

Lake Champlain Basin Program Steering Committee Meeting

Wednesday December 18, 2013
Georgian Hotel Lake George, New York

Approved Minutes

Welcome and Introductions: Bob Stegemann, Daniel Leblanc, Kari Dolan (for David Mears), Jeanne Voorhees, John Krueger, Mark Hohengasser, Mike Latham, Mike Winslow, Don Pettit, Dave Tilton, Vicky Drew, Jason Shea (for Gene Brickman), Roseanne Murphy (by phone), James Ehlers (by phone) Mario Paula (by phone), Catherine Brooks (by phone); **Staff:** Bill, Jim, Colleen, Ryan, Eric, Meg, Kathy, Martin, Fred, Michaela; **Guests:** Dave Wick, Walt Lender, Diana Kohtio, Howard Goebel

ACTION ITEM: September, 2013 meeting minutes approval
Mike Winslow moved to approve the September 2013 Steering Committee meeting minutes with minor revisions to the TAC section on the budget task review process, John Seconded. Unanimous approval.

Public Comments: Walt Lender from the LGA welcomed group to Lake George. He thanked the Steering Committee for their support of Lake George Programs and noted the challenge of managing Asian clam in Lake George and the need for more scientific research.

Brief Jurisdictional Updates (VT, NY, QC, Fed Partners):

- **Vermont:** Kari reported that a number of meetings with agriculture groups have been held. In addition, LCBP facilitated and did a tremendous job assisting VTDEC with six TMDL meetings that were held throughout the basin in early December. Over 500 people attended the six meetings. The meetings unveiled the State proposal for the VT phosphorus TMDL for Lake Champlain. The greatest challenge is nonpoint source pollution and how to conduct better targeting of our dollars to reduce phosphorus. The proposal document will likely transform into the reasonable assurances portion of the EPA TMDL. The proposal is open for public comment until January 17th and is available online. The timeline to complete the reasonable assurance document is this spring. EPA hopes to have the TMDL finalized by end of the summer 2014.
- **Quebec:** Daniel reported that MDDEFP had meeting in Plattsburgh yesterday regarding a landfill in Franklin County, NY. The 2009 Ministry of Environment strategy for water was also developed.
- **New York:** Bob reported that the economic development awards totaling \$81.3M focusing on water quality and infrastructure projects have been issued. Three priority status projects are waterfront revitalization, AIS management for Lake George, and infrastructure. NYSDEC is working on new regulations for invasive species transport. NYSDEC Region 5 provided a letter to the USACE in support of the barrier feasibility study on the Champlain Canal. US EPA has awarded money to assess wetlands. The US Department of Energy extended the time for comments for the power line until June 15th, 2014. The Lake George Park Commission is in the final stages of preparation for the Lake George boat inspection and decontamination program to start in May 2014. NYSDEC is preparing for work on the Lake George beach area where boat inspections may occur. An archeological survey will be done to preserve any artifacts.
- **Reports from Advisory Committee Chairs:**
EO – A written update was provided. There are seven new Education and Outreach Committee member nominations for consideration. The LCBP website has been updated with new content. LCBP is

partnering with Sea Grant on a realtor certification course. Buzz will be joining for the budget discussion. Education and Outreach local implementation grants are currently being reviewed by an external confidential review team. Four existing EO local grants that are finishing up in the southern part of the basin include the Lake George Association floating classroom, the Lake Champlain- Lake George Regional Planning Board teacher training project, CWICNY cistern work with students, and the Mountain Lake PBS video on invasive species.

TAC: The TAC has a record of decision for the ecosystem services assessment project for consideration. The last few meetings have been dedicated to budget preparation. The TAC has also looked at culvert prioritization tools in the Missisquoi basin.

HAPAC: The HAPAC met twice since last SC meeting. The first meeting was with the stakeholders group and the second was to work on a budget based on those discussions. There has been a review of the Commemorative and Legacy grants. The Camp Santanoni handout and LCMM report were circulated.

VT CAC – For the first time the VT CAC presented a series of budget recommendations to TAC, including a few new ideas and support of some emerging priorities already identified by TAC. The top three priorities of the VTCAC are tile drainage, toxics reduction task force, and blue green algae. VTCAC also developed a board member book and a conflict of interest statement for CAC.

NYCAC – Individual members have been busy getting information on a decision by NYSDEC for fish prime lands. Tomorrow there is a meeting with the North Country Chamber of Commerce to gather input for a new discovery museum. Ron Jackson announced that he is stepping down as Chair of the NY CAC effective after today's meeting.

QC CAC – There was a recent election in Quebec for mayors. Louis Hak is no longer the mayor of Clarenceville and there will be a new representative for MRC in January. Real Pelletier is still Mayor of St. Armand. Two new publications were released for land owner conservation and stream restoration. Resources are available to support a local grants program for implementation of the blue green action plan.

Federal Partners:

Group will meet in January. Have finalized and gotten all signatures on MOU. Smaller group is working on putting together a kiosk video project to produce something to indicate what the federal partners are doing for Lake Champlain. Jeanne has identified some EPA funds for this project. Champlain College is interested in assisting with video production but will require funding for this. Dave T. announced that after 20 years of work a sea lamprey barrier has been installed at St. Ignace de Stanbridge on the Morpion stream, just upstream of the confluence with the Pike River. The barrier is seasonal and will be installed and operated in the spring. Thanks to Senator Leahy for finding funding for the project. Vicky added that on the VT side the MOU was signed by all partners and there was support for a joint communication strategy so that the farmers will not be confused on who is responsible for what. This may take the form of a list serve, blog, etc. James extended thanks to Dave and Martin for work on the sea lamprey barrier work. Ron noted that we were trying to work towards having an office near Burlington for all federal agencies and wanted to know status of that. Dave said it is a good idea but not progressing at this time due to economic concerns.

Legislative Update:

There has been significant progress on some legislation. The upper Missisquoi and Trout River scenic designation has been approved. Senator Sanders has been the lead on this initiative. The Farm Bill went to conference committee in the fall and Senator Leahy sits on that committee. It looks like the conference committee will have a farm bill by the beginning of January. The previous farm bill expired in 2012. Appropriations looks like it will be passed in mid-January. EPA is level funded in Senate at \$2.399M, but that could be reduced. GLFC looks in good shape. Leahy has a new staff person, Kate Ashe, working on

historic preservation. LCBP will facilitate a meeting tomorrow regarding historic lighthouses on Lake Champlain between land owners, the historic preservation trust, and US Coast Guard. The lighthouses in discussion are the Split Rock light house and Isle LaMotte. The IJC study on Lake Champlain has funds in the appropriation bill.

Manager's Report:

Bill reported that Vermont followed up with its commitment regarding the stream gauge funding and LCBP funded the remaining 5 stream gauges so they would not be shut down. The SC agreed upon \$63,000 in support of the gages at the QC meeting but it ended up costing \$73,000. All NY stream gauges in the basin are funded through 2014 with some reliance on national stream gauge funding. LCBP may be asked to fund another gauge in the future. LiDAR of Grand Isle County is complete and includes shoreline in Clinton County, NY. LiDAR acquisition in Otter creek has been initiated and will be completed in the spring. The next Steering Committee will be February 13-14, 2014 in Middlebury, VT; Executive Committee meetings will be held on January 8th and 22nd for budget discussions. Bob noted that the NY state process for grants is getting complicated again and that there will be a large number of grant applicants for local grants. The local grants records of decision will be held at the Executive Committee meetings in January.

Meg provided an update on the 2013 Lake Champlain Boat Launch Steward Program. Ten stewards were stationed at VTFWD and NYSDEC boat launches around Lake Champlain. Stewards interacted with over 27,000 visitors. 85.3% of boat launch users encountered reported to take one or more spread prevention measures to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. Overall 7.4% off all boats were transporting aquatic organisms and 2.7% of all boats surveyed were transporting aquatic invasive species. Ticonderoga and Malletts Bay launches had stewards present through September while the rest of the stewards completed work over Labor Day weekend. Next year we hope to have funding to support the use of tablet data entry.

Bill reported that Mayor Weinberger of Burlington is interested in joining the Steering Committee. A letter from Governor Shumlin will be sent requesting an appointment. Tom noted that Mayor Weinberger would be an excellent addition to committee.

Lake George Mandatory Boat Inspection and Decontamination Update

– Dave Wick, Lake George Park Commission

The Lake George Park Commission was established in 1961 by the Governor of NY and has 10 board members appointed by the Governor. The LGPC has been focused on aquatic invasive species issues. Recently an environmental impact statement was conducted for an aquatic invasive spread prevention plan aimed at boat inspection and decontamination for Lake George. The boat launch steward program on Lake George has existed for seven years and this is the next step in reducing the risk of aquatic invasive species introduction and spread. The “no action” alternative to the proposed mandatory boat inspection and decontamination program may have significant economic impacts to property values. A range of options were reviewed to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species including no action, boat launch steward programs (voluntary), ranging up to a mandatory boat inspection and decontamination (if necessary) program. The Commission decided to support the mandatory inspection program because it has the strongest protection for Lake George. All trailered boats coming to Lake George would have to be inspected. If they are determined to be clean, drained, and dry before launch they may launch into the Lake. If the boats are not clean, drained, or dry then they must be decontaminated before launching. All inspection stations and boat decontamination stations are proposed to be placed at sites that will not interfere with the boat launch traffic. When boats exit the Lake the boat may be sealed with a physical link

between the boat and the trailer that would indicate that the same boat returning to Lake George with an intact seal has not been launched at a different waterbody can be launched again into Lake George without inspection. If the link is broken then the boat will have to be inspected again before launch into Lake George. Six inspection stations are proposed around Lake George that would be open from dawn to dusk to accommodate tourists and visitors, but hours may vary by season and location. The entire program including the decontamination stations would cost about \$650-700,000 annually. The only LGPC income is from boat registration fees. Lake George area municipalities agreed to pay for 50% of the program if Albany can pay for the other half. The pilot program starts May 15, 2014 and sunsets December 2015. The LGPC plans to hire 47 staff to implement the program.

Lunch Film - *Lake Defenders*

Champlain Canal Barrier Feasibility Study Update:

- Meg, USACE and NYS Canal Corp staff

Jason Shea, USACE, provided an overview of the Section 542 Lake Champlain program, how it works, what types of projects are eligible, and how it will work for the Champlain Canal barrier feasibility study.

Howard Goebel gave an overview of the New York State Canal Corps work to address aquatic invasive species spread prevention. The NYSCC has been implementing the recommendations of the Lake Champlain Rapid Response Task Force which included exploration of redirecting the flow of water from the Glens Falls Feeder Canal to be contained in the Hudson drainage, a boat launch steward program in the Champlain Canal, and initiation of the Champlain Canal barrier feasibility study. NYSCC contracted with an engineering firm to explore the flow redirection concept and that report was completed. NYSCC is working to add this project to their capital budget. NYSCC hired eight boat launch stewards that were trained by LCBP to pilot stewards on the canal system. The NYSCC, NYSDEC, USACE, and LCBP have been working with key partners like USFWS to move the Champlain Canal barrier feasibility study to contract.

Tom Berry explained how the funding for the feasibility study was obtained by Senator Leahy through the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the process for obtaining future funding for design and construction phases of the project.

Ron Jackson commended the Canal Corps for taking action to reverse the water flow in the canal to help address reducing the spread of aquatic invasive species.

Bob B. wondered if this project could be included in the economic development grants. Bob S. said he would look into it to see if it would be eligible.

Meg mentioned that the Chambly Canal is another open canal pathway to the north that has to be addressed when time and resources become available.

Bill said that over the past eight years LCBP has been working with Jason, Howard, Dave T., Fred, and others on this issue and we have progressed a long way toward cooperating on this project.

FY2014 Budget Development Update:

- The Steering Committee will hear task proposal titles and costs from each Advisory Committee chair and the LCBP Manager, and will consider if those tasks fit the September guidance of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee may provide guidance to the Executive Committee which will review the draft budget in greater detail at two meetings in January, 2014.

Bill said the overview of the tasks and costs on provided lists is to ensure members are aware of the upcoming dialogues to be had at the next 3 meetings of the Executive and Steering Committees.

EO – Colleen summarized projects that the EO Committee met to review and will meet again on January 3rd to rank and discuss.

HAPAC – John summarized the ranked list of projects, the first four of which are recurring projects. Bob S. added that accessibility of water ways could be worked into some projects. Kari noted that there were other projects that deal with the veteran's involvement projects.

TAC – Mike reviewed the large package for all the projects. The colored list is the ranked list and is also divided between implementation, research/monitoring, water quality, and fish and wildlife/toxics, etc. Mike summarized the projects.

Bill noted that the Executive Committee will review and discuss all projects and come to the Steering Committee in February with a proposed budget.

ACTION ITEM: Mike moved to enter Executive Session to discuss contract awards, Ron seconded, unanimous approval.

Committee entered Executive Session.

Committee returned to Open Session by declaration of the chair.

Record of Decision: Kari moved to approve the contract award for an Ecosystem Services Assessment project to the UVM Gund Institute, Dave T. seconded, unanimous approval.

ACTION ITEM: Mike moved to enter Executive Session for discussion of committee nominations, Ron seconded, unanimous approval.

Committee entered Executive Session.

Committee returned to Open Session by declaration of the chair.

ACTION ITEM: Ron moved to accept the recommended list of E&O committee member appointments, Dave T. seconded, unanimous approval.

New Business – Bob Stegemann will take over as chair of Executive Committee for the next two years.

Adjourn 2:50 pm☺