

Lake Champlain Basin Program Steering Committee

November 16, 2011

Valcour Conference Center, Peru, NY

Approved Minutes

Members Present: Breck Bowden (phone), Catherine Brooks, Gina Campoli, Vicky Drew, Louis Hak, Lynne Hamjian (phone), Buzz Hoerr (phone), Ron Jackson, Mike Latham, Daniel Leblanc, David Mears, Mario Paula (phone), Real Pelletier, Roman Rakoczy (for Gene Brickman), Chuck Ross, Marilyn Stephenson, Dave Tilton, Jeanne Voorhees, Rich Wagner (*chair*), Mary Watzin, Tom Berry; **Staff:** Jim Brangan, Fred Dunlap, Colleen Hickey, Eric Howe, Bill Howland, Martin Mimeault, Ryan Mitchell, Stephanie Strouse; Michaela Stickney **Guests:** David Borthwick-Leslie, Laura DiPietro, Kari Dolan, Steve Mahoney

Welcome: Rich welcomed the group and all introduced themselves.

Action Item: Ron moved to accept the meeting minutes; David Mears seconded the motion, which passed with unanimous approval, with no abstentions.

Agenda – Bill recommended that we add “other business” to the end of the agenda. David Mears suggested some discussion of the EPSCoR funding to UVM.

Updates from the Jurisdictions:

Vermont - David reported VT remains focused on the flood response. The big issues are how we allow the reconstruction of transportation infrastructure and how we manage rivers to protect housing and other resources. A lot of work has been done in streams following the flood; some has been done very well and some has been less well managed. VT DEC is looking into how to change policies to improve this process. On Friday VT state officials from VT DOT and Agency of Ag and Emergency Response, Health, and ANR will discuss what kind of flood resiliency policy the state will need in order to protect against future floods. The Lake Champlain TMDL redevelopment project at EPA is on schedule. Modeling work and watershed assessments are underway and scientists from across the region are participating. David is participating in a series of meetings with the public to learn about how organizations can contribute to the P reduction plan. VT DEC plans to collaborate with UVM researchers in the new EPSCoR project. David described a dairy farm pollution enforcement case brought in St. Albans; it was an appropriate action, though many comments arose concerning the lack of a fine. The state is re-examining the penalty options associated with enforcement actions.

Quebec – Daniel reported that Quebec has supplied \$18M for flood impact mitigation. He described the request by the Premier and Vermont’s Governor to the two national governments that the IJC be asked to evaluate the causes and impacts of the flooding and propose policy changes that would reduce impacts in the future. It is very important that the two governments work together in asking the IJC to evaluate the situation to recommend future flood mitigation planning.

New York - Rich reported that Regional Director Betsy Lowe has resigned from NYSDEC. He described the completion of Crown Point Bridge and appreciation for the cooperation between partners to achieve this goal. NYS continues to manage the recovery process from Irene, working with citizens and agencies with a focus on river restoration. Recently NYSDEC partnered with NRCS in the *Trees for Tribes*

Program and planted over 1000 trees in the AuSable River watershed. Another 1000 will be planted this spring. Fisheries staff has documented 69 salmon at the Boquet Fish Passage this fall, and that is a great testament to the treatment program. Warren County has adopted an AIS transport law, the first county to take this action; there now is a developing movement for a similar state-wide law. Water chestnut harvesting effort in South Lake this year resulted in 659 loads removed, and cost just under \$64K - this was a great program. Mike Latham reported that the Governor announced the Ag County Recovery Fund (\$200K) – supporting the work of conservation districts and other state agencies. The Department recently closed on an easement in Clinton Co. for Chazy Orchards and the LaPierre Farm, resulting in an additional 1400 acres protected from development.

VT CAC - Buzz reported the CAC is in the final stages of putting the 2012 action plan together and to report to the legislature. This past Monday night the CAC identified 6 recommendations from the draft list of 20 suggestions from all watersheds around the VT side of the basin. The process has been inclusive and the public has been involved in all the discussions - the priorities are reflective of concerns. Michaela is preparing these recommendations to present to different house and senate committees.

NY CAC - Ron reported on the CAC's continuing focus on Irene and the floods communities have endured. NY has had three major floods since last October, 2010, resulting in a tremendous amount of soil coming into the Lake, and more nutrients in the lake than we have been used to for a while. The NY CAC is particularly concerned about BGA and the ecosystem impact affecting fish and other aquatic life. Irene was an event of a lifetime - far more challenging than the spring flood. Next meeting, Mike Winslow will talk about the high water levels and how that is affecting everything, and there will be another presentation about funding for the stream gages. Looking back, without the stream gages - which permitted forecasting and timely warnings, many more folks might have lost livestock and other possessions. The NY CAC is preparing a resolution to support stream gages. The CAC feels that Gov. Cuomo acted quickly and decisively in dealing with Irene damage, and we give him credit. There now is a lot of emphasis on water quality and the need to reduce runoff. Some places have been developed that should not have been developed, increasing runoff and the impact of river flooding.

QC CAC - Louis reported that QC communities in the basin have begun a process to adjust their recreational development management plans, working with the Organisme Bassin Versant Baie Missisquoi. The CAC has had a recent meeting devoted to ways to avoid flooding impacts. They would like to develop a Richelieu River Watch program so there is an early warning system in place for flooding. They are developing a shoreline restoration program to inform communities how to do private property restoration following the flood.

Legislative Update - Tom Berry described the current stage of federal appropriations process and the continuing resolution. He described the possibility of an omnibus approach to agency funding in which Commerce, Justice, State, Interior, and Agriculture bills are all wrapped together. Senator Leahy has added one million to the President's line for Lake Champlain in the Senate, bringing it to \$2.399 million. He has discussed with the EPSCoR leadership the common interests in keeping the streamgage program supported.

Manager's Report - Bill summarized the state of several tasks that are in the final stages of completion.

- Beth Card has left her position at NEIWPCC, and now is an Assistant Commissioner for Mass DEP. Although NEIWPCC has provided a strong team to pick up her work, all of us will miss working with Beth. Tom Berry noted that "Beth Card moved mountains for LCBP and we are all very sad to see her leave this program, but excited about her future". The Steering Committee agreed.
- For the CSA project funded by IJC and conducted by Stone Environmental, a final report has been delivered and is now under external review. The related LCBP report has been submitted to

the IJC and now has to undergo a peer review process. By the terms of our contract, we must wait for IJC to approve our public release of the CSA report.

- The BSTEM Study that addresses the contribution of sediments and P to stream banks and streambeds was supported by both LCBP and the state of VT is wrapping up. The CSA and BSTEM projects have both been presented to the TAC.
- The State of the Lake report is underway and we have developed some of the content for the project to share later today. We hope to have most of the technical content of the draft ready for Steering Committee review by the time of the January meeting.
- We have been updating the LCBP's OFA tasks online and have encouraged partners to do the same. We have had a mixed response but several agency partners have made reports.
- The LCBP Website redevelopment and Lake Champlain Atlas update project are underway - with FY10 GLFC support.
- Flood Conference – LCBP is involved peripherally with the effort to develop the scope of the work for the IJC. QC is talking about what the QC scope of work will be; on a parallel track, the US State Department will be discussing with Foreign Affairs Canada their common interests and expectations.

David noted that the LCBP has been essential in identifying research needs, and hoped that the program could be involved with the IJC in the flood study that should result from the request of the Governor and Premier, particularly in order to avoid duplicative efforts. Jeanne V noted that the Department of State has made clear, in its discussion with federal partners, that it does not want to call for duplicative work.

State of the Lake Update - Eric Howe presented draft new graphics and figures and the Steering Committee provided guidance on the general direction and content of the report. Several points of guidance included:

- Be sure the report includes the phosphorus targets (standards) somewhere, so the reader understands how important the line is. Lynne likes the new figure, thinks it shows more info. Keep the standard line there. Have sidebar to include info about the state standards.
- The basis for color in the phosphorus graphic, including the bar graph, it needs to be related to either an improved statistic (ie both +and-) or just to concentrations (preferred). The report would lose credibility if we use (3) colors without explaining the reasoning behind the colors.
- The graphic should show the overall picture of how the Lake is doing.
- Design the report for the primary audience: it has to convey the message to the public. Combine the colors for the lake segments and the bars on a single map.
- The content will have to be complex- so use extra pages if needed to explain things.
- Beach closure graphic - colors within circles doesn't appeal to everyone - simplify this where possible.
- Have a "Go-To" page where the big picture message about the Lake is summarized, as in 2005 center map.
- Remember that the message in the center of the document provides the biggest impact.
- Don't just combine the weeks of spring flooding with the hours of Irene devastation - recognize them as separate events.
- Tighten the interpretation of flood flashiness relative to available floodplain area and the terrain morphology of the watershed involved, and not so much about wetlands in this case.

Flood workshops and conference update - Bill reported on the development of a rough schedule for a flood workshop. The first workshop concerning flooding and impacts will take place in Quebec in Jan or early Feb. A second workshop concerning responses and policy issues will be held in New York in Feb or March. The third flood event will be a conference held in Vermont, probably on June 4th, and dealing with Basin-wide flood resiliency.

Meetings - Bill circulated a Draft 2012 schedule of Steering and Executive Committee meetings and requested all members to give feedback so that a final meeting schedule can be produced.

OFA Updates - Ryan presented the web rendition of *OFA* live and staff led the committee through the update process, showing many reports of progress and performance on tasks.

- Bill asked the Committee if it was ready to have the related performance indicator lights for each task turned on, as planned when the document was approved one year ago. Committee members agreed that they should be held accountable for tasks listed in the plan, and that all partners need to use this accountability aspect of OFA as a tool for conveying to the public the huge level of work in progress or completed.
- The Committee unanimously chose January 30th as the date to turn on the task lights; staff agreed to provide another generation of specific stepwise instructions to each party about the online update process, and to work with any partner to assist the updating information in whatever form it is supplied.

The Committee had a discussion regarding the research plans of the EPSCoR Research on Adaptation to Climate Change (RACC) initiative, and the questions it plans to address. Bill will invite the PI, Professor Judith Van Houten to present to the Steering Committee in the near future. Bill is a member of the EPSCoR - RACC Internal Steering Committee and well informed about the research agenda.

Adjourn - The meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM