



LAKE CHAMPLAIN STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

DECEMBER 14, 2021, 9:45AM - 3:30PM

(VIA WEBINAR/TELECONFERENCE)

ATTENDANCE:

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Julie Moore (Meeting Chair, VTANR), Joe Zalewski (NYS DEC), Nathalie Provost (Quebec MELCC), 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), Justin Tuthill (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, Elizabeth Lee, Ryan Mitchell, Meg Modley Gilbertson, Matthew Vaughan, Lauren Jenness, Mae Kate Campbell, Katie Darr, Heather Radcliffe and Richard Friesner (NEIWPCC), Lauren Townley and Julie Berlinski (NYS DEC), Erin Vennie-Vollrath (LCBP NYSDEC), Pete LaFlamme (VTANR), Sarah Coleman (LCBP VT ANR), MaryJo Feuerbach and Bryan Dore (EPA R1), Maya Dehner and Diana Kohtio Bazzini (USACE), Liv Herdman (USGS)

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

Julie Moore and Pete LaFlamme (VTANR) Chaired this meeting.

MEETING BEGINS

10:00 AM

INTRODUCTIONS

Pete LaFlamme welcomed everyone to the meeting and led a round of introductions.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

ACTION ITEM: APPROVE MEETING SUMMARY FROM SEPTEMBER 22, 2021 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

- **Motion By:** Buzz Hoerr
- **Second by:** Andrew Milliken
- **Discussion on the motion:** Pierre Leduc provided an update on the election results referenced during the meeting summary.
- **Vote:** All in favor
- **Abstentions:** none

PUBLIC COMMENT

10:20 AM

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

CONGRESSIONAL UPDATES

10:25 AM

- **Tom Berry (Sen. Leahy's office):** Senator Leahy has announced that he will not seek another term. He will serve through the end of 2022 and will remain Chair of the Appropriations Committee for that time. Regarding federal appropriations for fiscal year 2022, Congress extended the continuing resolution through mid-February. It is likely that appropriations bills will be adopted in February. The continuing resolution includes the reauthorization of the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership. Congressionally directed spending requests for fiscal year 2022 have been posted, and the opportunity to request directed spending for fiscal year 2023 will be announced shortly. The Infrastructure Bill has passed and includes \$40 million for the Lake Champlain program, to be distributed over five years. The Build Back Better Bill is still under negotiation. A new rule was published by the United States Department of Agriculture that will make the Conservation Resource Enhancement Program more applicable to Vermont, and support significant water quality work on Vermont farms. The Lake Champlain Program is funded at \$20 million in the President's budget.

ENGAGING YOUTH WITHIN THE LCBP FRAMEWORK (KATIE DARR)

10:35 AM

Katie led the discussion around an approach to integrate youth voices into LCBP processes and committees via a [PowerPoint presentation](#). Pete LaFlamme asked if there were other suggestions regarding the creation of this



group. Andrew Milliken thought it was an excellent idea and an important mission for the LCBP. One piece might be interesting to explore is internships. Federal programs allow some to work part time during the school year and full-time during summer which can lead to federal employment. Justin Tuthill stated NRCS has a program as well - Pathways Program. Breck Bowden was glad for the mention of Lake Champlain Sea Grant and Sea Grant would like to do this work as well and excited to work on it with you. Like the long-term vision for watershed councils. Mel Cote said you only need to look at the gallery to see the need to integrate younger advocates. Growing emphasis on inclusion. Tom Berry agreed that we need to build on what Breck said as we go forward to work with partner organizations like Sea Grant, ECHO, VYCC, etc. and other organizations who have this as their core mission with key contacts to be efficient and no duplications. Neil Kamman said maybe LCBP could set up something up with VYCC that would allow access to an internship which could then be attached to local implementation projects. It's important to make sure staff time is carved out as it will require some staff time to support this group. Sarah Coleman said she would be happy to share some of the outreach VTDEC is doing with schools for the Green Schools Initiative in partnership with Lake Champlain Sea Grant and discuss if there is an opportunity to give a plug for the youth initiative as it moves forward.

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT SURVEY PRELIMINARY RESULTS (RYAN MITCHELL)

10:45 PM

Ryan provided an overview of the preliminary results from the survey that the team at the University of Vermont has been working on via PowerPoint presentation, specifically highlights that may inform LCBP work moving forward, including how people prefer to get information about protecting or improving water quality. The project team is working to conduct additional analyses and applications by demographics, geographic analyses, indices, State of the Lake Report indicators, etc. The plan is to repeat the survey every few years to get a sense of how much progress we are making. Ryan hopes to have a final version of the report by the end of January.

- The Executive Committee thanked Ryan for the presentation and agreed the statistics were interesting.
- Pierre Leduc commented that he was struck by how people seem to know what to do themselves to improve water quality but very few people know what is being done by other people (10-15% strongly know what is being done). This could help direct outreach efforts. Ryan agreed that it is consistent with what is heard anecdotally and through the June Summit process – we can do more to communicate project results and research to publicize the work being done.
- Ryan commented that it is interesting that Quebec has a higher level of engagement and involvement in water quality issues compared to survey respondents in the US. Pierre said that Quebec often polls differently, and he is proud of it. He asked if it's possible within the analysis to get a sense of where the respondents came from within Quebec. Ryan said the results were geolocated by town.

CHAMPLAIN CANAL AIS BARRIER UPDATE (LCBP, USACE)

11:00 AM

Meg Modley provided an overview of the issue of aquatic invasive species transfer posed by the Champlain Canal. She outlined the recent threat of the round goby, a small invasive fish that could compete with key fish species in Lake Champlain and has the potential to spread viruses if introduced. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) has been tracking the expansion of the round goby in the Hudson and Mohawk rivers. The LCBP Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force is evaluating the situation and will review a proposal from the USGS and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to expand monitoring for round goby into the southern end of the Champlain Canal, and potential stopgap measures to prevent spread while a permanent barrier is under consideration.

Diana Bassini introduced the feasibility study for an aquatic invasive species barrier that the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is conducting. The study intends to develop a design plan, identify an implementation location, and analyze the costs and benefits of potential aquatic invasive species barriers for the Champlain Canal. Six potential alternatives for an implementable barrier were identified, then narrowed based on feasibility criteria to three promising alternatives. Alternative 2 features a berm structure, along with a small boat access ramp, large boat lift, a boat washing station, and a barge loading facility. Alternative 4 keeps the lock fully functional, and includes repairing the lock seals, adding wedge wire intake screens, and installing a boat lift and cleaning station. Alternative 4 and 5 carry under the assumption that the locks are only open at low-risk times. Alternative 5 features a larger boat lift and barge loading facility. Alternatives 2 and 4 were determined to be cost-effective, and alternative 2 was determined to have a greater ecological benefit than alternative 4. The barrier feasibility study is now entering phase 2, which will result in a design for the preferred alternative.

- Steering Committee members asked several clarifying questions about the cost-benefit analysis and ultimate projected costs of the different alternatives. Steering Committee members emphasized the



importance of targeting total prevention of aquatic invasive species when considering the benefits and ultimately selecting any alternative. The need to consider the timeframe for implementation and having a plan in place to address aquatic invasive species threats until a permanent solution is implemented was noted.

Meg Modley reviewed the project summary and proposal for phase 2 of the canal barrier feasibility study. She noted that the stakeholder group strongly supports alternative 2, and that the Steering Committee will need to discuss if all three promising alternatives should be considered in phase 2, which would increase the review time, or if the phase 2 analysis should be limited to alternative 2 only. Phase 2 will include data acquisition around the drainage area of the Champlain Canal to determine how much water is needed to maintain Canal operations, and an analysis of real estate, right of ways, and easements. Meg outlined that phase 2 will be funded with section 542 funds, with LCBP/NEIWPCC serving as the local sponsor. Local matching funds will need to be identified to support this project.

- Steering Committee members requested more information on the amount of match required and the possible sources of matching funds. It was clarified that approximately \$1-1.4 million in matching funds will be required, and an additional \$2-2.6 million will be provided by USACE. Eric Howe noted that LCBP will likely work with Senator Leahy's office to request Great Lakes Fisheries Commission funding to support this project.
- Meg Modley stated that if the Steering Committee approves moving forward with the general plan for phase 2, LCBP will work with USACE to develop a more detailed scope of work for the project. Once the scope of work is more clearly defined, further discussion on matching funds could be held. A few Steering Committee members expressed concern about constraining local match requirements and potential sources, but agreed that moving forward with developing a more detailed scope of work then revisiting the discussion was the best next step.

ACTION ITEM: TO AUTHORIZE THE USACE TO DEVELOP THE PROJECT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT FOR PHASE 2 OF THE CHAMPLAIN CANAL AIS BARRIER STUDY WITHIN THE NEXT 8-12 WEEKS.

- **Motion By:** Joe Zalewski
- **Second by:** John Krueger
- **Discussion on the motion:** none
- **Vote:** All in favor
- **Abstentions:** Maya Dehner (USACE)

**QUÉBEC RESPONSE TO 2011 FLOODING IN THE MRC HAUTE-RICHELIEU
(NATHALIE PROVOST, QC MELCC)**

12:00 PM

Nathalie provided an overview. There will be an impact on R river. In 2-11 was a major flood in r river and that summer q govt created a intervention zone. By end of summer and end of 2012 the fluctuation who were in the zone were not able to complete new construction but felt it was unfair because policy regarding lake shore, floodplain, were permitted. They were not able to do that because of special intervention. 2017 and 2019 two major floods After that Quebec govt created a major intervention zone. After they decided to create that they also had plan to create new law regarding strategy to prevent flooding. Very expensive to react to those situations. By end of 2021 or beginning 2022 there will be a transitional regulation. Objective is to have better consistency of standards being more rigorous in those zones. Won't have those zones will all be under new regulation. Going step by step in order to have a permanent regulation on how to manage the lake shores, river zones, floodplains. Have mapping project and will be together in April will present manager of project officers for that project. There will be a new development act and will creating a new transitional regulation that will be enforced in a few weeks. Will protect existing structures along with new structures. Transitional regulation will replace 2011 and 2019 policies. Are correcting the regulation. No required integration of town planning bylaws. Adoption planned for fall 2021 and into effect in early 2022. Regulations respect the regulatory scheme applying to activities based on their environmental impact. Do not think there will be a major impact on Lake Champlain basin. These project officers main goal is to prevent flooding but aware with climate change may have problem with capacity for intake of water. Also must think about that with IJC report regarding the flood. Other meeting had this morning was presentation of IJC report to many departments of Q govt.

LUNCH BREAK

12:15 PM

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION 2022: OFA PROGRESS UPDATE (LCBP STAFF)
PLAN DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE (ERIC HOWE)

1:00 PM

Eric reviewed the schedule for revising *Opportunities for Action*. He noted that staff are currently working internally and with the support of LCBP advisory committees to review the goals, objectives, strategies, and tasks in the current plan, and have incorporated updates and feedback from the Steering Committee Summit that will be reviewed with the Steering Committee today. After this step, staff will incorporate feedback from the Steering Committee, begin to build an implementation schedule, and develop reporting metrics.

INFORMED & INVOLVED PUBLIC (COLLEEN HICKEY, RYAN MITCHELL)

Ryan reviewed changes to the Informed and Involved Public goal task table, reflecting input from the Steering Committee Summit. New content includes support for community capacity building, more explicit integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion principles (including developing targeted outreach and engagement strategies to reach underserved communities), convening a youth advisory committee, and expanding climate change education opportunities.

- Neil voiced support for continuing the Artist in Residence program.
- MaryJo asked if there was a specific approach that will be taken for messaging around climate and climate change adaptation. Ryan replied that it would involve communicating the results of research and implementation projects and efforts towards adaptation in communities.

THRIVING COMMUNITIES (JIM BRANGAN)

Jim reviewed the Thriving Communities section where input was taken from the June Steering Committee Summit and reviewed by the HAPAC. New additions from 2017 OFA currently include: a task centered around resource managers gaining public feedback, tasks centered around climate mitigation, additions about technical training, outreach on technical issues, benefits of educating people about clean water, diversity equity and inclusion, and ethnography.

- Neil requested that the term “stream equilibrium” be used instead of “streambank stabilization”. The Executive Committee discussed the term.
- Pierre recommended that, if possible, the results of the Public Awareness and Engagement Survey be incorporated into OFA before finalizing.

HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS (MEG MODLEY GILBERTSON, LAUREN JENNESS)

Meg reviewed how the priorities identified during the Steering Committee summit have been incorporated into the Healthy Ecosystems section. She noted that two new high-level objectives are proposed: climate change and evaluating ecosystem programs and policies.

CLEAN WATER (MATT VAUGHAN, MAE KATE CAMPBELL)

Matt reviewed the Clean Water section where input was taken from the June Steering Committee Summit and reviewed by the TAC. Highlighted changes include that the strategies were broken into research versus implementation and a climate change objective was added.

- The Steering Committee discussed the balance of the strategies and tasks – they don’t want OFA to seem like a shopping list but also any funding from Section 120 must be consistent with OFA and the TMDL implementation plan. EPA R1 said it’s important for the Steering Committee to look at and include anything in the TMDL that should be included in OFA. Eric Howe said that staff will make sure that the implementation of the TMDL be incorporated into the text that goes above each goal table within the final OFA document.
- Eric Howe describe how staff are also working on creating an implementation schedule that will be more focused and drive LCBP’s annual budget process. This implementation schedule will be an appendix to OFA so the Steering Committee can update as needed.
- EPA R2 asked about the incorporation of metrics that can show readers of OFA what actions are being done to meet the goals and objectives. Eric Howe answered that staff are working on developing metrics, but they are still in draft. They will be reviewed by the Executive Committee once they are ready.

NEXT STEPS PRIORITIZING STRATEGIES, METRIC DEVELOPMENT (ERIC HOWE)

Eric concluded the LCBP staff progress update on OFA by summarizing next steps including the creation of an implementation schedule which would identify a suite of topic areas that LCBP would focus on in each fiscal cycle that stretches across the four goals, ex “Public Access”, and the creation of metrics.



LCBP FY22 BUDGET PROCESS

2:15 PM

FY22 ANTICIPATED APPROPRIATIONS REVIEW, PROCESS SCHEDULE (ERIC HOWE)

Eric said that the LCBP budget could be between \$24M and \$30M and we still have \$3M in unallocated funding available. The staff have promising ideas about spending infrastructure funding, and we will talk about this at the January Executive Committee Meeting. Tom Berry mentioned that the FY22 new budget line could provide \$275K for long-term monitoring. Will know in February.

CORE PROJECTS (TECHNICAL)

Matt, Meg, and Erin Vennie-Vollrath provided a brief overview of the LCBP core projects, including aquatic invasive species rapid response, the boat launch steward program, the Lake Champlain long-term monitoring program, water chestnut management, the New York agronomy program, and volunteer coordination for the Lake Champlain cyanobacteria monitoring program.

REQUESTED TECHNICAL, CVNHP, E&O LINE ITEMS (NY DEC, VT ANR, LCBP, OTHERS)

Sarah Coleman, Erin Vennie-Vollrath and Julie Berlinski reviewed drafted line-item requests from the States.

- Tom Berry noted that the Infrastructure Bill from Congress has funding for aquatic organism barrier removal both through USFWS funding and US ACE funding. It will be important to think about leveraging funding instead of displacing funding. Neil Kamman echoed the sentiment.
- MaryJo Feuerbach asked about the difference between the work proposed in the line-item request versus work already being done by the NY Agronomist position. Lauren Townley responded that there are differences in what the funding would be going toward (cover cropping versus other soil health practices) and that the NY Agronomist would be administering the grant funding, if approved, to ensure efficiency and that efforts aren't being duplicated.

Lauren Jenness reviewed the Technical and E&O Line items submitted by LCBP.

- Breck Bowden encouraged the Steering Committee to consider supporting the Environmental Sensitivity Index Mapping Project in its entirety to gain efficiencies and momentum. Neil Kamman and Peter LaFlamme voiced their support.
- Breck Bowden endorsed the Economic Valuation Study in the strongest terms. John Krueger and Andrew Milliken voiced their support.

Jim Brangan reviewed the CVNHP line-item request.

- John Krueger said it would make an enormous difference if the bike route from NYC to Montreal was installed by 2025 for celebrating the Anniversary of the American Revolution via this multi-modal route.

CORE PROJECTS (EDUCATION AND OUTREACH)

Colleen Hickey and Sarah Coleman reviewed tasks A-J within the E&O Core Projects which total \$681,500 in requests. Neil Kamman suggested raising the Interpreting Water with Art task to \$75,000 and Mark Naud agreed. Mark then asked if \$20,000 is enough for the BIPOC outreach task as it's clearly a priority for everyone in the Basin. Meg Modley said that LCBP's BIPOC outreach work is done in collaboration with Lake Champlain Sea Grant and if others agree more funding would be good.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

3:00 PM

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP APPOINTMENT & REVIEW OF TECHNICAL PRE-PROPOSALS

ACTION ITEM: TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

- **Motion By:** Neil Kamman
- **Second by:** Buzz Hoerr
- **Discussion on the motion:** none
- **Vote:** All in favor
- **Abstentions:** Pierre Leduc and Breck Bowden excused themselves from Executive Session.

EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION.

ACTION ITEM: TO APPOINT PETER ISLES TO THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- **Motion By:** Buzz Hoerr
- **Second by:** John Krueger
- **Discussion on the motion:** none
- **Vote:** All in favor



- **Abstentions:** Breck Bowden, Pierre Leduc and Steve Garceau were not in Executive Session and abstained from this vote.

CREATION OF A BI-NATIONAL MISSISQUOI BAY PHOSPHORUS REDUCTION TASK FORCE (ERIC HOWE, JULIE MOORE, NATHALIE PROVOST) 3:15 PM

Eric led the Steering Committee in a discussion to create this Task Force as a standing Lake Champlain Steering Committee Subcommittee. They reviewed the scope of work document that was presented to the Steering Committee during their September meeting and Eric requested a vote for approval.

ACTION ITEM: APPROVAL FOR CREATION OF BI-NATIONAL MISSISQUOI BAY PHOSPHORUS REDUCTION TASK FORCE.

- **Motion By:** Buzz Hoerr
- **Second by:** Neil Kamman
- **Discussion on the motion:** Andrew Milliken noted that USFWS is a large stakeholder and landowner for the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge and if there is a role USFWS can serve on the task force they would be happy to. Nathalie replied that the small task force will first have to define what their objectives are and create a system that will work for two countries before bringing in more partners, but that they plan to do so. Neil Kamman noted that it will be no trivial matter to assemble a multi-jurisdictional funding report on an annual basis and recommended that the task force start small in that effort. Julie Moore echoed Neil's comment in the lens of challenges in communicating to the public.
- **Vote:** all in favor
- **Abstentions:** none

ADJOURN

3:30 PM
