

Lake Champlain Basin Program
Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday, March 15, 2012
Municipal Building, St. Armand, QC

Approved Minutes

Members Present: Daniel Leblanc, David Mears, Rich Wagner (for Bob Stegemann), Jeanne Voorhees, Laura DiPietro (for Chuck Ross), Marilyn Stephenson, Buzz Hoerr, Dave Tilton, Louis Hak, Real Pelletier, Ron Jackson (via phone), Mario Paula; **Staff:** Bill Howland, Jim Brangan, Colleen Hickey, Ryan Mitchell, Eric Howe, Stephanie Strouse, Kathy Jarvis, Michaela Stickney, Fred Dunlap, Mike Jennings, Clair Ryan **Guests:** Tom Berry, David Borthwick-Leslie, Lynne Hamjian, Eric Smeltzer, Bahador Zabihyan (Radio-Canada)

Meeting Begins – *Daniel Leblanc, Chair*
Welcome and Introductions

Draft Meeting Agenda review

Action Item: *Buzz moved to approve the January 2012 Steering Committee meeting minutes as written; Ron seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.*

Public Comments - None

Updates from Jurisdictions

VT - David reported that many legislative issues are under discussion in Montpelier. He described the draft rivers bill, and the lakes bill. The rivers bill is a response to flooding and includes a system of incentives for all communities to reach a higher level of flood resilience. The lakes bill is more about water quality than flooding and focuses on how to make water quality better throughout Vermont. Debate on the bill has considered a statewide storm water utility, and a pilot water quality program on St Albans Bay. VT is participating in the EPA re-development of the TMDL. The Ecosystem Restoration program has produced its annual report, which is available on the VT DEC website now. VT is finalizing the funding agreements for the America's Great Outdoors program with USDA.

NY – Rich reported that grants are available in NYS for flood recovery, flood debris removal, and bank and shoreline stabilization. Applications are due April 11. The Lake George groups again are initiating effort to eradicate Asian clams in the lake, committing about \$625K for this year.

QC –Daniel described initiatives in Quebec, and circulated a handout that summarized key points.

Federal Partners Workgroup – Jeanne is scheduling next partners meeting for sometime in April. Dave T said the partners' MOU is being updated and discussions on content have begun. He noted that members of the group have been looking at ways to participate collectively in the implementation of *Opportunities for Action*, and to be supportive of the work of the LCBP.

Reports from Advisory Committee Chairs

NY CAC– No meeting last month. This month the meeting will focus on Lake George issues, Asian clam, boat stewards, and boat launch programs.

VT CAC – Buzz reported on a busy period in which the CAC’s 2012 Action Plan was completed and distributed to the legislature. Buzz circulated the document, which recommends six top priorities for action in the coming year. The schedule of presentation is effective, as the CAC can highlight the message while testimony is being taken by the legislative committees on related bills.

QC CAC– Real reported that the QC CAC has decided to focus on shoreline tree planting, and have 7,000 to be planted near Lake Champlain. This project is intended to stabilize the riverbanks and shorelines, and a number of farmers have agreed to participate in the program.

EO – Buzz reported that CBEI had 22 educators participate in Climate Change workshop last weekend. New laws are now in place in both NY and VT on the use of fertilizer containing P on lawns. Signage was developed by LCBP for distribution to stores around the basin. Buzz recounted his recent meeting with some Quebec citizens about the 2011 flooding and they discussed their interest in the role played by the Chambly Canal on the flooding of Lake Champlain and the St Jean Richelieu River.

TAC – A written update of TAC activities was circulated. At the February meeting there was a presentation on the VT EPSCoR grant to examine the effects of climate change on lake water quality. This study will last 4-5 years and integrate available information into one model that will provide management scenarios. TAC has reviewed *State of the Lake* content and reviewed the final report of the Riparian Restoration grant with Intervale Center. At its March meeting TAC reviewed and commented on two draft RFPs, including the America’s Great Outdoors edge-of-field study, which is being supported with LCBP’s GLFC funds.

HAPAC -HAPAC has not met since the January Steering Committee, and its next meeting will be in April. Real asked if regulations might be changed to stop the duty on wines bought in US to bring to Canada and vice versa. Jim will get information.

Legislative Update – Tom reported that the farm bill is one of the biggest bills being supported by Sen. Leahy at this time. The current farm bill expires at the end of September, 2012. There will be hearings over the next few months and there is hope to have a new bill or to extend the current one. Dairy reform is also a priority; there will be a farm bill listening session in St Albans next Friday, March 23. Tom reported on the press event at ECHO to announce funding from Great Lakes Fisheries Commission and the \$450,000 that LCBP has budgeted for local grants. The President has delivered his proposed budget, including the EPA line for \$2,395,000 (\$1M less than this year’s actual budget). Tom complimented the VT CAC for presenting clear issues to the legislature.

Manager’s Report – Bill reported that LCBP’s server crashed last week but has been repaired and is again in service; he thanked Ryan for his extensive IT work. A number of projects are developing:

- The last 15 Quadricentennial legacy grants are being completed; the contract that supported these projects concludes at the end of March. Included in this work was the redesign of the heritage exhibits at the Gordon Center House.
- We have added two CVNHP regional stakeholder groups for Addison and Saratoga counties; this leaves only Franklin and Bennington Counties remaining.
- The CVNHP wine trail project is developing. The Adirondack Coast program in NY is participating. We are having good discussions with VT wineries in the north lake and Richelieu River valley areas are being added.
- Bill and Jim were invited to a White House Conference on Conservation and participated in the day-long event in Washington, DC earlier this month.
- LCBP’s first flood workshop was held in QC in February, to focus on what happened in the 2011 floods, and what issues and challenges state and local agencies encountered. The

second workshop is scheduled for early in May in NY, to be focused on policy concerns - what worked and what didn't. The Flood Conference will be held on June 4th and 5th in VT.

- Local grant RFPs are out and applications are due on March 27. Executive committee conference call will be on April 5 to consider review committee rankings and to finalize grant awards.
- Asian clam support this year is primarily allocated to LCMM for diving to see where the clams are.
- Jim and Bill were invited to a White House conference on America's Great Outdoors. Meeting was with cabinet members and a very interesting meeting.
- Journal of Great Lakes will be released soon with great articles.

State of the Lake 2012

Eric provided a 10-minute overview of the status of the report. Breakout groups met through the afternoon to review content and make further recommendations. Recommendations were recorded on flipcharts for staff use in follow-up editing. A small number of continuing questions will be reviewed again at the at the May Steering Committee meeting in New York.

Breakout groups:

Phosphorus (pages 6-24)

Focus topics: Indicator trends & interpretation of figures on Pages 8, 10, 12, 13, 17

Human Health & Toxins, Flood (pages 26-33; pages 49-53)

Focus topics: Pages 26-30: Beach closures, BGA issues

Biodiversity, Habitat, Invasive species (pages 43-46)

Focus topics: Pages 35-36: Incorporation of wetland/riparian habitat in the context of the report

Pages 39-40: Increased angler catch rate, bass tournaments

Page 44: barriers to salmon and trout from spawning waters

Recreation, Tourism, Heritage

Focus topics: Page 53, Question 30: cultural impacts of floods

3:00 **Other Business - None**

3:15 **Adjourned**