

**Lake Champlain Basin Program  
Technical Advisory Committee meeting  
Wednesday, March 8, 2023, 10 AM – 3 PM  
Held in-person at the LCBP office  
54 West Shore Rd, Grand Isle, VT 05458**

**Approved TAC meeting summary**

**TAC Members:** Jennifer Callahan, Ryan Cunningham, Laura DiPietro, Bryan Dore, Laurie Earley, Michele Fafette, Curt Gervich, Peter Isles, Neil Kamman, Margaret Murphy, Bridget O'Brien, Oliver Pierson, Jamie Shanley, Lauren Townley, Daniel Tremblay

**LCBP Staff:** Mae Kate Campbell, Eric Howe, Meg Modley, Matthew Vaughan, Sarita Croce, Erin Vennie-Vollrath

**1. Updates, announcements, public comments**

- Oliver: There is lots of lake-related draft legislation in the works currently, including bills related to wake boats and aquatic invasive species (AIS) control (funding and treatment allowability). The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) received a permit application from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for lampricide treatment on the Poultney and Hubbardton rivers and will be seeking input from experts as we have in the past. We continue to work on feasibility preparations for a potential alum treatment in Lake Carmi to try to treat cyanobacteria. This summer will likely be the final summer that we will operate the aeration system. Over the past 3 summers aeration hasn't led to intended outcomes (it may have even made some things worse). We will be reconfiguring the system this summer and also taking on a feasibility study for alum. We are targeting 2024 for alum if we can get permits. States that have linked motorboat reg fees with funding AIS prevention work have received information from the Coast Guard that that practice is not aligned with federal statutes. In VT, we are working to come up with a corrective action plan that will hopefully allow us to come into compliance and link motorboat use with AIS prevention and water access funding streams.
  - Neil: What is the jurisdiction of the federal government for additional fees that states would layer on?
  - Oliver: People must register motorboats but there must not be any fees beyond that apart from registering the boat. ME has threaded the needle on this where a fee is linked but not directly associated with a Protect ME waters fee that is separate enough that it is in compliance. One fee with additional dollars tacked on to the end user that aren't used for motorboat registration is what VT is doing and is not in compliance. There is new leadership at the Coast Guard prompting this enforcement; we've begun a dialog between states and the Coast Guard.
- Jamie: The International Joint Commission (IJC) may be able to fund some of the stream gauges in the Lake Champlain basin that are currently being funded through a combination of state agency and US Geological Survey (USGS) funding. This change is

not imminent, but we are convening a panel to discuss. If it moves forward, it sounds like the funding arrangement could be quasi-permanent.

- Matt: I imagine this funding stream would be limited to gauges that are closer to the border?
- Jamie: Yes, those would be more likely candidates. I am not sure how many gauges could be funded.
- Margaret: The Lake Champlain Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative has recommended another lake trout stocking reduction which will be implemented in 2024. Stocking rates will be down to 50% of their original rates. We are seeing good evidence of wild reproduction.
  - Neil: I read something that suggested the increased incidence in natural lake trout spawning was correlated with the introduction of alewife?
  - Margaret: Lake Trout begin feeding before they absorb that yolk, which may be helping them to survive better.
- Margaret: We are also hosting a State of the Lake Champlain Fisheries meeting on 3/25 at The State University of New York (SUNY) at Plattsburgh. We will be presenting on the salmonid fishery and touching on other species. Press releases will be issued by the end of this week.
- Erin: The New York DEC Lake Champlain draft Watershed Implementation Plan for the Lake Champlain Phosphorus Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) was released for public comment on 2/15; the comment period is open through 3/17. A draft is available on the DEC website. This plan includes updated analysis using new Lake Champlain data that LCBP collected, and information on implementation projects by sector. We just released the last round of water quality improvement (WQIP) grants; the Lake Placid wastewater treatment facility got a good amount of funding for upgrades. This summer, the NY Lake and Implementation Rotating Intensive Basin Studies (RIBS) team will be in the Lake Champlain Basin. They are currently taking recommendations for sites to sample.
- Oliver: One additional update related to the Coventry landfill – leachate from that landfill is trucked to Montpelier, treated there, and discharged, releasing it into the Lake Champlain basin. That practice will be stopping soon. A permit to set-up pre-treatment on site has been appealed. That leaves the question of what to do with the leachate and how to manage Per- and Polyfluorinated Substances (PFAS). This decision has implications for the Lake Champlain Basin if Casella ends up trucking the leachate to Plattsburgh. I will keep the group updated on this evolving situation.
  - Neil: The states have set aside substantial funding for the construction of the pre-treatment facility, that is on hold while the permit is being appealed.
- Bryan: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Equity Strategy that will drive Justice40 work through the LCBP's IJJA funds has been submitted to EPA headquarters for review; we are still waiting for feedback. So far, responses have been positive. I have completed my internal review of the VT Clean Water Performance Report and report cards for TMDL implementation. They look good, I am waiting for final approval. There has been phenomenal work at the state and great progress in the basins I was looking at.

- Laura: VT Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets (AAFM) hired a contractor to study PFAS and microplastics in the waste streams at farms. They are looking at material that is manure related and compost related. The work includes looking at the media itself and after-land application (soils). This work is in the quality assurance project plan (QAPP) development phase. DEC received an EPA pollution prevention (P2) grant to do similar work. As of a week or so ago, Québec is shutting off all sludge imports from the US (short paper fiber, septic). We are working to understand the impacts of that on agriculture in the US. A whole body of new research incoming.
- Eric: LCBP updates. Meg, Jim, and I completed our annual DC visits with staff from the Lake Champlain basin's Congressional delegation. We met with staff from the offices of all 6 Congressional members. This year is the first time we've done these visits without Sen. Leahy in office. We had encouraging conversations; all members were very supportive and excited about continuing to support our work. We also met with representatives from the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, including their newest employee, Tom Berry.
  - Neil: What is Tom's future engagement with LCBP in that capacity?
  - Eric: He is the new GLFC Lake Champlain Coordinator. His role is to work with folks here in the basin to identify priorities for GLFC funding. He is also working with members of Congress to make sure those priorities are reflected in annual appropriations bills. So far, he has been in contact with me as much as he was in his previous role. His role is part-time. I expect he will attend Executive and Steering Committee meetings as they apply.
  - Neil: Does his office oversee specific grants?
  - Eric: Yes, that is his role.
- Eric: Staffing changes: I think we are at the end of our staffing transitions. Cynthia Norman retired a week ago. We have now hired a grant manager, Logan Devaney. He will be serving as the administrative contact for all of our new grants moving forward.
- Meg: LCBP is still actively recruiting stewards for the upcoming boat launch steward field season. Please encourage folks to apply! NY partners at NYDEC will host a workshop for the VT Fish and Wildlife Department (FWD) about siting decontamination stations. We are looking to add another decontamination station to VT this season. We funded a Québec municipality to buy a decontamination station for the launch at Venise-en-Québec. We have updated and printed a new AIS guide. On the round goby front, we are going through the process to extend the contract with USGS for monitoring for the next 2 years. The next round goby task force meeting will be held tomorrow. We will be hosting a tour of Lock C6 of the Champlain Canal. The Canal Corps invited us to come out while they are conducting lock maintenance. We are currently meeting monthly with the Canal Corps, the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), NYDEC, and USFWS for Phase 2 of the Champlain Canal Barrier Feasibility Study.
- Matt: Thank you all for reviewing the technical full proposals. Neil and I will present the outcome of today's discussion to the Executive Committee next week and to the Steering Committee in mid-April.

*Review and approve summary of previous TAC meeting*

Motion: To approve the summary of the February 2023 TAC Meeting

By: Jenn

Second: Margaret

Discussion: Neil added a few small comments online.

Vote: All in favor

## **2. Discuss and disclose any potential conflicts of interest for FY23 research full proposals**

- Matt: Any feedback on the review process, in terms of how the proposals were distributed, instructions for review, guidance for scoring?
- Jamie: I didn't download the proposals and I had an issue with getting timed out of the online platform. I wish the pre-proposal and final-proposal numbers would have the same proposal ID.
  - Matt: I've considered doing it that way, but it would mean some numbers would be missing. That's not a problem if TAC members would prefer.
  - Neil: I think it gets to the idea I've said before about keeping a transparent catalog of what's come through and what's been funded.
- Jamie: I have comments about the climate change provision and priority provision. You can have a really solid proposal that doesn't quite meet a priority and the scoring system can be a heavy penalty. I am wondering if we can scale these categories differently or eliminate priorities.
  - Matt: The Steering Committee really likes having priorities. Weakening them is another approach, but the Steering Committee likes to keep it where it is. That said, the priorities set the scores for discussion, but TAC can move projects around.
  - Jenn: If priorities were more specific, not everyone would get 10. What do we really want? We should make the priorities the specific research we are looking for. Or we can consider making the priority category a range instead of a binary scoring system.
- Laurie: If it's possible to put the letter the applicants received in the same folder as the full proposals, that would be helpful. Keep the materials together as a complete package.
- Neil: In the full proposal, we should ask the applicants to have a quick section about how they addressed the comments received in the feedback letter. There was one proposal that specifically did that, and it was extremely helpful.
  - Lots of TAC members agreed.

### *Conflicts of Interest*

- Matt: There are 2 TAC members who are not present due to their conflicts (UVM and Miner Institute affiliations).

- Jamie: Someone from my agency is involved proposal with #6 but we determined that is not a COI.

3. Executive session to review and rank FY23 research full proposals

Motion: To enter executive session

By: Margaret

Second: Jenn

Abstentions: See above for conflict-of-interest information

Exit Executive Session