

New York Citizens Advisory Committee (NYCAC) on Lake Champlain's Future

**Monday September 27th, 2021
1:00 pm – 3:30 pm**

DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Committee Members Present: Vic Putman (Chair), Jackie Bowen, James Dawson, Steve Kramer, Ricky Laurin, Walt Lender, Tom Metz, Hannah Neilly, Charlotte Staats, Bill Wellman, Fred Woodward

Committee Members Absent: Jane Gregware

LCBP Staff: Katie Darr, Lauren Jenness, Eric Howe, Erin Vennie-Vollrath

Presenters: Jim Brangan, Colleen Hickey, Meg Modley, Matthew Vaughan

Public Guests: Kristin Ballou, Allison Gaddy, Mark Naud

Meeting summary by Katie Darr, Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP)

1:00 – 1:20 pm

- 1. Welcome and Introductions** – Vic Putman
- 2. Public Comments**

No public comments were made.

- 3. Membership Update** – Erin Vennie-Vollrath

All who applied should be receiving appointment letters from NYSDEC in the mail. Please let Erin and Katie know if you have not yet received your letter.

1:20 - 2:20 pm

- 4. Review of the 2021 State of the Lake Report** – LCBP Staff

Matthew Vaughan, Meg Modley, Jim Brangan, and Colleen Hickey provided an overview of the clean water, healthy ecosystems, thriving communities, and informed and involved public sections of the [2021 State of the Lake and Ecosystem Indicators Report](#). Please complete [this form](#) if you would like a hard copy of the report.

Clean Water Questions

- Vic Putman asked what factors contribute to years with Phosphorus levels below the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) limits. Matthew noted that the amount of water moving downstream is the biggest factor driving annual variability. It is impacted by the amount and timing of precipitation, how long it soaks into the ground or whether it runs off.
- Jim Dawson asked to what extent Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) contribute to high Phosphorus during rainfall events. Matt shared that CSOs contribute a very small portion of the

Phosphorus load to Lake Champlain (~0.04%). The primary issue CSOs cause is related to bacteria and its impacts on public health and recreation.

Healthy Ecosystems Questions

- Jim Dawson asked whether we look at other lakes in the watershed to see if nonnative species that are not present in Lake Champlain occur in local lakes. Meg confirmed that partners patrol local lakes, conducting surveys of aquatic plants to identify any non-native or invasive species.
- Bill Wellman asked about the status of the US Army Corps of Engineers' anti-invasive species work on the Champlain Canal. Meg shared that the feasibility study is concluding in the next few months. The study is looking at three different alternatives to address aquatic invasive species transfer between the Lake Champlain and Hudson River drainage areas including a physical berm just north of the Glens Fall feeder to permanently separate the watersheds which would maintain recreational use but not commercial traffic and modifications at lock 9 that would still allow for the opening canal for commercial traffic and maintenance vehicles. The feasibility study should be completed by the end of the year. A full environmental impact assessment and additional data for the preferred alternative must be gathered before the preferred alternative can be implemented.
 - Vic mentioned the Reimagine the Canals Initiative, a \$300 million program to revitalize communities along the canal system with a focus on tourism and recreation. Bill added the canal system is currently being maintained as a recreational feature for boaters and it may be time to examine a recreational fee structure to maintain the canal system's infrastructure.
 - Meg has leads she can connect the CAC to for the Reimagine Canals Initiative and will be in touch about a presentation upon completion of the canal study.

Thriving Communities Questions

- Jim Dawson asked why park attendance seemed to be trending down in Vermont and up in New York. Jim clarified that Vermont State Parks were at 50% capacity due to Covid-19 while New York State Parks were at 75% capacity.

2:20 – 2:35 pm

5. Grant Opportunities – LCBP Staff

Jim Brangan provided an overview of the [CVNHP request for preproposals](#) due on October 4th for projects that support the 2023 interpretive theme, the Corridor of Commerce, and encourage multi-jurisdictional, or regional projects that interpret, highlight, and support the observation of the interconnected waterways of the CVNHP or the bicentennial of the 1823 opening of the Champlain Canal.

- Jim Dawson suggested a cultural guidebook from the Peebles Island to Sorel in both English and French.

Matthew Vaughan introduced the [Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems grants](#).

- Hannah Neilly asked if these grants can be used for dam removal planning. Matthew confirmed that the Steering Committee has expressed interest in providing support for elements of dam and barrier removal that are typically harder to find funding for.

Colleen Hickey shared that the RFP for education and outreach grants will be released on October 22nd and will be due in December. The Education and Outreach Committee welcomes CAC member participation on the grant review committee.

2:35 – 3:00 pm

6. Advisory Committee Coordination – Katie Darr

Katie presented an overview of a proposed Youth Advisory Committee for the Lake Champlain Basin Program. The presentation is included with the meeting materials. The Committee was generally supportive of pursuing the development of a Youth Advisory Committee.

- Tom Metz suggested tapping into the volunteer service community program out of Plattsburgh State, Scouts, 4H, honors programs at high schools and community college, junior achievement programs, and BOCES.
- Jackie Bowen asked about the potential term length for youth engagement. She also suggested connecting with the organizations' internship programs.
- Colleen Hickey added it is important to include those not going to college as well, many are anglers, hunters, recreationists.

Katie provided an update on the joint CAC meeting planning. She is working with the Chairs to plan a joint meeting. Areas of shared interest include climate change and septic issues. The virtual meeting is likely to be scheduled for November 8th from 5:00 - 7:00 pm.

3:00 – 3:30 pm

7. NYCAC Discussion “Where Do We Go from Here?” – Vic Putman, Katie Darr, and Erin Vennie-Vollrath

Vic asked Erin for an update on the Resilient NY Program also wondering, changing tracks, resilient NY program with SLR. Erin shared that NYSDEC has contracted with SLR to conduct flood studies and develop flood and ice-jam hazard mitigation alternatives that help guide the implementation of mitigation projects. The rivers that are currently in the works for the Lake Champlain Basin are Little Chazy, Chazy, Ausable, Boquet, Mettawee and Indian Rivers. She has not heard a recent update, but it could be a good topic for a future presentation.

- Background on the program can be found here - <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/121102.html>.
- For more information and some specific discussions on the Chazy and Little Chazy studies, a recording and presentation slides can be accessed through this link - <https://mminc.sharefile.com/d-s6eae45ca1ecf4eb393ad36ee302a5072>.

Bill Wellman provided an update on the mitigation funds for the [Champlain Hudson Power Express](#). The Champlain Hudson Power Express is a consortium proposing a power project that will take hydropower from Quebec and deliver it to New York City. Two dielectrically insulated cables will transport the power. The company has been quite aware of environmental challenges. The Champlain-Hudson Governance Committee is composed of lawyers, representatives from the power company, the Adirondack Park Agency, NYSDEC, the New York State Council of Trout Unlimited, and others. The Committee will be

distributing over \$100 million in mitigation funds that will benefit the length of the power corridor. The Committee is heavily weighted toward the Hudson and NYC and Bill is trying to maintain focus on Lake Champlain. There are currently two advisory committees being formed. There is \$115 million intended for projects not funded by NYSDEC.

- Tom Metz expressed concern about recreational use around the cables and the potential for injury or death. Bill said that these cables do not pose an underwater shock hazard. In regards to the impact of the electrical field on fish, studies indicate when a cable is buried the radiation of the electrical field has no effect on macroinvertebrates or fish.
- Jackie Bowen asked if this will be going through forest preserve land or if it will be on the Vermont side of the lake. Bill clarified that the project is completely within NY State waters.

Tom Metz shared that proposition #2 on the NYS ballot is the Environmental Rights Amendment which would alter the New York Bill of Rights to guarantee the right to “clean air and water, and a healthful environment.”

Vic Putman noted that the LCBP is potentially looking at a significant increase in funds over the next 5 years as a result of the Infrastructure Bill and the President’s budget. At the Steering Committee meeting, Eric commented that the LCBP is trying not to add staff with these funds, but to continue to contract with non-profits and other partners. At the meeting, Erin requested \$150,000 for a CWICNY Coordinator position. As a founding member of CWICNY, Vic will have to recuse himself from that item, but he believes it is worthwhile for the NYCAC to review the proposal and provide feedback. This discussion will continue at the October meeting.

The next NYCAC meeting is scheduled for **Monday, October 25th from 1:00 - 3:30 pm** via Microsoft Teams. When possible, the NYCAC would like to hold hybrid meetings.