

Report of Activities Summary

2020



Lake Champlain
Basin Program



The LCBP's 2020 Fiscal Year started off with an amazing Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership Summit in Venise-en-Québec.

The gathering was energized with discussions about the centennial of 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which gave women the right to vote. Grand plans were in place—parades, re-enactments, and other commemorations of the events leading up to its passage in 1921.

At the same time, the LCBP had also rolled out the strongest grant program in its nearly 30-year history. The Lake Champlain Steering Committee awarded almost \$3 million to 106 grant applicants, adding to 90 active projects from previous cycles. By winter, dozens of organizations were gearing up for the start of a new field season.

Then, the LCBP, like the rest of the world, confronted a new reality on March 13, 2020. The staff transitioned remarkably to working remotely and the tricky dual home/work life situation. They have risen to whatever challenges have been thrown at them—at nearly any time of day—over the course of the year.

By late March, local watershed groups faced the po-

tential of cancelled funding from grantors and donors, and setbacks to field work that had to be cancelled or drastically altered. LCBP was able to redirect existing funding to provide “emergency” support grants to help organizations suffering financial hardships as a result of the pandemic.

Many of the LCBP's core programs moved forward normally, and others were re-oriented to ensure adherence to COVID-safety protocols. The boat launch steward program transitioned quickly to remote training and had a successful summer season that saw a significant increase in visitors on launches. Amid the ongoing recalibration, the LCBP started work on the next *State of the Lake* report, which will be released this summer.

The COVID pandemic and other events have brought grief to our country and challenges to the LCBP and our partners. Through it, we have found new ways to do the important work of improving the health of the Lake Champlain Basin. And we have discovered new opportunities to connect with and include diverse audiences and stakeholders. As we look forward to the end of the pandemic, these new approaches and the continued push for inclusion will be the legacy of FY2020.

OUR WORK

The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) is a Congressionally-designated initiative to restore and protect Lake Champlain and its surrounding watershed. We work with partners in New York, Vermont, and Québec to coordinate and fund efforts to address challenges in the areas of phosphorus pollution, toxic substances, biodiversity, aquatic invasive species, and climate change. The LCBP also administers the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership, which builds appreciation and improves stewardship of the region's rich cultural resources by interpreting and promoting its history.

The LCBP management plan *Opportunities for Action* identifies four goals that address the key resource issues facing Lake Champlain and its watershed. These four goals—clean water, healthy ecosystems, thriving communities, and an informed and involved public—serve as the framework for much of the LCBP's work.

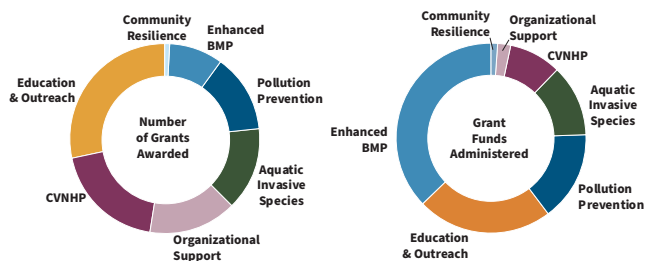
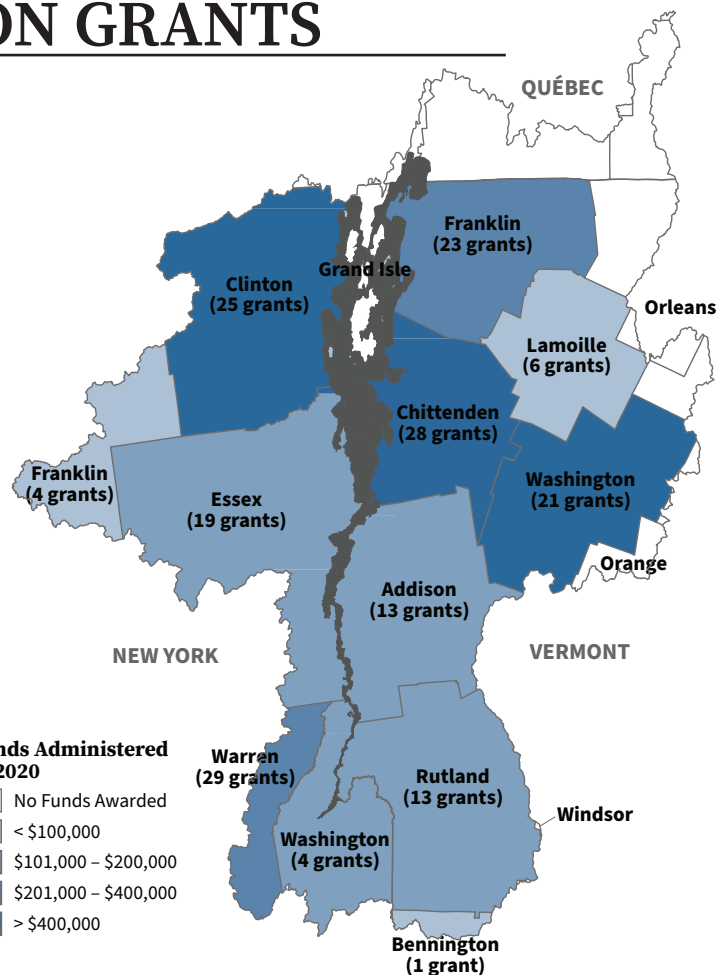
This summary of our work in FY2020 includes highlights of program staff work, local implementation grants, and larger technical grants. For a full listing of these projects, please visit lcbp.org/annual-report.



LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS

LCBP's Local Grant Programs provide vital support for many of the tasks included in the Lake Champlain Management Plan [Opportunities for Action](#). The LCBP's core areas of work are addressed through grants awarded in several categories: Pollution Prevention and Habitat Conservation, Aquatic Invasive Species Spread Prevention, Education and Outreach, Organizational Support, and Cultural Heritage and Recreation. Since 1992, the LCBP has awarded more than 1,200 grants totalling more than \$9,000,000 to 350 organizations.

In 2020, the LCBP administered **\$3,108,500** for **188** local grants across **7** grant categories. Some of these grants are highlighted in the following pages. Learn more about other grants at lcbp.org/grants.



PROGRAM GRANTS

Each year, the LCBP supports a number of research and implementation projects. These larger projects provide data that inform management decisions and implement practices to improve the health of the Basin. Results from these studies help guide policy, and are extended by educational programming and training opportunities. Projects in FY2020 included:

- Road Salt:** The Ausable River Assn. is measuring the amount of salt that goes into Mirror Lake and testing the effectiveness of management practices to reduce salt.
- Rock River Geomorphic Assessment:** Fitzgerald Environmental, Inc. is assessing the Rock River in VT and QC for channel instability and identifying potential restoration opportunities to reduce erosion.
- Cormorant Management:** The VT Fish and Wildlife Dept. provided technical assistance and implemented direct non-lethal mitigation measures to mitigate impacts of cormorants to nesting colonial waterbirds and waterfowl.
- Cyanobacteria Monitoring:** The Lake Champlain Committee coordinated and trained volunteers to monitor and report cyanobacteria blooms to help ensure public health.



Brendan Wiltse



GOAL: Water in the Lake Champlain Basin's lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams that sustains diverse ecosystems, supports vibrant communities and working landscapes, and provides safe recreation opportunities.

Program Highlights

In FY2020, LCBP staff:

- Collected critical data for scientific analyses and watershed management as part of the Long-term Water Quality and Biological Monitoring Program.
- Coordinated the work of the LCBP Technical Advisory Committee, which interprets scientific information and provides guidance on research and funding priorities for Lake Champlain management.
- Compiled a summary of hydrodynamic models of Lake Champlain for use in flood forecasting and understanding nutrient cycling dynamics (in partnership with Lake Champlain Sea Grant).
- Coordinated review and approval of more than 20 new quality assurance project plans (QAPPs) for projects requiring data collection or analysis to ensure consistent, high-quality environmental data.
- Conducted analyses for trends in tributary phosphorus loading, in-lake phosphorus and chloride concentrations, and other water quality parameters.



Missisquoi River Basin Association



LCBP

Local Grant Highlights

- Isle La Motte Lake Segment Management Plan:** The Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board is developing goals, resource inventory, and projects to improve water quality in northern Lake Champlain.
- Pervious Concrete:** The Lake George Association installed pervious concrete at two sites to allow more stormwater to infiltrate into the soil.
- Salt Runoff Reduction:** The Town of Fair Haven, VT is relocating its municipal salt shed away from the Castleton River's floodplain.
- Combined Sewer Separation:** The Town of Ticonderoga, NY purchased separator and piping and contracted project design to separate storm and sanitary sewer lines.



Lake George Association

HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS



GOAL: Ecosystems that provide clean water for drinking and recreating, and intact habitat that is resilient to extreme events and free of aquatic invasive species where diverse fish and wildlife populations will flourish.

Program Highlights

In FY2020, LCBP staff:

- Worked with a stakeholder group to review alternative barrier options for Champlain Canal barrier feasibility study to prevent spread of aquatic invasive species.
- Coordinated and participated in Vermont and New York dam task forces in efforts to increase river habitat connectivity.
- Surveyed 15,388 boaters and intercepted invasive species on one in twelve boats inspected by boat launch stewards in summer 2020.
- Helped conduct an inventory of sensitive natural resources along the 587 miles of Lake Champlain shoreline as the basis for the development of a NOAA Environmental Sensitivity Index.
- Served in leadership positions with professional organizations and committees, including North American Lake Management Society, National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, and regional Northeast Aquatic Nuisance Species Panel.



LCBP



LCBP

Local Grant Highlights

- Habitat Improvement:** The Warren County SWCD installed floating wetlands, in-channel woody debris habitat structures, and bird boxes in the Halfway Brook watershed.
- Stream Crossing Improvement:** The Ausable River Association coordinated the replacement of undersized and failing culvert on Otis Brook to improve habitat and flood resilience.
- VT AIS Management:** The Lewis Creek Assn. surveyed Lewis Creek, Bristol Pond, and Monkton Pond for aquatic invasive species, created an AIS management plan, and started a boat launch steward program at Bristol Pond.
- NY AIS Management:** The Lincoln Pond Assn. conducted a survey of invasive plants and developed a management plan and education outreach program.



Ausable River Association

THRIVING COMMUNITIES



GOAL: Communities have an appreciation and understanding of the Basin's natural and cultural resources, and the capacity to implement actions that will result in sound stewardship of resources while maintaining strong local economies.

Program Highlights

In FY2020, LCBP/CVNHP staff:

- ✂ Hosted the online 2020 CVNHP International Summit Knowledge Cafés to develop budget priorities, outreach ideas, and partnership opportunities.
- ✂ Celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment and woman suffrage with travelling interpretive exhibits.
- ✂ Launched a redesigned and updated CVNHP website and inaugural edition of the Champlain Valley Heritage Times e-newsletter.
- ✂ Provided technical assistance to communities in developing interpretation programs and products.
- ✂ Provided support and coordination of technical workshops, data acquisition, and public outreach for the International Joint Commission's flood study of reducing water levels and flood vulnerability.
- ✂ Administered Emergency Organizational Support grants to support watershed groups suffering financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.



NFCT



LCBP

Local Grant Highlights

- ✂ **Women of Shelburne:** The Shelburne Historical Society created an exhibit and a companion guide for teachers to honor the contributions women have made to build community.
- ✂ **Ladies of the Lake:** The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum developed digital and travelling banner exhibits to highlight female captains on Lake Champlain.
- ✂ **Swanton Heritage Water Trail:** The Northern Forest Canoe Trail engaged volunteers and community partners in the creation of two interpretive signs at a "gateway" to the Missisquoi River in Mansonville, QC.
- ✂ **South Champlain Historical Ecology Project:** SCHEP offered school and community programs to increase knowledge of culture and history, including Abenaki heritage, in the southern part of Lake Champlain.



SCHEP

INFORMED AND INVOLVED PUBLIC









GOAL: Basin residents and visitors understand and appreciate Lake Champlain Basin resources, and will possess a sense of personal responsibility that results in behavioral changes and actions to reduce pollution.



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Program Highlights





In FY2020, LCBP staff:

-  Collaborated with partners to expand business partner participation and outreach for the **“Raise the Blade”** campaign to encourage people to mow their grass to no shorter than 3 inches to improve soil and water health.
-  Greeted 13,207 visitors and hosted classes in a COVID-safe space at the LCBP Resource Room at ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain.
-  Coordinated production of animations and videos about the Lake Champlain phosphorus Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and efforts to achieve its goals.
-  Facilitated video production workshops as local watershed and community groups moved resources and outreach online during the COVID pandemic.
-  Conducted outreach efforts at farmers markets, summer concerts, and Love the Lake speaker series.
-  Worked with local artist to produce a Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! sail to be rigged on a Lake Champlain Community Sailing Center boat in Burlington, VT.



LCBP

Local Grant Highlights

-  **Floating Classroom:** The Lake George Association helped students and the public learn about Lake George aboard their Floating Classroom vessel and conducted several stream monitoring programs.
-  **Engaging NY Students:** SUNY Plattsburgh-LC Sea Grant is working with several schools to implement water programs offered through UVM Watershed Alliance.
-  **Nature Centers to Rivers:** The North Branch Nature Center partnered with Friends of the Winooski River to develop self guided river walks, a river festival, and expanded exhibits to encourage homeowners to take action.
-  **Watershed signage:** OBVBM is highlighting sub-watersheds and local rivers in Québec that flow to Missisquoi Bay with small signs along roadways.



LCBP

ABOUT THE LCBP

The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) coordinates and funds efforts that benefit the Lake Champlain Basin's water quality, fisheries, wetlands, wildlife, recreation, and cultural resources, in partnership with government agencies from New York, Vermont, and Québec, private organizations, local communities, and individuals.

The Lake Champlain Basin Program was created in 1992 at the recommendation of the Lake Champlain Management Conference. The Management Conference was a multi-jurisdictional effort led by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) upon the signing of the Lake Champlain Special Designation Act, under Section 120 of the U.S. Clean Water Act on November 5, 1990. Sponsored by Senators Leahy and Jeffords from Vermont and Senators Moynihan and D'Amato from New York, this legislation designated Lake Champlain as a resource of national significance and required examination of water quality, fisheries, wildlife, recreational, and economic issues.

Before passage of the Act, natural resource managers faced the challenge of addressing specific problems requiring immediate action while also charting a comprehensive, integrated plan for the future of the Lake Champlain Basin. To address this challenge, the Lake Champlain Special Designation Act authorized funding through the US EPA to the States of Vermont and New York, and to NEIWPCC in support of the Lake Champlain Basin Program to work collaboratively toward achieving management goals outlined in *Opportunities for Action*, the management plan for Lake Champlain.

In FY 2020, the LCBP received federal funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the National Park Service, and the International Joint Commission. NEIWPCC—a regional commission that helps the states of the Northeast preserve and advance water quality—serves as the primary program administrator of LCBP at the request of the Lake Champlain Steering Committee, and administers the program's personnel and finances. LCBP is a program partner of NEIWPCC.



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