



# LAKE CHAMPLAIN STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

SEPTEMBER 22, 2021 9:45AM - 3:30PM  
(VIA WEBINAR/TELECONFERENCE)

## ATTENDANCE:

**STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:** Joe Zalewski (Meeting Chair, NYS DEC), Nathalie Provost (Quebec MELCC), Pete Laflamme for Julie Moore (VTANR), Vic Putman (Chair, NY CAC), Pierre Leduc (Chair, Quebec CAC), Mark Naud (Chair, VT CAC), Buzz Hoerr (Chair, E&O Committee), John Krueger (Chair, HAPAC), Neil Kamman (Chair, TAC), Mel Cote (EPA R1), Mario Paula (EPA R2 for Rick Balla), Rifat Salim (USACE), Andrew Milliken (USFWS), Breck Bowden (Lake Champlain Sea Grant), Obediah Racicot (NRCS VT), Brian Steinmuller (NYS Dept. Ag & Markets), Joe Giordano (NY Local Municipal Representative – Town of Ticonderoga), Steve Garceau (Quebec Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs), Laura DiPietro for Alyson Eastman (VT AAFM), Laura Trieschmann (VT ACCD), Craig DiGiammarino (VTRANS)

**STAFF:** LCBP: Eric Howe, Jim Brangan, Colleen Hickey, Kathy Jarvis, Ryan Mitchell, Meg Modley Gilbertson, Matthew Vaughan, Lauren Jenness, Mae Kate Campbell, Katie Darr, Heather Radcliffe (NEIWPCC), Isabelle Piché (QC MELCC), Lauren Townley (NYS DEC), Julie Berlinski (NYS DEC), Erin Vennie-Vollrath (LCBP NYSDEC), Sarah Coleman (LCBP VT ANR), MaryJo Feuerbach (EPA R1), Bryan Dore (EPA R1),

**GUESTS:** Tom Berry and Rebecca White (Sen. Leahy's office), Ahren Von Schnell (Cong. Stefanik's Office)

*Joe Zalewski (NYS DEC) Chaired this meeting*

## MEETING BEGINS

10:00 AM

### INTRODUCTIONS

Joe Zalewski welcomed everyone to the meeting and led a round of introductions.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

#### **ACTION ITEM: APPROVE MEETING MINUTES FROM JULY 20, 2021 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING**

- **Motion By:** Neil Kamman
- **Second by:** Andrew Milliken
- **Discussion on the motion:** none
- **Vote:** All in favor
- **Abstentions:** Joe Zalewski, Breck Bowden, and Craig DiGiammarino abstained as they were absent from the July Steering Committee meeting.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

10:15 AM

No members of the public were on the call to provide comment.

## CONGRESSIONAL UPDATES

10:30 AM

- **Tom Berry (Sen. Leahy's office):** As we near the end of the fiscal year, three major bills are in play. A Continuing Resolution to carry us through to early December was passed in the House, however Republicans oppose a measure to extend the debt limit so the path forward for passing the CR is unclear at this time. The Infrastructure bill passed in the Senate with a bipartisan majority and has a good chance of advancing and contains \$40Million in new money for work on Lake Champlain through EPA over a 5-year period. The budget reconciliation bill currently has an unclear trajectory to pass. The bill to reauthorize the CVNHP has been introduced in the Senate with full support from the VT and NY delegations and the reauthorization will likely move forward as a package with other heritage areas, however Senator Leahy is prepared to re-authorize the CVNHP as part of the appropriations bill if necessary. The closure of the land border with Canada into the US is in effect through October.



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- EPA R1 and VTANR noted that they are hard at work developing budgets and administration systems for the increased funding coming their way but that it would be a hard lift to accomplish the typical match requirements that comes with the federal dollars. They requested that Tom look at the language in the bills regarding match.

### CREATION OF A BI-NATIONAL MISSISQUOI BAY PHOSPHORUS REDUCTION TASK FORCE – (ERIC HOWE & PIERRE LEDUC)

10:40 AM

Eric Howe reviewed a high-level outlined structure for the proposed Bi-National Missisquoi Bay Phosphorus Reduction Task Force that was last discussed at the May Executive Committee meeting. The task force is proposed to be a subcommittee of the Steering Committee that meets on a regular basis, coordinated by LCBP staff and chaired by QC MELCC and VTANR, whose primary function is to develop and implement a bi-national action plan to meet mutually agreed upon phosphorus load reduction targets and publish an annual bi-lingual progress report to the Steering Committee and public. Eric requested general feedback on the proposal which, if supported, could be further refined with a proposed operating structure and membership list by the December Steering Committee meeting.

- VTANR confirmed that the task force would be charged with integrating the MOU between VT and QC into their goals and that a task force role would be to report out and help people understand the differences in reporting and monitoring work between the two jurisdictions.
- The Steering Committee discussed what, if any, role the IJC would play in the task force and while it was thought that there would not be any additional funds for the IJC to be involved, Tom Berry agreed to connect with the State Department to see if there were funds left from past studies.
- The Steering Committee discussed how the recommendations from the task force might be incorporated into future LCBP budgets via Opportunities for Action.
- The Steering Committee discussed LCBP staff capacity to support the task force. Eric explained that Mae Kate Campbell's time with the IJC study will be wrapping up and that Katie Darr is still able to fill out her workplan.
- VTANR requested the creation of mechanisms to be artful and effective in making investments and keeping track of what VT versus LCBP is funding in the Missisquoi Basin.
- VTANR requested that the Chair of the Missisquoi Basin Water Quality Council be a member of the Task Force and that the Missisquoi Clean Water Service Provider manager be able to sit in on the meetings.
- EPA R1 recommended that a person with water quality expertise be added to the task force list.

### APPROVAL OF LCBP MISSION, VISION, VALUES STATEMENTS UPDATED TO REFLECT DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION INITIATIVES – (ERIC HOWE)

10:50 AM

Eric Howe reviewed the drafted LCBP mission, vision, and values statements that were conditionally approved during the May Executive Committee meeting. Last December, LCBP recruited a consultant to work with staff on DEI concepts with a focus on the LCBP mission and vision. LCBP developed a commitment statement and mission, vision, and values statement to be included on our website. Eric asked for formal approval from the Steering Committee as a commitment to LCBP working on DEI issues in the Basin. The intent is to augment the current LCBP mission statement to include DEI values, and the vision statement is drafted to support the mission. The values are working from language developed for the four OFA goals and then is updated to include DEI elements. All of this updated language, including the values, will be incorporated into next OFA.

Steering Committee members expressed support for this work and asked that Justice also be considered in this work as a future amendment to the mission, vision, and values statements.



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### **ACTION ITEM: APPROVAL OF UPDATED LCBP MISSION, VISION AND VALUES STATEMENTS AS AMENDED DURING THE MEETING TO PUBLISH ON THE LCBP WEBSITE AND IN RELATED DOCUMENTS AS APPROPRIATE AND FOR LCBP STAFF TO FOLLOW UP ON INCLUSION OF JUSTICE ASPECT.**

- **Motion By:** Breck Bowden
- **Second by:** Mel Cote
- **Discussion on the motion:** Andrew Milliken supported Mel's idea to follow-up on the inclusion of the justice aspect
- **Vote:** All in favor
- **Abstentions:** None

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION 2022 – (ERIC HOWE)**

**11:15 AM**

Eric Howe re-oriented the Steering Committee members on the 2017 Opportunities for Action document and webpages. The intent is to maintain the Plan structure that was developed for the 2017 plan and update that with information from the June Summit and through follow-up discussions with Advisory Committees. Staff will be working with Advisory Committees through the fall of 2021 to update the Objectives, Strategies and Tasks. This work will be reviewed with the Steering Committee in December. Subsequent steps will be to develop an implementation schedule for the Plan, and metrics to document progress. Staff will work with advisory committees and the Executive Committee in winter 2022, and review the full draft Plan with the Steering Committee for approval in April 2022, with a launch date in June. This schedule will allow for the FY23 budget process to be informed by the new Opportunities for Action.

### **LUNCH BREAK**

**12:15 PM**

### **LCBP FY22 BUDGET PROCESS**

**12:45 PM**

#### **REVIEW OF FY22 BUDGET CALENDAR – (ERIC HOWE)**

LCBP went through a LEAN process to examine the LCBP budget development cycle in FY21, and this new approach added the June summit into the process. Eric reviewed the funding distribution across categories: staff and LCBP office, competitive grants, technical core projects, technical line-item projects, VT TMDL implementation funding, competitive grants, E&O core projects, and CVNHP core projects. Eric reviewed the budget process calendar, which concludes with the April 2021 Steering Committee budget meeting.

#### **EDUCATION & OUTREACH GENERAL RFP – (BUZZ HOERR, COLLEEN HICKEY)**

Colleen Hickey reported that the E&O committee reviewed summit materials, priorities for large grants. E&O committee has only had large grants for several rounds. Suggesting we don't establish a priority for grant categories, but mention themes that came up during discussion, suggest they be part of projects that can be included in RFP. For 2018, 19, and 20, had requests from 700K to 430K total, average request of 30-40K per grant. Major topics included education/STEAM/arts, and overall water quality outreach. Want to keep themes for large grants broad, include themes from the summit as specific focus areas. Want to ensure thoroughly evaluating project outcomes.

High level budget suggestions for 2022 -- 6 coming out of the committee: Interpreting technical information in a way that is easily understood, supporting education programs to communicate messaging about climate resiliency and adaptation, video series highlighting success stories (farmers, watershed groups, citizen advisory groups working to protect and improve water quality), develop targeted outreach and engagement strategies for underserved communities, develop education and outreach programs and toolboxes to help technical professionals better engage with the general public. General suggestions from staff include increasing the cap on size of small grants, outreach stewards, streamwise phase 4, and artistic interpretation about water.

Andrew commented that he appreciates the process, trust it and staff. On climate change, think it's important. Those of us deep in that topic forget we use a lot of technical language, lot of important basic



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info that could be better interpreted for the public. Also important to educate about climate impacts in addition to resilience and adaptation. Potentially also add in idea of mitigation.

Neil added that there was a theme from the summit, echoed in a state line item, having to do with development and partner support. Put a plug in that we keep that focal point alive across our themes, particularly for watersheds where we need additional partners to do work. Investment in interest and then coalescing functional watershed groups. Education in there.

MaryJo recalled that as part of the Summit, there were discussions about taking E&O and getting at targeted audiences that already have an investment in the lake (boating, biking). Colleen responded that this is key to social marketing, identifying target audiences. LCBP works closely with LCSG on marinas. Teachers and students are other key audiences. Think we could do more with angling community. We could start thinking about more target audiences. Need to find right kind of partnership.

Mark noted that with increased funding, could improve invasive species messaging on boat launch decontamination stations for anglers. Great opportunity for communication. Happy to help with regulatory implications.

### **ACTION ITEM: APPROVAL OF THE FY22 EDUCATION & OUTREACH GENERAL RFP PRIORITIES**

- **Motion By:** John Krueger
- **Second by:** Mark Naud
- **Discussion on the motion:** None
- **Vote:** All in favor
- **Abstentions:** None

### **TAC RFPP PRIORITIES – (NEIL KAMMAN, MATT VAUGHAN)**

Matt Vaughan reviewed the Technical RFPP Priorities that were approved by TAC during their September meeting. To create the list of five priorities, the TAC first reviewed the Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems themes from the June Steering Committee summit and discussed which from the list would be most appropriate to include as priorities. TAC discussed and recommended that the FY22 Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems grant category include a large grant category to cover the priority: implementing projects at a larger landscape scale that support, conserve, or restore vulnerable native species and their habitats.

- The Steering Committee requested the LCBP staff refine the language of priority #2 as the phrase 'non-nutrient contaminants' can be limiting and to add in language about researching the financial feasibility of any project proposed.
- The Steering Committee was supportive of creating the large healthy ecosystems grant category in the next fiscal year and agreed to remove the habitat implementation piece from priority #4.
- The Steering Committee agreed that they play a crucial role in proactively thinking about how funding prioritized for habitat restoration projects should be used and requested continued dialogue about how this work should be coordinated within 2022 OFA development and how the work relates to the Biden Administration's 30x30 conservation priorities.
- The Steering Committee agreed, considering increased federal funding levels, to discuss the best role for each member organization and LCBP in terms of their funding priority niche for OFA-related topics including habitat, water quality, climate change, etc.

### **ACTION ITEM: APPROVAL OF THE FY22 TECHNICAL RFPP PRIORITIES AS DISCUSSED**

- **Motion By:** Breck Bowden
- **Second by:** Laura DiPietro
- **Discussion on the motion:** None
- **Vote:** All in favor
- **Abstentions:** None



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### **REQUESTED LINE ITEMS – (NY DEC, VT ANR, LCBP)**

Staff from NYSDEC, VTANR and LCBP reviewed the current list of budget line item requests. Requests are attached to this meeting summary. Committee members asked that the requests be clear as to whether each request would be a one-time ask for support or if it would be a recurring ask. There was substantial discussion around the request for LCBP support for a CWICNY coordinator position. Several members noted that if supported, this would open the door for other watershed groups to ask the same. There also is a bi-state priority for expanding capacity among the watershed groups. If LCBP supports this task, there would need to be clear boundaries to consider future requests, including those that would likely come in for other watershed groups.

Additional comments:

The resilience item for NY mentions bridges; EPA funding may not be the right fit for this work. Restoration yes, but roads and bridges no.

Aquatic Connectivity – not clear how this request would build on work the VT and NY Dam Task Forces are doing/have done already.

### **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATIONS:**

**2:15 PM**

#### **WATER QUALITY TRENDS (MATTHEW VAUGHAN)**

LCBP has supported the Lake Champlain- Long-Term Monitoring Program since 1990. Data from that program and the USGS gauging stations help to answer questions including how water quality has changed over time, and to quantify results of management efforts. For many lake segments, annual P concentrations are at, near, or below EPA limits. For most segments, there are no long-term trends in epilimnion P concentrations. When examined as shallow vs. deep sites, recent data suggests epilimnion P concentrations are decreasing. For tributaries, all 3 that contribute to Otter Creek have seen increases in phosphorus loading since 1991. Trends for other tributaries vary. Changes in total P loading can be attributed to a combination of changes in watershed management and/or trends in streamflow. Where trends exist in Lake Champlain tributaries, watershed management is a more important factor. Overall, P loading in tributaries remains too high to meet water quality goals. Nitrogen is decreasing lake-wide. In-lake chloride concentrations are increasing, which could have an impact on the lake's ecosystem. Chloride loading has increased since 1991 in nearly all Lake Champlain tributaries.

#### **CHAMPLAIN-ADIRONDACK BIOSPHERE NETWORK (CABN) UPDATE (JIM BRANGAN)**

The CABN Steering Committee is meeting monthly. The committee has 12 members with more representation currently from Vermont, so the group is looking to increase members from NY. A youth committee was established last winter and has expanded its role nationally. The LCBP Steering Committee supported funding for coordination for CABN in the FY21 budget; Katie Darr is providing coordination, organization and research for CABN. We had hoped to include a half-day conference focused on CABN and the UNESCO sustainable development goals the day after the postponed Research Conference in January, but the recent postponement has created some questions about timing in May. SUNY ESF and others are developing an online climate change atlas. We have briefed the Vermont and New York CACs on this proposal and will discuss at the Federal Partners November 30 meeting. About this time last year, NPS sent film crew to film biosphere-related programs in the biosphere region. The documentary was released recently and is available online at the [CVNHP webpage](#).

#### **STREAM WISE & OTHER OUTREACH UPDATES - (LAUREN JENNESS, COLLEEN HICKEY)**

Lauren Jenness reported that Phase 1 of the Stream Wise program is wrapping up. This was first conceptualized by Will Eldridge (VT FWD) and Karen Bates (VT DEC) and funded by LCBP in FY2019. The Phase 1 contract was awarded to Fluid State Consulting in partnership with Greenleaf Designs and The Image Farm. Program outcomes for Phase 1 include the establishment of a program





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foundation/resource library, development of a program outline, and development of program branding and communications plan. Next steps will be the creation of a Stream Wise website, a Stream Wise data collection app for the desktop and field visit assessment forms. Phase 2 is a 2-year campaign (LCBP funded in FY20) and will be launching in the next few months. Phase 3 is targeted for the 2023 field season for up to 100 Stream Wise assessments completed with \$20,000 to provide cost share incentives for landowners to implement BMPs (LCBP funded in FY21).

Colleen followed Lauren with additional E&O Program updates:

- NY Educator Summit - October 20 at Fort Ticonderoga to get NGOs and teachers together. Every school in 5 NY counties has received an invite. If for some reason the event cannot be held in October, a May date is reserved.
- Resource Room at EHCO Leahy Center saw 6,817 people in June-Aug 2021. LCBP staff have been developing new exhibits throughout the summer.
- Jim and Elizabeth have been developing interpretive panels around the basin. Mohawk Nation helped to put together one about the beginning of earth. Elizabeth is working on exhibits for the former Airforce Base in Plattsburgh, Miner Institute, and Plattsburgh Library. St Albans Bay Park also will have new exhibits.
- Ryan has updated the [Get Involved videos](#) informing people about how they can get involved or do things on their own properties. Videos will be uploaded to the LCBP YouTube site. The Healthy Soils group has also been working on [PSAs](#). Cost was about \$600 to run on YouTube and the short video now has over 60,000 views.
- Public Survey - UVM and Sea Grant are working on this project, funded in FY19. Good response to survey in VT and QC but not so much in NY. UVM is issuing a second round to their survey contacts in NY. Survey is about outreach, stewardship etc.
- Boat Launch Stewards have also met and talked with close to 20,000 lake users this summer.

### UPDATES FROM LCBP AND STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

3:15 PM

Eric Howe directed Steering Committee members toward the LCBP written updates and notes that the French translation of the 2021 State of the Lake Report should be complete within the next couple of weeks. The next Steering Committee meeting is December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

**Brian Steinmuller (NYS Dept. Ag & Markets):** The recent round of agricultural nonpoint source and abatement grants closed last month and we are currently reviewing the 101 proposals that were submitted that contained over \$30M in request with \$13M to spend. Areas like Lake Champlain have been prioritized and will receive a significant amount of grant funds. Our department has a MOU with NYSDEC to work with conservation districts across the state and a recent project that has been initiated in the Lake Champlain Basin calls for an assessment of forest parcels and rural roads for the identification of water quality projects. The Inventory will include the identification of hot spots and will prioritize areas for implementation with an associated report. The Department is currently working on the contract with CWICNY and Franklin County SWCD will hold the contract and coordinate the work. Progress can be reported to the Steering Committee if requested.

**Pierre Leduc (Chair, Quebec CAC):** There is a National Election on Monday that may have a local impact as an opposition member may be voted in. At the National level no big changes are expected.

**MaryJo Feuerbach (EPA R1):** Provided written updates but want to mention that Eric Perkins will be retiring at the end of October. He has been an indispensable member of the EPA and one of the founding members of LCBP. Many people have relied on Eric for countless pieces of information and advice and he served on the TAC for quite some time. He will be greatly missed by all at the EPA and at LCBP. Because of Covid restrictions there will unlikely to be an official party, but something about celebrating his retirement will be circulated. With Eric leaving, Bryan Dore will be taking some additional responsibilities including leading the EPA Nonpoint Source Program, coordinating Clean Water Act Section 319 Funding to VTDEC, and tracking the Lake Champlain TMDL implementation.

### ADJOURN

3:18 PM