

*Improving LCBP Committee Representation:
Proposal to Develop a Youth Advisory Committee*

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Introduction

- The LCBP committees lack diversity that fully represents the populations that live, work, and play in the Lake Champlain Basin.
- Youth perspectives are largely absent.
- Youth under 25, and especially under 18, are notably left out of discussions on topics in which they have the most at stake.

Goals

- To engage the next generation of Lake Champlain managers, recreationalists, decision-makers, etc.
- Amplify youth voices in the management of Lake Champlain

Co-benefits

- Diversify committee perspectives
- Career development for youth in the basin, including mentorship
- Skill building
- Workforce development
- Active youth involvement in management discussions and decisions

Proposed Structure

- A. Stand-alone Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) with members serving on or as liaisons to existing advisory committees
 - Improve youth representation on committees
 - Provide youth voices a dedicated platform within the LCBP organizational framework
- B. Youth Advisory Committee as a subcommittee of the Education and Outreach Committee with YAC members assigned a mentor from one of the committees
 - Improve youth engagement on committees
 - Provide youth voices a dedicated platform

Youth is broadly defined as ages 12-35, the LCBP YAC should consider targeting members ages 16-24.

Potential YAC Activities

- Outreach on specific lake issues to new audiences
- Participate on grant review committees
- Action Plan/ Focus document
- AIS harvests, tree planting, etc.

Benefits of Youth Participation

- Increased engagement of younger generations in the conservation, preservation, and management of natural and cultural resources in the Lake Champlain Basin
- Broaden the perspectives present on existing LCBP committees
- Demonstrate commitment to inclusive engagement and management of the Lake Champlain Basin
- Youth members can bring new and creative ideas
- Expand outreach on lake issues to new audiences
- Build capacity for the future and empower the youth constituency

Challenges and Considerations

- Logistical considerations and potential barriers to consider for youth engagement on existing committees including meeting timing, transportation, and parental permission (for members under 18).
 - Virtual and hybrid meetings alleviate some of these issues.
 - It is necessary to consider barriers to participation and ways to overcome those barriers to meaningfully engage youth perspectives.
- Youth may face larger financial barriers to participation. It is important to reduce equity issues across age brackets and career stages when asking youth and other underrepresented communities to serve on committees.