FOCUS 2023 | For a thriving Lake Champlain Basin

New York Citizen's Advisory Committee on Lake Champlain Management

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The Lake Champlain Basin

PRIORITIES:

- Aquatic invasive species spread prevention and management
- Critical water infrastructure and education
- Habitat protection and resilience
- Phosphorus loading reduction
- Assessment and mitigation of contaminant pollution

The Lake Champlain Basin is rich in natural and cultural resources. Visitors and residents alike take advantage of the countless opportunities for recreation from boating, fishing, and swimming on the lake itself to enjoying stunning vistas from its headwaters high up in the Adirondack High Peaks. Clean water and healthy ecosystems are essential to support thriving human and natural communities in the basin. To maintain and enhance the environmental, economic, cultural, and recreational benefits residents and visitors enjoy, New York State must commit to addressing concerns related to aquatic invasive species, critical water infrastructure, habitat protection and resilience, phosphorus loading reduction and contaminants pollution.

Aquatic Invasive Species Spread Prevention and Management

FOCUS Resources on:
Implementing a physical separation barrier in the Champlain Canal. Improving invasive species education and outreach by the Canal Corporation. Sustaining an aggressive water chestnut harvesting program and sea lamprey control program. Expanding the boat launch steward and boat wash programs.

Once introduced, aquatic invasive species (AIS) are nearly impossible to eradicate and very expensive to manage. AIS often displace native species, disrupt food webs, reduce ecological diversity, and impact water quality. Invasive species negatively impact property values, recreation, tourism, and local economies. With 51 known AIS in Lake Champlain, New York State must devote resources to preventing the introduction and spread of new and existing AIS.

Interested in participating or learning more? Scan QR code or visit lcbp.org/nycac for more information

Climate change is causing frequent and severe precipitation and flooding, resulting in increased pollutant loading and risks to public safety, infrastructure and property. Restoration and protection of river corridors, floodplains, wetlands, and adjacent woody vegetated riparian areas are cost-effective community resilience strategies and help achieve other benefits such as clean water and ecological health.

Educational campaigns like the Raise the Blade help educate the public about practices that help reduce stormwater runoff and pollution while improving soil health.

Critical Water Infrastructure

FOCUS Resources on:

Upgrading and maintaining wastewater treatment facilities, sewer, and septic systems. Supporting public implementation of septic maintenance and best practices. Support the Stream Gage Network, Implementing Green Infrastructure.

Upgrading and maintaining critical water infrastructure is essential to achieve clean water goals and support thriving communities in the region. Failing wastewater treatment plants and septic systems can have negative impacts on public health, tourism and recreation opportunities, wildlife, and the economy. The current limited gaging capacity of New York streams puts people and property at risk. Through its flood forecasting and warning systems, the USGS Stream Gage Network provides data that saves lives, protects property, and documents climate change impacts. The Climate Action Council Scoping Plan calls for the use of green infrastructure and natural resources, like wetlands, to reduce climate risks.

Habitat Protection and Resilience

FOCUS Resources on:

Protecting and restoring wetlands and floodplains. Implementing education and outreach on the value of wetlands, floodplains, and connected habitats to support ecological diversity, improved resilience, and reduced damages to properties and infrastructure.

Wetland degradation, development of floodplains, roads, culverts, removal of hedgerows and riparian growth result in loss of habitat, impact wildlife and fish movement, threaten ecological diversity, reduce resilience to storms, increasing damages to property and infrastructure.

Phosphorus Loading Reduction

FOCUS Resources on:

Implementing best management practices in all nonpoint source categories. Optimizing best treatment technology at wastewater treatment plants. Supporting education and outreach to modify public attitudes and behaviors related to phosphorus loading.

Non-point source run-off from agricultural, urban, and developed lands, roads/ditches, and eroding stream banks, along with point source discharges from wastewater treatment plants add nutrients to the lake which degrade water quality and aquatic habitat, cause harmful algae blooms, impact water supplies, and affect recreational enjoyment of the lake. Phosphorus reductions are needed to restore and protect a healthy and vibrant ecosystem.

Contaminant Pollution

FOCUS Resources on:

Assessment and mitigation of contaminant pollution including PFAS, pesticides and chlorides.

Chemical contaminants in the environment pose health risks to the public. Monitoring, mitigating, and eliminating toxic contamination is essential to protect health and avoid long-term environmental damage.