

Vermont Citizens Advisory Committee (VTCAC) on Lake Champlain's Future

December 11th, 2023

5:00 – 7:00 pm

Zoom

Approved Meeting Summary

View Recording [here](#)

Committee Members Present: Karina Dailey (Vice-Chair), Eric Clifford, Rep. Kari Dolan, Sen. Randy Brock, Wayne Elliot, Bob Fischer, Rep. Carol Ode, Hilary Solomon

Committee Members Absent: Denise Smith (Chair), Lori Fisher, Mark Naud, Sen. Chris Bray

LCBP Staff in Attendance: Katie Darr, Sarah Coleman (VTANR), Meg Modley

Presenters: Ryan Mitchell (LCBP), Kris Stepenuck (Lake Champlain Sea Grant)

Public Guests: Chris Callahan

Meeting summary prepared by Katie Darr, Lake Champlain Basin Program

1. Welcome and Introductions – Karina Dailey, VTCAC Vice-Chair

2. Public Comments

Chris Callahan shared the [legislative study on proposed necessary updates to Act 250](#) was recently released. One of the primary changes would give Act 250 authority to municipalities that have the capacity to handle it. That would probably include most of Chittenden County. The report involved a range of stakeholders, but Lake Champlain interests did not seem represented by the focus group participants. There is also a [public meeting on December 14th from 5:30-7:30](#) that the CAC might be interested in. In the past, Act 250 has given significant review of water issues through ANR, concerned that if the agency is taken out of the is if agency is taken out the equation water quality impacts from development will go unreviewed. It could be an issue for the lake.

Meg shared that LCBP is hosting an information session on December 13th from 2-4 pm about the US Army Corps of Engineers Watershed Assistance Program (**more information available [here](#)**). The program awards design and construction services provided by the New York District of the Corps for planning, designing and implementation of projects that protect and enhance water quality, water supply, ecosystem integrity and other water related issues within the watershed. Project awards consist of federal services equivalent to 65% of the total project cost, a local sponsor much provide a match of 35% in non-federal funds. The program is open on a rolling basis, ~\$5M is available now. The program is relatively undersubscribed, larger projects are often needed to achieve the match mount. SRF dollars are good for match. The federal delegation is also looking for opportunities to reduce the match requirement.

- Karina asked if the meeting will be recorded. Meg noted they did not plan to record it, but with participant permission they may be able to. Meg offered to schedule separate meetings with interested parties that cannot attend the 12/13 meeting.
- Rep. Dolan was also interested in learning more about the types of projects that could leverage these funds. She also noted SRFs are a combination of State and Federal funds. Meg shared once

federal dollars hit the state coffer, they are considered state dollars. One of the projects under consideration for the program is a large stormwater infrastructure project in Vergennes. In addition to SRF, match might come from municipal bonds or state grants.

- Karina asked if this is a new program or if projects have previously been supported by this program. Meg noted the program started in 2000. Examples of previous projects include: supporting phase 1 of the Waterbury dam, St. Albans modeling project, and phase 1 of the Champlain Canal Barrier Feasibility Study. A number of different projects have been supported through this program, including several stormwater and wastewater projects. If there's enough interest by the CAC, Meg offered to share an abbreviated presentation at a future meeting.

3. ACTION ITEM: Review and vote on draft September 11th, October 9th, and November 13th meeting summaries.

- Motion to approve the meeting summaries by: Rep. Ode
- Second by: Hilary Soloman
- Discussion: None
- Abstentions: Karina Dailey
- Vote: All in favor

5:15 – 5:45 pm

4. November 13th Action Plan Rollout Debrief & Next Steps – Karina Dailey, VTCAC Vice-Chair

The committee discussed the November 13th meeting. Members felt it was a successful meeting with good attendance.

Wayne asked how the November 6th meeting with Secretary Moore went and if she had any feedback on the Action Plan priorities. Karina shared the meeting went well and it was helpful to have that conversation in advance of the Action Plan roll out. Many of the talking points she shared during the presentation came from the conversation with Sec. Moore. Overall, Sec. Moore was receptive to the plan and provided some helpful feedback. She was curious to learn more about where an AIS inspection station might be sited and suggested including recommendations about that. Regarding public access to the lake, she mentioned there was a boy scout camp that had been for sale and offered to ANR, but they did not have interest in purchasing it due to failing infrastructure. Sec. Moore also mentioned VTFW is working on an Otter Creek paddler's trail, which is something the CAC should learn more about.

Meg provided additional context for a roadside decontamination station at critical control points. There is funding through the USACE for border crossing concerns related to AIS. There have been preliminary discussions with VT and NY State about their ability and interest to provide the required 50/50 match. Some potential sites have been identified. VTrans was engaged in preliminary discussions, but there has not been a follow up yet. Karina asked how the CAC can help move this forward. Meg noted that one of the big issues related to roadside decontamination and inspection stations is funding, permitting, maintenance, and staffing.

Action Plan Next Steps:

Katie and Sarah are working on scheduling the Action Plan presentations for late January. The committee will likely follow a hybrid approach to the legislative "week" again, it would be helpful to have at least one person

from the committee present in-person at the State House on each presentation day. The following members were interested in presenting: Bob, Wayne, Hilary, and Karina. Bob and Wayne are unavailable January 22 – 24.

Sen. Brock suggested connecting with the chairs of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy and the House Committee on Environment and Energy to figure out when a good time to present might be. If there is not a specific bill the CAC is looking at, there may be pieces of the CAC priorities that fit into committee bills. It is important the presentations include actionable items that can be translated into legislation. He suggested looking at what bills have been introduced or will soon be introduced to see if any lend themselves to the CAC's priorities.

Karina suggested spending time at the January 8th meeting reviewing the relevant bills and solidifying the CAC's requests through the action plan talking points.

Rep. Dolan expected additional bills related to the July floods to be introduced. She has a bill on the wall related to sustainable funding for AIS management. VOREC grants relate to the CAC's public access equity concerns.

Wayne asked if the January timing works. Rep. Dolan noted the sooner the better as things get busy fast in the second year of a biennium.

Sen. Brock suggested Rep. Ode or Rep. Dolan have a conversation with Amy Sheldon to let her know the CAC would like to present, if there is a time that would be best, and find out what bills would be appropriate for the CAC to have input on. Sen. Brock will contact Sen. Bray.

5:45 – 6:25 pm

5. Lake Champlain Public Awareness and Engagement Survey Overview – Ryan Mitchell, Communications and Publications Coordinator (LCBP)

Ryan provided an overview of the Lake Champlain Basin Public Awareness Survey completed in 2021 by Lake Champlain Sea Grant, UVM Extension, and Lake Champlain Committee. The goal of the study was to better understand the public's knowledge of watershed issues and their level of engagement. The survey assessed knowledge, attitudes, engagement, and preferred information sources, and audiences and communication channels to target. Respondents tended to skew older, well-educated, homeowners. For future iterations of the survey, they will explore different ways to administer the survey to reach other demographics and characteristics. 53% of respondents indicated they get information from TV, newspaper, and radio, this result may be related to the respondents' demographics. Websites, brochures or informational documents, and information on TV or radio were the respondents' preferred ways to get information. A long-term goal is to include public knowledge and engagement in the State of the Lake Ecosystem Indicators Scorecard to assess changes in the informed and involved public goal. The [presentation](#) and [final report](#) are both available in the meeting materials.

- Bob noted there is more outreach to do given the disconnect between the perception and reality of wastewater contributions. Ryan shared there is a figure in the State of the Lake report that shows wastewater facility contribution reductions over the years, they are working on improving that figure to make it clearer.
- Wayne noticed the slides showed younger age groups seemed to be less engaged in the actions presented in the survey. Considering the outreach LCBP does with schools, he was surprised it did not seem to translate to kids bringing that information back home to their parents. Ryan agreed it was a

surprising result and suggested that using a different outreach mechanism to obtain survey responses might yield different responses. Kris added the emails the survey was sent to were purchased from a data company; it is possible that the people offering their emails through whatever sources that company uses might be older. In Quebec respondents expressed they were taking more actions for environmental benefit and that might be reflective of the different way the survey was distributed there. In Quebec surveys had to be mailed and required respondents to take an additional step to visit the survey webpage.

- Karina shared that VNRC has found short video clips to be a helpful part of their communications strategy. She asked if there were some distilled talking points from the survey that could be shared with legislators. Ryan noted there is a [4-page summary](#) available that highlights key findings from the report.

6:25 – 6:45 pm

6. Membership Discussion – Karina Dailey, VTCAC Vice-Chair

After the November 13th public meeting, several people expressed interest in joining the committee. In the lots of interest. In the interest of pursuing an equitable, organized approach to recruiting, Karina presented a proposed recruitment approach and timeline.

- **January – February:** Organized outreach to prospective members
- **February 29:** Deadline for submission of prospective members' letter of interest and resume
- **March 4-8:** Subcommittee review of prospective members' materials
- **March 11:** Subcommittee shares recommendations for membership with VTCAC
- **March 29:** Deadline for prospective members to submit application through Governor's Committees site.

The committee reviewed the draft recruitment outreach materials and were supportive of the proposed approach.

Sarah is going to review the recruitment approach and timeline with partners at the State to ensure the CAC can advertise positions publicly, vet members, and provide recommendations for prospective members. Ultimately the Governor appoints the CAC members. question is about whether or not ask is for interested parties to apply and send CAC app materials. Ultimately the governor recommends these members.

The committee reviewed the [member survey](#) results from earlier in the year, focusing on the expertise missing on the committee currently. Hilary asked if there was any overlap between that list and the folks that expressed interest in joining the committee. Katie noted that was hard to know for sure without a resume and letter of interest from the interested parties.

Sen. Brock noted Sen. Gulick was appointed to replace Sen. Bray, he will confirm.

6:45 – 7:00 pm

7. Meeting Wrap-Up – Karina Dailey, VTCAC Vice-Chair

The VTCAC will meet next on **January 8th from 5:00 – 7:00 pm** via Zoom. The meeting will focus on lining up Action Plan priorities with committee bills in preparation for the Action Plan presentations.