

Vermont Citizens Advisory Committee on Lake Champlain's Future

2022 Lake Champlain Action Plan A thriving Lake Champlain Basin ecosystem matters

Vermont has a once-in-a-statehood opportunity to make critical strategic investments to restore Lake Champlain, increase resilience within its watershed, and assure that its communities will thrive.

Concerns about climate change impacts and increasing petrochemical pollution must be addressed to support our communities with healthy lands and waters. Almost 250,000 residents rely on Lake Champlain for safe drinking water. Visitors and residents support the State's \$2.5B recreation economy by taking part in the many recreation opportunities afforded by a clean lake.

Vermont's Climate Action Plan reminds us to

DO NO HARM to PEOPLE,
COMMUNITIES, and THE LAND

Invest in Natural and Developed Infrastructure

Federal economic recovery funds must be invested to build community and ecological resilience to climate change impacts.

Surface runoff from developed lands and roads contributes approximately 1/3 of pollution loads within the Lake Champlain Basin. Our built environment requires State investment in workforce capacity to coordinate, design, and build stormwater pollution controls as municipalities, institutions, and private landowners comply with new State regulations and implement new stormwater treatment practices. The Vermont Climate Action Plan emphasizes the need to invest in agricultural and working lands management practices that improve resilience and are important for clean water. The State must expand nature-based solutions that promote healthy, connected river corridors, floodplains, and wetlands. Practices and investments that help Vermont communities prepare for climate impacts and that support adaptive, resilient, and compact settlement must be prioritized.

Invest in Public Access and Recreation Economy

The State must increase and improve public access with priority for non-motorized recreation on Lake Champlain, particularly in southern Vermont, and on rivers and ponds throughout the Lake Champlain Basin.

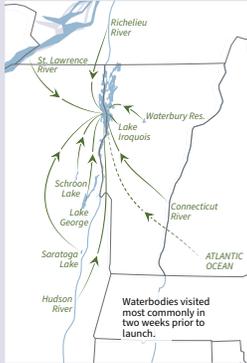
The pandemic has demonstrated how important our lands and waters are to healthy communities and how they support our economy with hundreds of millions of recreation and tourism dollars. Vermont should allocate ARPA funds and other resources to expand shoreline and water access for all Vermonters to foster greater experiences with and stewardship of the State's natural resources. Outdoor recreation business development can further strengthen public access opportunities and the recreation economy.



Lake Champlain Action Plan 2022

Invest in Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention

The State must increase grant resources and dedicated staffing for aquatic invasive species prevention and control programs, including mandatory boat and trailer inspections and decontamination at high-use public launch facilities.



DATA SOURCE: ICBP and AWI Boat Launch Steward Programs

Waterbodies with aquatic invasive species visited prior to launch into Lake Champlain. [ICBP 2021 State of the Lake Report \(Figure 18\)](#)

Public launch facilities saw more than a 50 percent increase in utilization over the last two seasons; every boat launch facility is a potential port of entry for invasive species. Many would-be invasives, if established here, would compromise aquatic ecosystem integrity and cause tens of millions of dollars in damage to recreation, water quality, infrastructure, and property values. Across the country, mandatory boat inspections and decontamination are considered best practices to prevent the spread of invasive species.

Consolidate Water Quality Enforcement

Enforcement of clean water rules by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFM) has suffered from inadequate staffing, communication, and poor coordination with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). This has led to inconsistent enforcement and confusion within the regulated community. The leadership of both agencies must commit to making the administrative changes necessary to correct this situation, if not the Legislature must intervene.

The current model places the primary responsibility for determining when and what enforcement actions are needed under VAAFM, which maintains long-standing relationships with farmers and has a high degree of industry knowledge. DEC has expertise in environmental enforcement, but the shared responsibility between DEC and VAAFM has suffered from a lack of clarity and consistency that must be resolved, if necessary, at the highest agency levels, to ensure effective and consistent agricultural water quality enforcement.

Invest in the Agricultural Transition to Sustainability

The Legislature and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets must support farmers as they transition to alternative models of agriculture and value-added products that are adaptive and resilient to stressors, including climate change and supply chain disruptions.

State leadership is needed to redesign Vermont agriculture to be sustainable—with an emphasis on significant reductions of agricultural nonpoint source water pollution. The traditional commodity agricultural system will always require subsidies. Vermont must accelerate its diversification of value-added agricultural products to protect its farmers, farm economy, and environment. The Legislature must support our farming sector's transition to benefit communities, the economy, and the environment by investing in specialized equipment that allows implementation of best practices, fully funding the support programs offered to the agricultural community, and providing resources to small farms to enable effective implementation of best practices.

Invest in Solutions to Emerging Contaminants Pollution

The State must fund increased screening of pesticides and unregulated contaminants to enable early detection and response to emerging pollutant issues. Toxic substances must be eliminated from our communities and from application near our waterways to prevent polluting the watershed and lake.

Agricultural and industrial chemicals are routinely introduced into production processes without adequate research on their environmental and human health impacts. In the past decade, there has been a tremendous surge in the application of agricultural herbicides in Vermont. PFAS and related toxic contaminants are increasingly prevalent, yet monitoring and data collection of other emerging pollutants are insufficient to characterize the environmental and human health problems they cause. Elimination of toxic substance use is essential to protect health and avoid long-term environmental damage that will be very costly and require protracted mitigation efforts from taxpayers.

<https://www.lcbp.org/about-us/how-we-work/citizen-advisory-committees/vermont-cac/>

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