsburgh presentation on Stormwater and green infrastructure planning, the climate change project, and floodplain protection. The TAC received several other presentations: NRCS on tile drainage; Vermont Center for Geographic Information on LiDAR and National Weather Service on the Rainfall Atlas.
- Budget 2015 task development
- State of the Lake graphics development

VT CAC –The annual action plan was distributed. The action plan was the main focus of the last few meetings. The CAC will be meeting with the legislature and Governor to discuss action plan issues. Main items include:

- Clean water fund;
- agricultural compliance and enforcement; and
- human health and ecosystem protection.

FY15 Budget Survey Monkey results and final budget discussion

Eric assembled the results and thanked all for using the survey monkey. Bill reminded the committee to approve the priority list and then LCBP will seek funds for as much as is possible. The project rank order changed slightly but it is almost the same as the Executive Committee ranking.

- **Heritage Tasks:** The funding level limits the heritage tasks to \$170K, which are ranked.
- **Education and Outreach Tasks:** The prioritization remained the same, but the Steering Committee felt it important for the grants line to contain \$200,000 and to have Organizational Support added to the Local Grants.
- **Technical tasks** - \$4,388,300 was the expected funding level, but a \$5,514,800 total was ranked in order to include additional projects in priority order if funds become available. The Steering Committee, after viewing the ranked results of the survey monkey, then made a number of decisions to elevate or lower the rank of proposed tasks, based on the discussion around the table.
- Bill reminded the committee to make a decision concerning cormorant control. Brad noted that while there is not a great deal of information on cormorant impacts other than on land, that which is available is adequate to support continued cormorant management. Tom and Brad advised that putting a small amount of money into research would not make sense at this time, but that providing some funds to support field management activities would be helpful to the states. Some committee members felt that without a management plan, management attempts were not well founded. Mike noted that TAC questioned if cormorant management is a good use of LCBP funds and felt that the request could be repeated yearly. A significant part of the issue is that the cormorant issue is a *perception* that there is a problem, whereas the science does not substantiate any significant aquatic ecosystem problem. Chuck proposed supporting the management task at \$20,000. Mike noted that the original proposal came in at \$150,000. The Steering Committee decided to consider \$20,000 to help get management work done this year, divided between the states, and then states can go to their legislature to secure funding to continue this program if there is adequate support; future LCBP support is unlikely.
- A draft final budget spreadsheet of ranked tasks, as adjusted by Steering Committee dialogue was shared online and on screen.

ACTION ITEM: FY15 Ranked and Prioritized Task List

Bob moved to approve the draft FY15 budget task list. Gina seconded the motion which was unanimously approved.

- Bill asked how the committee felt about survey monkey. Most thought it was a good tool to use. Gina mentioned a method that used a real-time clicker that gave an instantaneous answer. Bill said we did consider that sort of system and can look into it again for a future budget meeting. Chuck suggested keeping the survey open while the budget is being discussed.

- Jeanne noted the need for the budget process to be followed more rigorously in the future and that committees and staff should not add proposals to the budget list after the deadlines for submission to the advisory committees. There was general agreement with this. Breck felt the survey monkey was very effective. Bill said that the Steering Committee meeting can discuss and set definite rules for the submission of proposed projects before the budget process begins next year.

State of the Lake 2015 – Content Introduction and Discussion

The Steering Committee reviewed graphics and key messages for the developing State of the Lake.

- **Updating from 2012 to 2015**
- **Scope**
- **Draft Timeline to Release**
- **Draft Updated Information and Graphics**

The timeline presently is to have it released on the last day of June. The format this year may be a bit more information-heavy rather than text-heavy. Stephanie reviewed updated graphics and explained the main changes. The Steering Committee suggested adding drinking water to the document content; a two page spread will focus on LC as source of drinking water.

Memorandum of Agreement (QC-NY-VT) Update Discussion

Daniel circulated a draft of the MOU update. Vermont has given the ok to updates and NY is working on its review. March 23rd is the signature target date.

March 2015 – March 2016 LCBP Steering & Executive Committee Schedule –

Bill reviewed the timeline and noted an incorrect date in September and changed the February 2016 meeting dates to the 17 & 18, 2016 due to a holiday that week.

Executive Session for committee appointments

ACTION ITEM: Motion to enter executive session

Vic moved and Renee seconded a motion to enter Executive Session to consider candidates for appointment to committees.

Enter executive session at 12:15 PM; Exited executive session at 12:25 PM

ACTION ITEM Appointments

Vic moved to approve two new members of HAPAC, (Suzie O’Bomsawin and Linda Davignon, both from Quebec), as discussed in Executive Session and Renee seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

12:30 PM Adjourn following lunch