

New York Citizens Advisory Committee (NYCAC) on Lake Champlain Management

**Monday, April 24th, 2023
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm**

APPROVED MEETING SUMMARY

Committee Members Present: Walt Lender (Chair), Jackie Bowen, James C. Dawson, Steve Kramer, Ricky Laurin, Tom Metz, Colin Powers, Vic Putnam, Charlotte Staats, Fred Woodward

Committee Members Absent: Jane Gregware

LCBP Staff: Mae Kate Campbell, Katie Darr, Colleen Hickey, Erin Vennie-Vollrath (NYS DEC)

Presenters: Brendan Wiltse (Adirondack Watershed Institute)

Public Guests: Ryan Cunningham, Michele Fafette, Zachary Matson, Alison Marchione, Guy Middleton

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

1. Welcome and Introductions – Walt Lender

Walt welcomed attendees.

2. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

3. Adirondack Watershed Institute (AWI) Lakes Survey Presentation – Brendan Wiltse

Brendan Wiltse provided an overview of the Adirondack Watershed Institute’s Lakes Survey and 2022 Field Season Results; his [presentation](#) is available with the meeting materials. AWI helps develop lake management plans using an adaptive management framework. Action plans tend to be more focused than lake or watershed management plans, focusing on the specific actions a community can take to protect and restore a waterbody. Action plans include a road map to guide communities in the implementation of the plan. Action plans can serve as a middle ground for Lake Associations looking to develop a more comprehensive management plan but who lack the resources to develop a full plan. AWI looked at existing data within the basin to determine which waterbodies might benefit from an action plan and found that 75% of lakes had not had any assessment in the last 20 years. The primary data source in the water body inventory was the Adirondack Lakes Survey, completed in the 1980s. There have been lots of changes in the Adirondacks over the last 20 years and an updated assessment would help determine where to focus action plan development. The goal of the project was to collect data on 50 waterbodies that have not been assessed in the last 20 years. A project advisory committee consisting of representatives from NYSDEC, LCBP, the Adirondack Park Association, and county Soil and Water Conservation District representatives helped select which lakes to target for assessment. Another goal of the project was to recruit volunteers for the Adirondack Lake Assessment Program. 20 lakes were adopted by volunteers in 2022 and several volunteers intend to cover those lakes again in 2023. AWI partnered with the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program to ensure volunteers followed their Lake Protectors Protocol for Aquatic Invasive Species surveys.

AWI is in the early stages of analysis. Most lakes were mesotrophic/oligotrophic, considered circumneutral non-impacted, and had moderate, adequate, or high acid neutralizing capacity. The study also examined the influence of road salt. Most lakes did not have aquatic invasive species. The study team is interested in exploring why harmful algal blooms are occurring on oligotrophic lakes. Several harmful algal blooms occurred in watersheds that have little to no development on them.

Three lakes were selected for Action Plan Development: Lake Roxanne, Lake Colby, and Mirror Lake.

- Walt asked how big the team was that worked on this. Brendan shared there were 6 full-time staff on the lab team, 2 seasonal techs, and volunteers. There were 3-4 primary people who worked in the field. All the lab work was done at Paul Smith's lab which has been certified by the Department of Health, so the data can feed to NYSDEC.
- Vic asked if reservoirs are included and if public access influences the lakes selected for study. Brendan confirmed that two reservoirs were included in the study. Public access was a consideration for the selection of volunteer-surveyed lakes.
- Vic noted the study did not test for toxics like PCBs or mercury. Brendan would have liked to look at things like toxics, but the lab did not have the capacity to test for those and sending the samples to a commercial lab would have been cost prohibitive.
- Tom asked if the lakes showed an improvement or recovery from acid rain impacts. Brendan noted that this was outside the scope of this particular project, but the data generated can be used to look at that.
- Walt asked for more details about lakes with acid neutralizing capacity. Brendan shared that metric looks at the concentration of calcium carbonate which is a substance that tries to bring the pH of the lake back to 7. They are looking at that concentration to assess how sensitive a lake might be to acidification.
- Colin asked why the harmful algal blooms are occurring on oligotrophic lakes and whether nutrients may be entering from an unknown source. Brendan shared some thoughts based on his observations. In the part of the Adirondacks around Paul Smith's College, lakes typically bloom at the same time on the same day which suggests there is some broad external factor pushing them to bloom. Blooms tend to occur in the late fall in Mirror Lake and Saranac Lake which coincides with the lakes mixing and the transport of nutrients to the surface of the water. Coupled with calm, sunny, warm conditions, the influx of nutrients creates the ideal conditions for a bloom. Smaller lakes and ponds without development seem to be following that pattern as well, though others bloom throughout the entire summer. Nutrient loading might be continual from the soil. There is lots of research to be done on this topic.
- Tom asked whether the presence of motorized boats on a lake would contribute to mixing. Brendan has not looked at that specifically. Lakes like Upper Saranac, Mitchum Lake, and Barnum pond will bloom on the same day and are incredibly different water bodies. The cause is to be determined.
- Walt asked how the data collected by AWI differs from CSLAP. Brendan noted there are lots of similarities. Due to CSLAP's association with DEC, that program's focus is more on nutrient management and things tied to water quality standards. ALAP and CSLAP examine many of the same analytes with some slight differences in frequency and methodology. ALAP also looks at things that are of interest from a scientific perspective but may not be used in management.

- Fred asked what AWI does with the aquatic invasive species data. Brendan shared AIS data goes to APIPP because they are the entity focused on management and prevention of AIS. AWI defers to APIPP, DEC, and LCBP for the management of any new infestations.
- Vic asked if there are any programs that do this sampling in rivers. Brendan shared the DEC Water Assessments by Volunteer Evaluators (WAVE) Program utilizes benthic macroinvertebrates to assess water quality. There are some programs across the country that look at the chemistry of rivers, he did not know their names. Erin added that the long-term monitoring program staff monitor the main tributaries going into Lake Champlain and that information is available on the Vermont DEC website.

4. ACTION ITEM: Review and vote on Draft March 6th NYCAC Meeting Summary

- Vic submitted a written correction in advance of the meeting.
- Motion to approve meeting summary by: Fred Woodward
- Seconded by: Vic Putman
- Discussion on the motion: None
- Vote: All in favor
- Abstentions: None

5. Updates

LCBP

- Please share the Champlain Basin Education Initiative's upcoming Watershed for Every Classroom teacher training https://www.lcbp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/2023-2024-flyer_web.pdf.
- Several RFPs are open now, including the Lake Champlain Watershed Economic Assessment, AIS Management and Spread Prevention, Native Tree Nursery Projects, and NY Wetland and Floodplain Restoration Project. For more information, visit <https://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/request-for-proposals-rfps/>.
- The LCBP Steering Committee passed a \$34.9M budget at their April Meeting, stay tuned for upcoming grant opportunities.

Boquet River Association

- BRASS' annual meeting will take place on April 24th at the Whallonsburg Grange and will feature a presentation by Laurie Early (USFWS) about salmon restoration.

NYSDEC

- NYSDEC's Rotating Integrated Basin Studies (RIBS) program assesses water quality of all waters of the state, visiting each watershed once every five years. The Lake Champlain Basin is on the list for assessment this year.
- Erin is working with a contractor to adapt [Vermont's Lakewise Program](#) information sheets for New York. Vermont Lakewise is a program that recognizes landowners who implement lake friendly lakeshore practices. Lakewise is the lake equivalent to the Streamwise

program. The New York Lake Champlain Lake Wise Info Sheets will be posted at <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/48369.html> when they are finalized.

Member Updates

- Jim shared Wilcox dock will have limited access once the Champlain Hudson Power Express work begins. Tom added that the launch will stay open, but the fishing pier will be closed and parking will be limited.
- Charlotte shared that she is working with a group of Keene residents to become a climate smart community. They need to get a resolution passed by the town board and can then start identifying priority actions.
- Colin is speaking with folks in Elizabeth town about developing a wastewater treatment plant. There is new momentum around that and there may be infrastructure funds available.
- Laura is continuing a project to look at the impacts of tile drainage on water quality. The new phase of the project will provide a different experimental phase to attribute more causation to observed impacts.
- Steve has an LCBP grant to deliver a half-day lab event for high school students. He is gathering a team of students from SUNY Plattsburgh to assist with the event.

6. NYCAC Coordination, Collaboration, and Outreach – Walt Lender, Katie Darr

Debrief of the CAC's participation in the March 18th World Water Day Event

Over 20 partners hosted a mix of interactive and non-interactive exhibits, over 200 people attended. Jim, Tom, Vic, Colin, and Laura participated. The NYCAC distributed the FOCUS 2023 document and had an interactive origami fish activity. It worked well to have two people at the table with an interactive activity, one person led the activity while the other spoke to the rest of the party about the CAC and Lake Champlain. It was a great opportunity for facetime with the communities the NYCAC represents that may not otherwise interact with the CAC. Members agreed it is important to keep lake and water quality threats visible to the broader public to support action.

May 8th Vermont CAC Meeting

In early 2021, the NYCAC submitted a resolution requesting that the LCBP Steering Committee and TAC formalize a routine monitoring and sampling program for the presence of herbicides, pesticides, and other toxics. Stone Environmental was awarded a grant to do that work, they are currently developing the plan for the monitoring and sampling program. They will provide an overview of the project and there will be an opportunity to provide feedback at the May 8th VTAC meeting. Also at that meeting, there will be a presentation about septage, biosolids, and emerging contaminants from Eamon Twohig, the Residuals & Emerging Contaminants Program Manager with Vermont Dept of Environmental Conservation. This meeting will be recorded.

May 18th Joint NYCAC-CWICNY Meeting

The joint meeting with CWICNY is scheduled for May 18th from 10-12:30 pm. CWICNY is planning to host that at the Westport Town Hall depending on the size of the group. Please let Katie know if you plan to attend.

Joint CAC Meeting

Katie is working with the three CAC chairs to plan a joint meeting for the Fall. The oil train has come up as an issue of shared concern, please let Katie know if you have other items of interest you would like to cover at the meeting. Colleen suggested the Valcour Boat House as the location for the meeting.

CAC Outreach

LCBP's Love the Lake speaker series features both natural and cultural heritage resource topics relevant to the Lake Champlain watershed; it is generally held at the LCBP Office in Grand Isle, VT. Members were supportive of co-hosting an event at a NY location. Members were supportive of targeting mid-September to early November.

Members discussed other outreach opportunities including the Mayor's Cup (July 8th), Adirondack Council's Forever Wild Day (July 15th), county fairs, and the Battle of Plattsburgh Commemoration (September 7-10).

7. Meeting Wrap-up Discussion

The NYCAC meets next on **Thursday, May 18th from 10-12:30pm**, this meeting will be a joint meeting with CWICNY. Members were supportive of an in-person meeting on **Monday, June 26th** before breaking for the summer. Please contact Katie with any agenda or location requests.