

APPROVED Minutes --- Wednesday & Thursday 17 & 18 February 2016

Auberge West Brome # 128, route 139 | West Brome, Brome, Québec J0E 2P0, <https://www.awb.ca/en/>

Wednesday 17 February 2016

Daniel Leblanc, Chair

Members: Daniel LeBlanc, Johanna Hunter, Bill Ardren, Tom Berry, Chuck Ross, Vicki Drew, Laura Treishman, Gina Campoli, Christina Marts, Renee Rouleau, Pierre Leduc, John Krueger, Julie Moore, Mike Winslow, Kari Dolan (for Alyssa Schuren), Vic Putman, Bob Stegemann, Buzz Hoerr, Mario Paula (via phone)

Staff: Bill H., Ryan M., Eric Howe, Stephanie C., Colleen H., Elizabeth Lee, Fred D., Michaela Stickney, Meg Modley (via phone), MaryJo F., Jane Ceraso, Martin Mimeault

Guests: Amy Alton, Laura Cisco, Diana Kotio, Gerard, Frederic Choinard, Joann Berube, Laura DiPietro.

Draft Meeting Agenda accepted

ACTION ITEM: Motion to approve November, 2015 Steering Committee minutes by John Krueger; Johanna seconded. Correction: add Gina Campoli to attendees. Renee Rouleau likes the detailed meeting minutes. The motion passed - all approved.

Public Comments

No comments.

Brief Jurisdictional Updates

NY: New funds (\$75million appropriation) are available for drinking water infrastructure. A portion of this is for Willsboro and Saranac Lake. NY State Environmental Fund will support AIS, Ag nonpoint source, and climate change resilience. Another round of tanker inspection is taking place now to improve rail safety. CAFO permits are up for renewal in summer.

VT: An RFP for public Ecosystem Restoration grants should be released in the next two weeks. The P-TMDL is still being finalized by EPA, with hopes it will be released by the first quarter of 2016. VT will finalize the phase one implementation plan after EPA releases the P-TMDL, per Act 64. Public meetings are scheduled for the first week of May in partnership with VTrans and Agency of Agriculture – LCBP will facilitate these meetings. Act 64 will require new general stormwater permits for Vermont’s state highway network. DEC is working on the municipal general permit (due to be completed by end of 2017). The Clean Water Fund only provides 3 years’ worth of funding- it will sunset at FY18 – so VT will begin stakeholder meetings between March and June to identify long-term sources of funding.

QC: Martin provided written updates to the group. MDDELCC announced a new pesticide use strategy after finding increased levels in surface water. The Paris Climate talks led to new target of 37.5% CO2 below the 1999 level. Discussions have begun about renewing the VT/QC Missisquoi Bay agreement.

EPA: EPA circulated a written update. A Vermont and New York MOU concerning the Lake Champlain P-TMDL is being developed to address the distribution of new allocations in the final P-TMDL. An Emergency Response multi-agency plan is being finalized in view of increased railway oil traffic along the shores of Lake Champlain.

USFWS: The Willsboro Dam removal has opened up many miles of Salmon habitat. USFWS has found eggs in small mouthed bass testes, which means we suspect it is an estrogen compound. It is not know where they were exposed. The impact of agricultural pesticides is being studied through other sources.

NRCS: Received \$9 Million for Lake Champlain Agricultural work. NRCS will focus resources on targeted watershed this year. About 50% of dollars will go into high priority HUC12- Lake Carmi/St Albans Bay/Rock River and McKenzie Brook. Farmers are not participating in conservation measures as much as hoped, perhaps due to low milk prices. An additional \$1.3 Million for the RCPP grant to VT is targeted to conserved farms.

NPS: Funding for CVNHP is holding level. This is the 100th anniversary of NPS, and lots of work at national level intends to raise awareness. Wild and Scenic program on the Missisquoi River is now getting underway. Congress is close to approving the North Country Scenic Trail establishment through the Lake Champlain watershed from western Adirondacks to connect with the Appalachian Trail.

Legislative Update

Tom reported that Congress adopted a federal budget in December, with the EPA funding line for Lake Champlain at \$4.399 Million, which is tied with highest ever. The GLFC funding for Lake Champlain at \$3.5 Million (same as last year). IJC at \$400-500K- will be more helpful if there is support from Canada. USACE has historically funded WC control in Lake Champlain, and is funded again. NPS requested funds for Wild and Scenic Rivers which also was funded.

Advisory Committee Updates

TAC: TAC met 3 times, reviewed one final project (Rock River FY10 funds) and two invited presentations (not funded by LCBP): Don Ross's streambank erosion study, and the USGS flood mapping done with the IJC workgroup. TAC had been focused on the FY2016 budget recommendations.

E&O: A teacher training was held at ECHO in January, concerning the State of the Lake. LCBP initiated the Healthy Soils campaign at a NOFA conference last week. The Resource Room saw nearly 29,000 visitors in the past year.

HAPAC: John stressed the importance of history education in local schools. In Sept., 2017, the World Canal Conference will be held in Syracuse, NY. HAPAC would like to use the Lois McClure to in a tour program for schoolkids from VT and NY, carrying white pine and white oak seedlings, and making ceremonial plantings at each stop. HAPAC has developed budget recommendations for heritage programs.

VT CAC: The CAC had large bi-state meeting to review rail oil spill response issues. There was excellent representation from both states and federal agencies, except for the US DOT. The committee will continue to work on spill response issues. The Annual Action Plan was circulated, featuring three areas of focus: Clean Water Fund (want public representation), Ag Compliance and Enforcement, and Public Access and Rec Opportunities. The CAC recognized Michaela's years of service as Vermont Lake Champlain Coordinator at its last meeting.

NY CAC: The CAC hasn't met since the joint meeting Julie spoke about, but is planning to meet on Feb 29 to discuss the agriculture conservation easement program. Willsboro will hold a Salmon Symposium on March 11.

QC CAC: Pierre Leduc is the new leader of QC CAC. Johanne Bérubé is executive director. Frédéric Chouinard is in charge of the master plan for water quality. The CAC has applied for two projects to be funded by the Québec Ministry of Agriculture. One is to reduce and identify erosion in Pike River

and produce action plans (3 year, \$230k). The second project is to support a designated watershed-level focus from the Ministry of Agriculture, prioritizing local issues, public health, etc. This focus may take crops out of floodplains; some 300 hectares have been identified for transition to perennial crops, but the program needs better incentives for farmers.

MRC: When federal elections were held in autumn 2015, the regional mayors asked all candidates to come to the area to discuss their support for local issues. There was a lot of support from the public for attention to drinking water quality and the cost of treatment.

Director's Report

- LCBP has completed an annual report to summarize the accomplishments of the past fiscal year. Bill briefly reviewed the different sections of the report, and the different types of projects represented.
- Many local grant sub-awards have been finalized in the past months.
- Advisory committees have worked on the draft 2016 budget, and the Executive Committee has ranked the draft tasks as a means of conveying its recommendations, as shown in today's meeting binder.

FY16 LCBP Draft Task Introduction & Exec Committee Ranking

Bill reviewed the FY16 budget process. Each of the advisory committees received feedback from the Steering Committee in fall 2015, to address certain priorities within the context of *Opportunities for Action*. Each advisory committee then prepared a ranked list of tasks for the Executive Committee to consider. Bill briefly reviewed the criteria used to rank tasks. One task has been added to the ranked list, at the request of Vermont - an extension of support for the agronomist positions considered. One task (#8) has been re-scoped from \$125,000 to \$35,000. Bill determined a tentative benchmark number of \$2.4 million for technical tasks, as a way to guide the TAC in determining its priorities. He also determined the number of \$400,000 for E&O tasks, representing a 33% increase from last year, when E&O support was unduly limited (because of the budget information available at the time E&O developed last year's proposed budget).

- The Vermont Lake Champlain coordinator task description is being re-written. New York coordination is level funded. Communications and Publications task has increased due to reallocation of budgeting from other task areas. Program direction task is split between EPA (.85) and CVNHP (.15) funding. CVNHP coordination includes support for Wild and Scenic Rivers coordination (not more than \$10,000).
- Mary Jo asked why E&O grants are not included in key functions with local implementation grants. Bill responded that E&O committee places a high priority on these grants and includes this line at the top of the E&O prioritized task list. However, TAC is silent about local implementation grants, assuming they will be funded, and spending its time on designing larger technical tasks instead. Bill includes the Local implementation grants within the Key Function budget so that they are sure to be discussed by the Steering Committee – as they are widely regarded the most important awards the LCBP makes each year. Tom noted that the local grants line has, in past years, offered flexibility to be increased or decreased at this meeting, as opposed to staffing lines which can't change without major programmatic impacts.
- GLFC funding is expected to be \$750,000, but might be slightly more, and EPA funding is approved at \$4.399 million. Chuck asked if federal funding were reduced next year, would key

functions change. Bill noted that because there is more than a one-year buffer, they would not need to be changed unless two years of significantly reduced support occurred. EPA funds under discussion at this meeting will not be received by LCBP until the beginning of FY 17 (1 October 2016). Last year GLFC funds for Lake Champlain were allocated to lamprey control, USFWS projects, LCBP projects, and projects directly supported by the GLCF in the watershed. For LCBP last year, GLFC provided \$675K. Bill has anticipated \$750,000 in support for this year, and asked the Steering Committee to rank tasks based on that assumption.

FY16 LCBP Draft Task Review & Discussion

The Executive Committee filled out the survey monkey to prioritize budget task proposals last month, and to provide rankings to begin their discussion. Steering Committee members can vote on survey monkey software while the budget is being discussed. The priorities approved by the Steering Committee tomorrow will be the 2016 budget and will inform the discussions that Bill will bring to all of the funding agencies in sorting tasks by funding source. If either more or less funding is available, the Steering Committee priorities also provide guidance for small changes that may be needed.

- **CVNHP:** Jim and John reviewed the heritage task priorities forwarded by the Executive Committee. HAPAC proposed funds beyond the anticipated NPS support, for the *Lois McClure* to participate in the World Canals Conference, and funds to assist with conference itself. Teacher Training and Museums of the 21st Century conference are other high priority tasks that fall below the current funding level. Julie supported funding the *Lois McClure* as a one-shot deal. Chuck would like to see the grassroots food task be modified to educate consumers about agriculture so that people see the merits of agriculture, and agricultural literacy increases. The Committee felt this to be a good budget allocation outcome for the day, so there will be no survey monkey exercise needed.
- **TAC:** Mike described the top 8 ranked tasks, noting there was agreement between Executive Committee and TAC rankings. The “Enhanced Local Grants” would state priority areas of work and would be competed, so that the most effective projects would be supported. Mike noted that this task reflected numerous concepts that had been proposed.
- Vicki added that NRCS has innovative agricultural grants with 50% match required. Laura noted that this task reflected numerous task ideas, some very costly. Laura went over the individual projects that prompted developing this larger project. Kari noted that some of these innovative projects might not work in VT. Pierre suggested breaking the larger task apart to look at individual projects on a merit basis. Tasks to be supported will be determined through a competitive process. Tom reminded the group that the goals of this budget follow *OFA*, not the TMDL. The role of LCBP should be to take risks that state agencies can’t take, for innovative practices, and this applies to both 4h and 4aa.
- Chuck noted that because the new TMDL plan is very aggressive VT needs innovative ways to meet the TMDL goals. He suggested that both 4h at \$650,000 and 4aa at \$350,000 can be funded to allow for an innovative approach to problem solving, and this would leave enough for three other high priority projects such as agronomists in both states and water chestnut management. Johanna and Laura supported innovative agricultural projects as a necessary part of this budget.

- Julie felt that cyanobacteria testing in drinking water should be the responsibility of state health department, not LCBP. The agronomist support was never intended to be a long term LCBP commitment, so we need to go back to the people (heads of extension programs in both states) who started these positions and put pressure on them to find additional funding –as they did commit to do back in 2011. Tom noted that the agronomist work is very useful, but there is not much information tracking performance. If it's going to be a long-term program, then LCBP should have more control over it and every product that comes out of it should have the LCBP stamp on it. Alternatively, we could put it out to competitive bid every year.
- Buzz recalled that in 2013, this was promised to not be part of future budgets, and wondered why it was not a higher priority for other funding sources? LCBP has traditionally funded tasks that can't be handled by the state or other entities, and projects that span two states or two jurisdictions. Kari noted that the Clean Water Fund is not providing high enough revenue to support agronomists, but two years from now, this task won't be on the LCBP budget table.
- Vicki noted the importance of the McKenzie Brook project for NRCS on-the-ground work that is going on right now.
- Kari noted that stormwater management is very important – particularly the illicit discharge project for Plattsburgh. Mike noted that IDDE project could fit under a grants line.
- Bill asked the Committee if they felt this budget allocation list was a good final outcome. The Steering Committee agreed on the \$2.4 million allocated for technical tasks in budget as a good stopping point, so that no survey monkey for these tasks is needed.
- **E&O** grants are consistently the E & O Committee's highest priority task, along with CBEI. CBEI will have strong support this year from Plattsburgh and St. Albans. Both cities have requested in-service training; this is the reason CBEI budget is larger this year than in years past.
- The Riparian Buffer E&O campaign for Missisquoi Bay will provide CSA data to farms in the region; will involve 2 students as summer outreach programs along the Pike and Rock Rivers.
- Snow and ice training school for five NY counties was discussed. Gina asked what training would be provided. VT local roads program already runs training programs working with municipal officials and that is well funded. Vic noted there is a serious need in NY for this training. Each county has different equipment; each piece of equipment needs to be calibrated for sand/salt dispersion. This is why it's important for each county to have its own training that is applicable to their equipment. Then county staff can then go to their town DPW people to repeat the training. The Executive Committee reduced the project budget to \$50K.
- Floodplain and river corridor outreach modules were discussed. Bob S noted that public concerns about floodplain & river corridor outreach are high right now.
- LCBP – ECHO partnership for SOL exhibits intended to present selected SOL information to the public that visits ECHO each year. Bill described the reduction in budget as a way to fund the first year as a pilot. The Steering Committee was assured that LCBP will retain control of the message content and will be credited appropriately in the public presentation of SOL information. The budget was reduced to \$37K, which includes some LCBP staff time to help develop the exhibits and work on interpretation of the technical content.

Buzz pointed out that annual projects like continuing support for the agronomists are crowding out other good projects more appropriate for LCBP to support. Many projects under consideration now are for tasks proposed by state agencies, tasks that they should be funding and doing. At some

point if this eats up enough money and we hit a down year, there will be a trainwreck for those agency projects.

- Bob spoke about the importance of funding these projects because the states are not funding them and they are highly effective. He also noted that some of the projects proposed by the states have been ranked high.
- Tom commented about the role of the LCBP – that it would be easy to go through the spreadsheets and flag the projects that directly fund agency priorities. The Committee needs to think more about why LCBP exists as an independent cross-boundary organization. The Committee needs to keep a closer eye on what percentage of dollars flows through to states to supplement agency budgets. If this continues then need for LCBP is devalued. Mike W echoed the comments made by Buzz and Tom. Several agencies have developed a direct pipeline to the LCBP budget process. They are more informed about how to work the system than other players. Mike recommended that to counterbalance this problem, LCBP should put more money out in the form of competitive grants, such as 4H “enhanced” grants and 4AA.

Bill reminded the committee that, having reached preliminary consensus on the four different aspects of the budget, it may choose not to use the survey monkey as earlier planned. The committee agreed. Bill noted that the streamlined budget discussed again tomorrow can be further adjusted at that time.

Daniel thanked the group and reminded all about the evening dinner schedule.

5:00 PM Meeting Recessed Overnight

Thursday 18 February 2016

Present: Bill Howland, Daniel LeBlanc, Martin Mimeault, Bob Stegemann, Kari Dolan, Tom Berry, Vicki Drew, Bill Ardren, Laura DiPietro, Laura Treishman, Jane Ceraso, Fred Dunlap, Stephanie Castle, Colleen Hickey, Elizabeth Lee, Michaela Stickney, Eric Howe, Ryan Mitchell, Jim Brangan, Vic Putman, Christina Marts, Buzz Hoerr, Renee Rouleau, Pierre Leduc, John Krueger, Mike Winslow, Johanna Hunter, MaryJo F., Amy Alton (citizen).

8:30AM The meeting re-convened with a summary of the Agenda and the previous day’s work

Public Comments

A staff member from parliament (from Denis Paradis) office spoke about Parliament’s concern for water quality in Lake Champlain and Lake Memphremagog. He hopes to become familiar with ongoing Lake Champlain work to inform the Minister and future deliberations at the parliamentary level.

Final Budget Discussion

Bill recapped the budget discussion from yesterday and the resulting spreadsheet. There was a spreadsheet error yesterday that revealed the budget has an additional \$200k. All the tasks prioritized yesterday can be funded at this point, and \$12,800 remains to be allocated; he asked

the Committee to identify “back up” projects so there are more prioritized projects than available funds.

- John suggested allocating \$12,800 for teacher training that would be modeled on CBEI - a small project that would have a big impact on kids and the teaching system throughout the basin.
- Bob suggests the interpretive signage program from HAPAC should be funded because it’s an ongoing program with a big public impact; John supported this suggestion.
- Johanna encouraged members to think about more support for the innovative projects from the technical budget.
- Daniel noted that \$12k is not a lot of money, and a project benefitting schoolchildren is probably the best fit for these funds.
- Buzz asks if CBEI can be expanded to accommodate a linkage of cultural heritage and water quality stewardship rather than creating a new program. Colleen agrees that would be workable. There was general support for moving extra funds into the education and outreach arena rather than into high cost technical projects.
- Johanna recommended that the \$650k and \$350k open and innovative project categories for technical tasks must address targeted criteria before the RFP is released. The Executive Committee will discuss the criteria for these two grant categories.
- Johanna recommended that this be the last year of funding for agronomist positions in Vermont, as a formal statement from this Steering Committee to the VT DEC leadership. Mario Paula concurs that this is the sunset year. Bob reminded the committee that the NY program has not been underway for very long, and should not sunset this year – there was general agreement.
- Buzz strongly supported Johanna’s recommendation to sunset the agronomist positions in VT.
- Pierre, from being away for several years, observes that a significant chunk of budget is devoted to recurring projects- some shouldn’t be touched, but maybe some of this work should now be moved to other agencies. There are growing requests from agencies around the table to fund their projects; he asked if this really is in line with the original LCBP mission? He recommended developing a policy for these agency requests, including an exit strategy and timeline.
- Mike agreed with Pierre’s comments that these ongoing projects reduce the flexibility of our budget.

ACTION ITEM: *Buzz moved to adopt the revised budget priority list shown in the spreadsheet, for FY2016; John seconded the motion.* The motion passed by unanimous consent.

ACTION ITEM: *Johanna moved to decide that FY16 is the sunset year for VT agronomist program funding through LCBP – so it would be supported through calendar year 2017 but not beyond. Buzz seconded the motion.* Vigorous discussion followed this motion. The motion passed by 6 votes in favor and 3 against, with seven members abstaining.

Opportunities for Action 2016 – Draft Content discussion

Staff presented the draft flowcharts outlining OFA 2016, for discussion of goals and objectives

- Clean Water
- Healthy Ecosystems
- Foster Thriving Communities
- Inform and Involve the Public

Each goal has a series of objectives, each of which has sub-objectives. The staff has reviewed comments and feedback from the Committee, and much of this input has been incorporated into the outline. Johanna encouraged the Committee to review the materials carefully and to provide comments back to the staff, to make the plan more robust.

A spreadsheet developed to correspond with the flowchart outline was reviewed. The spreadsheet will be the tool used to further develop the content of OFA. The spreadsheet includes objective and sub-objective descriptions and desired outcomes (which may be merged), performance measures, and example projects for implementation. Bill clarified that tasks that address objectives and sub-objectives will be developed each year through the annual budgeting process, beginning with next year's annual budget and workplan meeting of the Steering Committee in February 2017. After Eric presented the *Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems* outlines, Ryan presented the *Foster Thriving Communities* and *Inform & Involve the Public* outlines. Bill said that the current Chapter 9 of OFA, the CVNHP Management Plan, will not be revised, but will continue to be part of the management plan as is.

Kari Dolan voiced her support for the new approach to the management plan. Pierre asked if climate change will be addressed. Jane responded that the focus of addressing climate change is based on resilience to those changes. Ryan responded that climate change resilience is included in the outline. Bill reminded the group that the LCBP significantly upped its efforts to address climate change and resilience after the 2011 floods, including the LCBP report on Climate Change prepared at the request of the Vermont Governor and the Québec Premier. Bob said that the effects of climate change on water quality need to be addressed in the plan. Bill Ardren asked how the performance measures will be set, noting that they need to be clear so the LCBP can refer to them in setting annual budget priorities.

There was consensus that the LCBP Annual Report gives an excellent example of accomplishments of the staff and partners. Bill Ardren recommended that LCBP grant RFPs should focus on OFA performance measures and those performance measures be included in the LCBP Annual Report. The committee would like to receive the Annual Report a couple of weeks prior to next year's February budget meeting.

Renee suggested that in the draft budget, additional columns that focus on achievements and performance be included. She feels that this will help the Steering Committee make more informed decisions in the workplan and budget process. Bill Ardren asked if the LCBP staff could review the past 10 years of work and find some way to show the Steering Committee how effective expenditures have been. Bill responded that past retrospective analysis have not been very helpful, but that we will explore this idea and see what information we can assemble.

Mary Jo suggested that a multi-jurisdictional/bi-state performance measures and reporting database would be very helpful, so that the Steering Committee can see everything that is being done throughout the basin. Bill noted that the LCBP's prime performance measure is the tributary load data and the concentration data for the Lake itself.

Daniel ended the discussion by asking the SC to send in more comments. The Steering Committee set a March 10, 2016, deadline to submit comments to ehowe@lcbp.org. Those suggestions will be

integrated into the draft plan and discussed at the next steering committee meeting in April 13, 2016 in New York.

Meeting Adjourned